

Department of Economics, University of Utah
Economics 5300 and 6300/Public Finance

Gardner Commons 3680
Fall 2019

Instructors

Natalie Gochnour, MS

Phone – (801) 581-8819

Email – Natalie.gochnour@eccles.utah.edu

Twitter – @gochnour

Michael Parker, MPP

(801) 541-8466

Merrill.michael.p@gmail.com

Twitter --@Mr_MikeParker

Office hours – Students can meet with Natalie Gochnour by appointment in her office at the Thomas S. Monson Center, Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, 411 East South Temple, 2nd Floor. Students can meet with Michael Parker by appointment.

Course description

Economic theory guides practitioners in the public sector, but the clear majority of work is solidly grounded in applied tasks. Too often, students graduate in economics or public policy with very little applied experience. This course attempts to fill the gap by focusing on the practice of public finance in a real-life, state government setting. Students will be challenged to develop and apply their economic skillset to current issues facing the Utah economy, with a focus on state tax modernization. Lectures will focus on the role of government in a market economy and how public sector economics informs public decisions. As part of the applied emphasis, students will write case-based policy memos and a policy brief for elected and senior government officials. Regular quizzes will assess students' understanding of public finance concepts. By the end of the semester students will have a foundational understanding of public finance and an improved economic skillset.

Objectives/Course outcomes

This course prepares students for economic and public policy jobs in a federal, state and local government setting. The course has two specific objectives: 1) Develop a rudimentary framework for understanding the taxing and spending activities of government, and 2) Improve each student's applied economic skillset. Analyzing public issues from an economic perspective and communicating economic concepts to non-economists will be hallmarks of the course. These objectives will be presented from the perspective of applied economists who study the Utah economy and advise government, business, and non-profit decision-makers.

Typical class structure/agenda

Class will start at 6:15 p.m. We will spend the first 15 minutes on most nights discussing a current event relevant to the field of public finance or reviewing a topic(s) of interest. Students are encouraged to bring their own public policy items to discuss during this open discussion time. Our purpose will be to develop themes, concepts, insights and expertise about current economic events. Next, a 45- to 90-minute lecture will be given on a topic of public finance. After a short break, class will conclude with an applied discussion and presentations that complement lectures and class readings.

Required readings

The theoretical underpinnings for the course are presented in the required textbook:

August 16, 2019

Public Finance and Public Policy, Jonathan Gruber, Sixth Edition

We will use the textbook extensively in class discussions and assignments. DO NOT TAKE THIS COURSE WITHOUT ACCESS TO THE TEXTBOOK.

Students are also required to read and contribute to and complete class assignments from this book:

Fiscal Therapy, by William G. Gale

Graduate students will also complete a writing assignment on the book.

Course lectures will be seasoned by a variety of other supplemental readings shared on Canvas.

Course grades

Since class instruction is concentrated into one evening per week, self-directed readings and a participatory discussion are important.

Grades will be determined on an absolute grading scheme based on performance in these areas:

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

1) Participation and presentations (11 points); 2) policy memos (24 points/6 @ 4 points each); 3) policy brief (25 points); 4) chapter quizzes (20 points total – 20 @ 1 point each); and 5) capstone quiz (20 points). Undergraduate students are graded as a cohort.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

1) Participation and presentations (6 points); 2) policy memos (24 points/6 @ 4 points each); 3) policy brief (25 points); 4) quizzes (20 points total – 20 @ 1 point each); 5) capstone quiz (20 points); 6) book essay (5 points). Graduate students are graded as a cohort.

Additional notes

Canvas – Class lectures, reading assignments and other materials will be posted on Canvas. The course will be “paper free” except for the final, in-class quiz. Please plan on viewing course materials electronically. Instructors will not bring copies of materials to class.

Extra credit – We do not allow students to do extra credit to improve their grade. We are very specific about the content and timing of assignments and tests. As upper-division and graduate students, we expect you to organize yourselves to achieve a satisfactory grade in the class.

The Americans with Disabilities Act – The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services, and activities for people with disabilities. If you will need accommodations in this class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services, 162 Olpin Union Building, (801) 581-5020. CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in an alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services.

August 16, 2019

University Safety Statement – The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu.

Addressing Sexual Misconduct – Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender (which includes sexual orientation and gender identity/expression) is a civil rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, color, religion, age, status as a person with a disability, veteran's status or genetic information. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you are encouraged to report it to the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 135 Park Building, 801-581-8365, or the Office of the Dean of Students, 270 Union Building, 801-581-7066. For support and confidential consultation, contact the Center for Student Wellness, 426 SSB, 801-581-7776. To report to the police, contact the Department of Public Safety, 801-585-2677(COPS).

