

Syllabus

Course description

Course title	Public Economics
Course code	27199
Scientific sector	SECS-P/03
Semester	1st semester
Academic Year	2025-2026
Credits	6
Day and time of the lectures	See calender online
Place or/and online	Bolzano/Bozen
Total lecturing hours	36
Level (bachelor, master, for everybody)	bachelor
Prerequisites	none
Specific educational objectives	<p><i>The course gives a general overview of scientific contents. Public economics explores how governments influence the economy through taxation, spending, and regulation. It examines why certain goods and services—like roads, education, and clean air—are provided by the public sector, and how policy can address issues such as inequality, poverty, and market failures.</i></p> <p><i>The course looks at how public decisions are made, the trade-offs involved in raising and allocating public funds, and the economic reasoning behind policies that affect everyday life. With real-world examples and intuitive concepts, it offers insight into the role of government in building fairer and more efficient societies.</i></p> <p><i>Designed for a broad audience, the course focuses on making complex ideas understandable and relevant.</i></p>
Lecturer/s	<p><i>Paolo Roberti,</i> Office I3.03, paolo.roberti@unibz.it tel. 0471 013552, https://www.unibz.it/en/faculties/economics-management/academic-staff/person/41969-paolo-roberti</p> <p><i>Steven Stillman,</i> Office E3.03,</p>

	<p> <i>steven.stillman@unibz.it,</i> <i>tel. 0471 013132,</i> <i>www.unibz.it/en/faculties/economics-</i> <i>management/academic-staff/person/36390-steven-</i> <i>stillman</i> </p>
Scientific sector of the lecturer	SECS/P-03
Teaching language	<i>English</i>
List of topics covered	
Teaching format	<i>Frontal lectures</i>
Learning outcomes	<p><i>Knowledge and understanding:</i> <i>Participants should know analytical tools used in public economics and acquire knowledge on the theory of externalities with applications to environmental and health, dynamic efficiency and sustainable development, sustainable resource use, public goods and their provision, political economy models, social insurance and social security, taxation and government regulation.</i></p> <p><i>Applying knowledge and understanding:</i> <i>Participants should be able to comprehend and apply research contributions. They will learn how to interpret theoretical ideas and applied research results such as to the ability to adapt government interventions.</i></p> <p><i>Making judgments:</i> <i>Participants should be able to reflect on specific problems and formulate judgments that include a critical reflection on the relevant social and economic issues involved.</i></p> <p><i>Communication skills:</i> <i>Participants should be able to communicate content, key concepts, research ideas, problems and solutions as well as research results to both a specialist and non-specialist audience.</i></p> <p><i>Learning skills:</i> <i>Participants are able to link economic theory and specific economic problems related to the public sector. They are expected to extend their knowledge acquired during the course autonomously by reading and understanding scientific research and analysis and to continue to undertake further study in order to do a literature review and to frame a proper research question.</i></p>
Assessment	<p> <i>A voluntary midterm and mandatory final exam, both written, as well as a mandatory writing assignment and</i> </p>

	<p><i>presentation. Non-attendees are allowed to take the midterm exam and are encouraged to do the presentation. The midterm grade can be rejected in which case the student will take a longer final exam covering all of the material in the course.</i></p> <p><i>For attending participants, the course project is done in groups of 2 participants and it includes a written project report (about 10 pages) and short 10-minute presentation of the main ideas developed.</i></p> <p><i>Non-attending participants can do a course project in groups of 2 participants if they prefer but must sign-up when this is offered, i.e. agree on a topic with the instructors at the least 2 months before the exam that they wish to take. Non-attending participants can also do instead so a written 10-page project on their own.</i></p>
Assessment language	<i>English</i>
Evaluation criteria and criteria for awarding marks	<p><i>The final grade will be a weighted average of the writing assignment (25%), presentation (5%), midterm exam (35%) and final exam (35%). Participants that do not take the midterm or reject their midterm grade will be given a longer final that will count for 70% of the final grade. For non-attending participants who choose not to do the presentation, the writing assignment will count for 30% of the final grade.</i></p> <p><i>The textbook, "Public Economics" by Jonathan Gruber, additional reading materials made available to the class and the in-class slides of the instructors will form the basis for the material covered in the exams and will be made available to the students online.</i></p> <p><i>Relevant for assessing the written exam is the clarity of answers, mastery of the teaching language, and the ability to summarize, evaluate, and establish relationships between topics and to solve formal problems. Relevant for assessing the course project is the ability to work on a specified topic, creativity, critical thinking, ability to structure and summarize ideas in your own words, teamwork and an effective presentation.</i></p>
Required readings	<p>Gruber, J. 2013. Public Finance and Public Policy. 4th Edition. Worth Publishers. Older editions of the book are also OK.</p>
Supplementary readings	<p>Selected articles are suggested as supplementary readings. They will be presented during the lecture and uploaded to the reserve collection.</p>