

ECO 4532

# Economic Analysis of Politics

**Randall Holcombe**

**Spring 2017**

TEXTBOOKS: Randall Holcombe: *Advanced Introduction to Public Choice* and Randy T. Simmons, *Beyond Politics*.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday and Wednesday, 2:00-3:00, or by appointment. Office location: 162 Bellamy. e-mail address: [holcombe@fsu.edu](mailto:holcombe@fsu.edu). Web site: [www.RandallHolcombe.com](http://www.RandallHolcombe.com) (has syllabus).

COURSE OBJECTIVES: One object of the course is to provide an understanding of the way that individual preferences are aggregated to produce public policies. Another objective is to use that understanding to see why government activity in the United States has expanded since the nation's founding, and how people's perceptions about the role of government has evolved. The paper assignment is designed to develop research and writing skills and to aid in understanding the evolving role of government in the twentieth century.

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 Thursday, February 23. 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>.)

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 growth in government expenditures in the United States from the beginning of the twentieth century up through the present. You should look at federal, state, and local government expenditures, and can also look at the revenues that financed those expenditures. As a part of your paper assignment, you must include tables, charts, and/or other data that document the growth in government spending since the beginning of the twentieth century. Why did government spending grow so much? What programs grew the most? What are the positive and negative aspects of this expenditure growth?

There are many sources of data. One print source that has much data is *Historical Statistics of the United States*, which is available in Strozier Library. You can also find more recent data in 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 Tuesday, April 6. 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.

#### COURSE OUTLINE:

1. **Market Failure and Government Failure:** Simmons, Chs. 1, 2 & 3; Holcombe Ch. 1.
2. **Majority Rule Voting:** Holcombe Chs. 2 & 3.
3. **Political Strategy:** Simmons Ch. 3. Holcombe Ch. 4.
4. **Aggregating Voter Preferences:** Simmons Chs. 4 & 5; Holcombe Chs. 5 & 6.
5. **The Political Marketplace:** Holcombe Chs. 7 & 8; Simmons Ch. 9.
6. **Bureaucracy:** Holcombe Ch. 9; Simmons Chs. 10 & 11.
7. **Political Organization:** Holcombe Ch. 10.
8. **Political Entrepreneurship:** Holcombe Ch. 11; Simmons Chs. 13 & 14.
9. **The Economics of Constitutions:** Holcombe Chs. 12 & 13; Simmons Chs. 6, 7 & 8.
10. **Government Policy:** Simmons Chs. 12 & 15.
11. **Checks and Balances, Elites and Masses:** Holcombe Ch. 14.