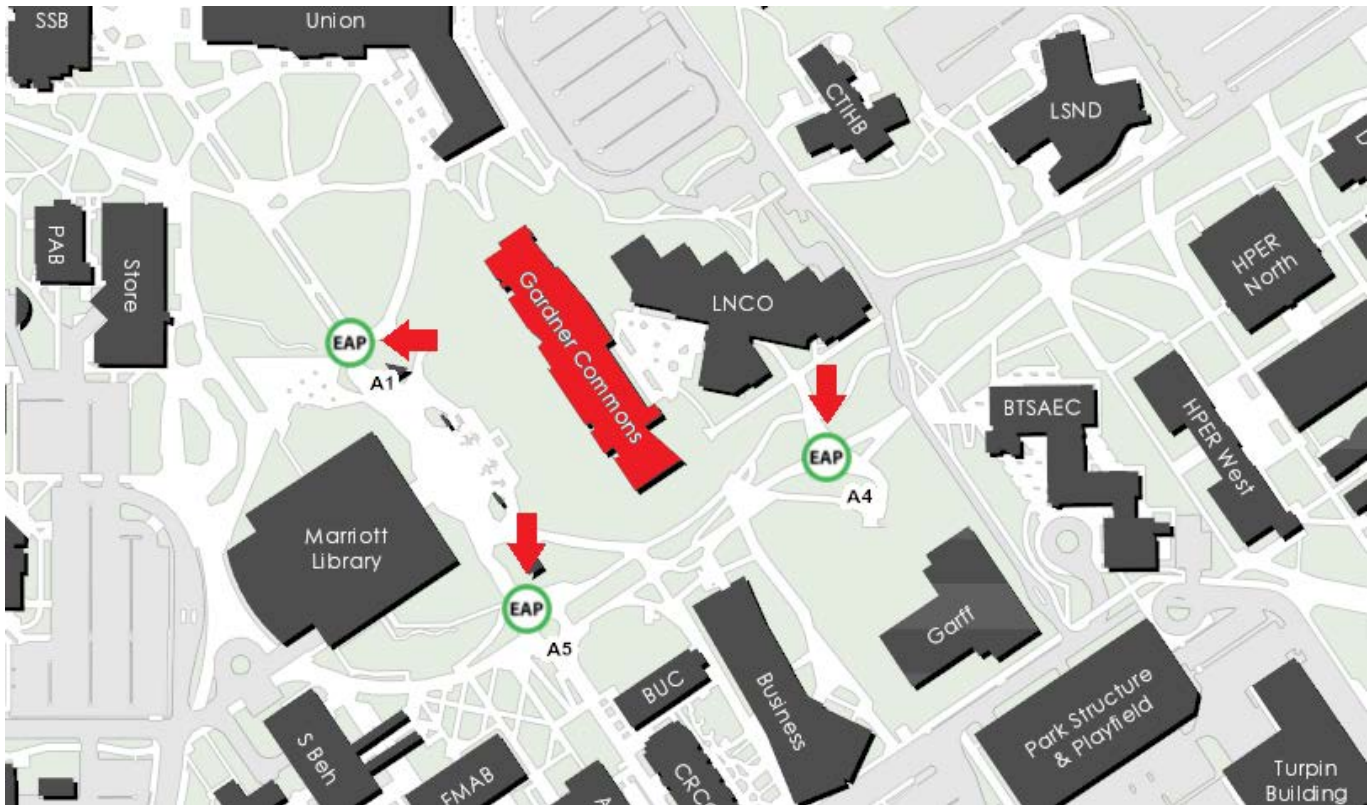
Undocumented Student Support Statement – Immigration is a complex phenomenon with broad impact—those who are directly affected by it, as well as those who are indirectly affected by their relationships with family members, friends, and loved ones. If your immigration status presents obstacles to engaging in specific activities or fulfilling specific course criteria, confidential arrangements may be requested from the Dream Center. Arrangements with the Dream Center will not jeopardize your student status, your financial aid, or any other part of your residence. The Dream Center offers a wide range of resources to support undocumented students (with and without DACA) as well as students from mixed-status families. To learn more, please contact the Dream Center at 801.213.3697 or visit dream.utah.edu.

Safety – The University of Utah values the safety of all campus community members. To report suspicious activity or to request a courtesy escort, call campus police at 801-585-COPS (801-585-2677). You will receive important emergency alerts and safety messages regarding campus safety via text message. For more information regarding safety and to view available training resources, including helpful videos, visit safeu.utah.edu. See the College of Social and Behavioral Science Emergency Action Plan included with this syllabus.

Note: This syllabus is meant to serve as an outline and guide for our course. Please note that we may modify it with reasonable notice to you. We may also modify the Course Schedule to accommodate the needs of our class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas under Announcements.

Questions? – Send an email to Natalie.Gochmour@eccles.utah.edu or Merrill.michael.p@gmail.com.

CSBS EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN



BUILDING EVACUATION

EAP (Emergency Assembly Point) – When you receive a notification to evacuate the building either by campus text alert system or by building fire alarm, please follow your instructor in an orderly fashion to the EAP marked on the map below. Once everyone is at the EAP, you will receive further instructions from Emergency Management personnel. You can also look up the EAP for any building you may be in on campus at <http://emergencymanagement.utah.edu/eap>.



CAMPUS RESOURCES

U Heads Up App: There's an app for that. Download the app on your smartphone at alert.utah.edu/headsup to access the following resources:

- **Emergency Response Guide:** Provides instructions on how to handle any type of emergency, such as earthquake, utility failure, fire, active shooter, etc. Flip charts with this information are also available around campus.
- **See Something, Say Something:** Report unsafe or hazardous conditions on campus. If you see a life threatening or emergency situation, please call 911!

Safety Escorts: For students who are on campus at night or past business hours and would like an escort to your car, please call **801-585-2677**. You can call 24/7 and a security officer will be sent to walk with you or give you a ride to your desired on-campus location.