

ECO 4504

# Public Sector Economics

**Randall Holcombe**

**Fall 2016**

TEXTBOOK: Randall Holcombe: *Public Sector Economics: The Role of Government in the American Economy*.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday and Wednesday, 1:30-2:30, or by appointment. Office location: 162 Bellamy. e-mail address: holcombe@fsu.edu. Web site: [www.RandallHolcombe.com](http://www.RandallHolcombe.com) (has syllabus and test questions).

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The object of the course is to provide an understanding of the economic activities of government. This includes taxation, government spending, and regulation. Government activities will be analyzed both with regard to the government's actual activities and from the standpoint of what governments can and should do. The paper assignment is designed to develop research and writing skills and to aid in understanding government taxation and spending over the past five decades.

COURSE OUTLINE: The course will follow the outline of the book. The following chapters will be covered in detail: 1-6 and 10-16. Additional chapters will be covered as time permits. Examinations may cover material in the book and all material covered in class, whether or not it is in the book.

EXAMINATIONS AND GRADES: Grades will be assigned based on a mid-term examination, a final examination and a paper. The mid-term will be worth 30 percent, and the paper and final 35 percent each, of the final course grade. Both exams will be essay exams. The mid-term will be given on Friday, October 21. The final will be given at the regularly assigned examination period for the class.

ACADEMIC HONOR POLICY: The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to ". . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>.)

POLICY ON ELECTRONIC DEVICES: You may use a laptop computer or other electronic device to take notes during classes, if you receive permission from me. You may not use any electronic devices during exams. To obtain permission to use your laptop or other device in class, you must deliver to me a written request saying you will be using it only for classroom purposes. Your request can say "I request permission to use my laptop in class to take notes. I will not use it in class for any other purpose." Write your name clearly and sign your request. You may not use electronic devices (laptops, phones, etc.) in class unless you have my prior approval to do so.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center  
874 Traditions Way  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
[sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu)  
<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

PAPER: The paper is to be an examination of the revenues and expenditures of the federal government of the United States. The paper should begin by comparing the current U.S. budget with the budget as it has changed since 1960. As a part of your paper assignment, you must include tables, charts, and/or other comparisons of the government budgets over the years. After examining the budget's evolution, your paper should then recommend any changes to the budget you think would be appropriate. Your recommendations may include the entire budget, or may single out particular budgetary items to examine in more detail. Recommendations should be justified by basing them on economic theory, using the textbook and/or other sources, and referenced as such.

There are many sources of data, including the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (which ceased publication in 2011), [www.usgovernmentspending.com](http://www.usgovernmentspending.com), Office of Management and Budget ([www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget)), the Congressional Budget Office ([www.cbo.gov](http://www.cbo.gov)), and *The Economic Report of the President* (which is available on-line; data in the Appendix).

Any material you obtain from outside sources should be referenced in an appropriate manner, and your paper should have a list of references at the end. Any material quoted directly from your references should be enclosed in quotation marks and referenced. Your paper should be your own work, and you should adhere to the standards of the FSU honor code, which is in the FSU General Bulletin. This means (1) upholding the highest standards of academic integrity for your own work, and (2) refusing to tolerate violations of academic integrity. For sources from the Strozier Library, list the call numbers along with the reference. Any references you use that are not from the Strozier Library should be annotated as such, and their sources given. For internet sites, list the complete URL and the date accessed. I check some papers by doing an internet search on the papers' contents. Any papers that do not list references this way will not be graded.

The paper should be typed, double-spaced, and the text of the paper should be about 20 pages in length. You must hand in a "hard copy" of your paper, and may not hand in your paper via e-mail or in another electronic form. The paper will be due at the end of the class period on Wednesday, November 16. Papers handed in after the end of the class period will be counted as handed in the next day. One letter grade will be deducted from your paper for each day it is handed in late.