

San José State University  
Department of Economics  
ECON 232 - 01, Seminar in Public Finance, Fall 2025

## Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Dr. Patralekha (Pat) Ukil
Office Location:	Zoom Meeting Room ( <i>link is provided in Canvas</i> )
Email:	<a href="mailto:patralekha.ukil@sjsu.edu">patralekha.ukil@sjsu.edu</a>
Office Hours:	Tuesdays: 3.30p.m. – 5.30p.m. PST ( <i>via Zoom</i> )
Class Days/Time:	N/A (hybrid course)
Prerequisites:	Instructor consent.

## Course Description

*From the SJSU course catalog:* The public sector. Determination of objectives of the public sector; pricing and output in the public sector; taxes, their distribution and allocative effects; public expenditure theory; public debt theory and policy.

This course is a graduate-level course on the economics of the public sector. **The focus of this course is on understanding the microeconomic reasons behind public/government sector involvement in a market economy.** We will use microeconomic principles to understand the *reasons for* government involvement and intervention, and will also focus on gaining a quantitative and analytical understanding of such topics. We will be covering a wide range of theoretical issues relating to public economics with a specific focus on practical issues relating to public goods, social insurance, healthcare, redistribution and taxation. This course will also link public finance issues to recent empirical research that use quantitative (quasi-experimental) methods and insights from behavioral economics.

## Course Format

This course is a hybrid course, primarily administered online using the [Canvas Learning Management System](https://sjsu.instructure.com) at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>, and with a few on-campus in-person meetings (dates TBA). All students will require a reliable internet connection and an electronic device for access to Canvas LMS. You can borrow laptops and other equipment from the MLK library. Please visit the library or this website: <https://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/student-computing-services>.

The lecture materials will follow ***an asynchronous online format*** in which ALL materials (lecture videos, lecture slides, additional readings, etc.) will be posted on Canvas. There are **no** required online synchronous classes for lectures that need to be attended at a set time. Modules on Canvas will be organized by topic/week, and you will receive Canvas notifications whenever new lecture materials are posted. ***Please make sure that you check your Canvas notifications regularly.***

## Course Web Page and Canvas Messaging

All relevant course materials such as the course syllabus, lecture materials, readings, notes, assignments and instructions, etc. can be found on the [Canvas Learning Management System](http://sjsu.instructure.com) course login website at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through Canvas to learn of any course updates.

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. *Understand and apply microeconomic principles to the involvement of the government in a market economy.*
2. *Understand and analytically apply the quantitative methods used in the recent empirical research used in the literature.*
3. *Review and explain the different concepts of public economics and apply those to situations involving social insurance, health insurance, redistribution, taxation, etc.*
4. *Read and review recent research on different fields in public economics and develop a research paper on a topic related to public economics (or a very closely related field)*

## Required Texts/Readings

Journal articles, lecture videos, and all reading materials posted on Canvas are the required learning material for this course. **There is no requirement to purchase a textbook for this course.**

Recommended reading: *Public Finance and Public Policy, 5th edition, Jonathan Gruber, Macmillan.*

## Course Requirements and Assignments

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practical. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

The course assessment will be based on the following:

Assignment	Due Date/Notes	Assignment Weight
1. Homework exercises	approx. 5 assignments; due dates TBA	30%
2. An Analytical Writing Assignment	Friday October 24 <sup>th</sup>	15%
3. Term Paper:		55%
3a. Research Paper Proposal	Friday September 26 <sup>th</sup>	5%
3b. Preliminary Draft	Friday November 21 <sup>st</sup>	15%
3c. Paper Presentation	the first week of December	15%
3d. Final Paper	Sunday December 14 <sup>th</sup>	20%

- **Homework exercises** will be assigned on Canvas *on a regular basis throughout the semester*, and the questions will be based on the lecture materials. You will receive approximately 5 such assignments. These are built to test your understanding of the material covered, and to help you apply the theoretical foundations of public economics.
- For the **analytical writing assignment**, each student will submit a 3-to-4-page assignment on a particular topic covered in class. The topic, the structure of, and the rubrics for this assignment will be provided in due course as the semester progresses.
- **The proposal of your research paper** is due by **September 26<sup>th</sup> 2025** on Canvas. I expect you to submit your specific research question / the hypothesis you wish to test, the sources of data you and the method you want to utilize, and an initial literature review. More details and the rubric for the paper proposal will be provided on Canvas.
- **A preliminary draft of your research paper is due on Canvas by November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025.** This should be an edited version of your paper following my comments on the proposal, an updated literature review and any preliminary results that you may have. More details and the rubric for the preliminary draft will be provided on Canvas.
- **Paper presentations will be held on campus, and these are the required in-person meetings.** The presentations will be held over 2 days in the first week of December, and students will be notified of their presentation dates ahead of time.
- Your **final research paper** is due on **December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025** on Canvas. It should be approximately 16-20 pages (Times New Roman, font 11.5 and double spaced) and the grading rubric for the paper will be provided on Canvas.

## Grading Information:

Course final grades will be calculated as follows:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>A plus</i>	98 to 100%
<i>A</i>	94 to 97%
<i>A minus</i>	90 to 93%
<i>B plus</i>	86 to 89 %
<i>B</i>	83 to 85%
<i>B minus</i>	80 to 82%
<i>C plus</i>	76 to 79%
<i>C</i>	73 to 75%
<i>C minus</i>	70 to 72%
<i>D plus</i>	66 to 69%
<i>D</i>	63 to 65%
<i>D minus</i>	60 to 62%

## Office hours/emails information:

I will hold office hours on Tuesdays from 3:30p.m. to 5:30p.m. PST via Zoom.

- **If you wish to set up a meeting outside of this time slot or if you wish to meet with me on campus, please send me an email.**
- **I also welcome you to submit any questions or doubts via email if you prefer.** I generally respond to emails within 24 hours.

## Strategies for Success in this course:

1. I will set up the lecture modules on Canvas to be as comprehensible as possible, **but if you can't understand something, please email me at the earliest.** If you like studying in groups please reach out to your peers as well.
2. The homework exercises are a great way to understand and apply the concepts and theories that we will learn in this course. If you have difficulty understanding any of the concepts/questions, please reach out to me before submitting any assignments.
3. Building and writing a research paper can often be a long and demanding process, and I've set up course milestones so that you can stay on track with this paper. Meeting these milestones is a great way to make sure you are not falling behind!
4. **I take academic honesty seriously and this is particularly important to keep in mind for (1) the analytical writing assignment in which you are required to write in your own words; and (2) the research project that you will build for this course. I will also discuss the AI-policy for this course by August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025.**

## University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>), which is hosted by the

Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

I will follow the [SJSU policy regarding academic integrity](#) and honesty, and will take it very seriously. Please read and understand what constitutes a violation in this respect and all instances of academic dishonesty will be reported.

Please come and talk to me as soon as you can if you are in need of any course changes, adaptations or any accommodations due to a disability. According to the [Presidential Directive 97-03](#) students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center \(AEC\)](#) at <https://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.

More guidelines on grading information and class attendance can be found from the following university policies:

- [University Syllabus Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>)
- [University Attendance and Participation Policy F15-12](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>)
- [University Grading System Policy F18-5](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F18-5.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F18-5.pdf>)

You may also find the following information useful:

- [SJSU Cares](#)
- [The SJSU Food Pantry Program](#)
- [SJSU Counseling](#)
- [SJSU Learn Anywhere](#)

## ECON 232-01 Fall 2025 Course Schedule

This is the **tentative schedule** for the course. We will try to stay on track with this syllabus as the semester progresses. If any changes have to be made to the syllabus, those changes will be communicated to all students in Canvas. A timely notice and consideration will be provided to all students if any changes need to be made.

### Course Schedule

Week #	Week of	Topics & Readings	Notes
1	Aug 20 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to the course and syllabus	The course will open on Canvas
2	Aug 25 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to Public Economics; The Four Qs of Public Finance	
3	Sept 1 <sup>st</sup>	Market Structure; Competition and the Government	<i>Homework #1 will be assigned this week</i>
4	Sept 8 <sup>h</sup>	Externality Theory	
5	Sept 15 <sup>th</sup>	Public Goods	<i>Homework #2 will be assigned this week</i>
6	Sept 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Topics in Political Economy	<i>Research paper proposal due by Friday September 26<sup>th</sup> 11:59pm</i>
7	Sept 29 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction to Taxation	
8	Oct 6 <sup>th</sup>	Taxation (contd.); Corporate Taxation	<i>Homework #3 will be assigned this week</i>
9	Oct 13 <sup>th</sup>	Taxation of Labor Supply	
10	Oct 20 <sup>th</sup>	<i>x</i>	<i>AWA due by Friday October 24<sup>th</sup> 11:59pm</i>
11	Oct 27 <sup>th</sup>	Taxation and Savings	

Week #	Week of	Topics & Readings	Notes
12	Nov 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Topics in Social Insurance	<i>Homework #4 will be assigned this week</i>
13	Nov 10 <sup>th</sup>	Healthcare and Health Insurance	
14	Nov 17 <sup>th</sup>	<i>x</i>	<i>First draft of research paper due by Friday November 21<sup>st</sup>, 11:59pm</i>
15	Nov 24 <sup>th</sup>	Place-based Policies: Theories and Evidence	<i>Homework #5 will be assigned this week</i>
16	Dec 1 <sup>st</sup>	Place-based Policies (contd.)	<i>Paper Presentations this week</i>
17	Dec 8 <sup>th</sup>	<i>x</i>	<i>Final paper is due on Sunday May 14<sup>th</sup> 11:59pm.</i>

### **SJSU Land Acknowledgement:**

San José State University and Surrounding Region Thámien Ancestral Muwekma Ohlone Territory.

The San José State University community recognizes that the present-day Muwekma Ohlone Tribe, with an enrolled Bureau of Indian Affairs documented membership of over 550, is comprised of all of the known surviving American Indian lineages aboriginal to the San Francisco Bay region who trace their ancestry through the Missions Santa Clara, San José, and Dolores, during the advent of the Hispano- European empire into Alta California; and who are the successors and living members of the sovereign, historic, previously Federally Recognized Verona Band of Alameda County.

Furthermore, the San José State University community recognizes that the university is established within the Thámien Ohlone-speaking tribal ethnohistoric territory, which based upon the unratified federal treaties of 1851-1852, includes the unceded ancestral lands of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe of the San Francisco Bay Area. Some of the enrolled Muwekma lineages are descended from direct ancestors from the Thámien Ohlone tribal territory whose ancestors had affiliation with Mission Santa Clara.

The San José State University community also recognizes the importance of this land to the indigenous Muwekma Ohlone people of this region, and consistent with our principles of community and diversity strives to be good stewards on behalf of the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe whose land we occupy.