

University of Colorado at Boulder  
Department of Economics

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Economics 4231  
Syllabus and Schedule  
17 January 2024

Welcome! I am Prof. Jeffrey S. Zax. This is Economics 4231,  
Applied Economic Analysis and Public Policy.

Course description:

This course applies economic analysis to current issues of public policy in the State of Colorado. It begins with an examination of the theoretical foundations for government economic activity. It then provides a description of the structure and procedures of the Colorado General Assembly (the official name of the Colorado State legislature). It continues with detailed discussions of the basic principles of public finance, the economic justifications for government action and the contents of

economic literature and apply the implications of that literature and our economic principles through briefing papers, in-class presentations and testimony at Assembly hearings. In addition, we conduct a cooperative project in which we rate the economic content of the bills considered during the first half of the Assembly session, with the intention of distributing these ratings to the Assembly and the public.

This course explores the challenges of integrating informed economic analysis into the legislative process. It allows students who are interested in issues of public policy to learn both about the economic analysis that is relevant to those issues and to apply what is relevant to the process of determining public policy.

Although issues of public policy are addressed in many courses in the Economic Department, there is no other course in the Department that engages the public policy process directly. This engagement will be valuable to the many among our students who will be active in public policy subsequent to graduation, either through their employment or as citizens. This course is also of benefit to the State of Colorado, because it improves the quality and consistency of economic analysis available to the General Assembly.

### Course structure:

This course will meet on Thursdays from 3:30 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. throughout the semester in Economics 119. Classes will consist of lectures, discussions of assignments, discussions of Assembly procedures and individual presentations. You should expect to attend every class. I will drop any student who does not attend the first class, on 18 January, even if the student did not enroll in the course prior to that class.

I will hold regular office hours between 10:30 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and 2:00p.m.-3:30p.m. on Wednesdays in my office, Economics 111 and via Zoom (<https://cuboulder.zoom.us/my/jeffreymax>). Appointments may be made for meetings at other times, if these are inconvenient.

Course information will be posted regularly on Canvas. Notifications will be posted there as well, and sent to your campus email. It is your responsibility to monitor both.

### Course prerequisites:

### Course requirements:

Performance in this course will be judged on the basis of four bill projects and two additional graded assignments. Each student will choose four bills before the Colorado General Assembly during the course of the semester. Any bill can be chosen by only one student. Assignments related to these bills will constitute 80 points, or 80% of the course.

The project for each of these bills will be worth 15 points, or 15% of the course. Each project will consist of three assignments.

The first assignment will be a briefing paper. Once a bill is chosen, the student has one week in which to submit a first draft of this paper. If a first draft is not submitted within one week, the bill becomes available for other students to choose.

The paper must consist of no more than five pages, with additional pages only for reference lists. The paper will summarize the relevant literature and present an original economic analysis in language that would convey the essence of the material to a general audience.

You are welcome to consult with other resources and individuals for the purpose of formulating your arguments. In addition, the Writing Center in the Office of Undergraduate Education (<https://www.colorado.edu/proded>)

The second and third assignments of the project for each bill can be undertaken only if the final draft of the paper attains a grade of at least 6 points out of 8. If the final draft does not attain this standard, the grades for the second and third assignments will both be zero.

The second assignment of each bill project will consist of confirmed distribution of the briefing paper to appropriate members of the General Assembly. I must approve each paper for distribution. Distribution should occur via email, with myself as one of the recipients. Papers must be distributed after the receipt of approval, and within five days of that receipt in order to receive credit. Each distribution will be worth 2 points, or 2% of the final grade.

The third assignment of each bill project will consist of a testimony presentation. This assignment will condense the associated briefing paper into a three-minute oral presentation. This presentation will take place in class. Each of these presentations will be worth 5 points, or 5% of the final grade. Presentations should ordinarily follow the submission of final paper drafts. If the General Assembly schedules for the bills in question demand otherwise, you must receive permission to modify the ordinary schedule from me in advance.

In addition to the project associated with each bill, students will be required to ~~write~~ <sup>present</sup> a

The final examination is scheduled to take place on Monday, 6 May, from 1:30p.m.-4:00p.m. Any student who has three or more final examinations scheduled on 6 May has the right to reschedule all exams following the first two. Any student wishing to invoke this right must do so by 22 March.<sup>1</sup>

The course as a whole is valued at 100 points. The score attained by each student, evaluated relative to those of other students and to the score which would be attained b





8 April	Assignment: Third paper due
11 April	Taxation Readings: • Rosen and Gayer, chapters 14-16 Assignment • Third paper due today
18 April	Government structure and legislatures Readings: • Rosen and Gayer, chapters 6, 22
25 April	Government structure and legislatures Readings: • Rosen and Gayer, chapters 6, 22
29 April	Assignment: Fourth paper due
2 May	To be announced Readings: • To be announced Assignment • Fourth paper due today
6 May	Final examination, 1:30p.m.-4:00p.m.

#### Additional policy statements

- The University adheres to the standards for student privacy rights and requirements as stipulated in the Federal Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974.<sup>2</sup>
- I am available to discuss any issues of individual or group treatment in office hours or by appointment.
- The following pages present the University's required "Syllabus Statements", which apply to this course in their entirety.

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<sup>2</sup> A description is available at <http://www.colorado.edu/registrar/resources/family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa>.



# Syllabus Statements

## Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote, or online. Failure to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation, or political philosophy.

For more information, see the [classroom behavior policy](#), the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

## Requirements for Infectious Disease

Members of the CU Boulder community and visitors to campus must follow university,

If you have a required medical isolation for which you require adjustment, contact me via email at [zax@colorado.edu](mailto:zax@colorado.edu) as soon as possible.

## Preferred Student Names and Pronouns

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

## Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include but are not limited to: plagiarism (including use of paper writing services or technology [such as essay bots]), cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty.

All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution: [honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu), 303-492-5550. Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Visit [Honor Code](#)

support resources. To learn more about reporting and support for a variety of concerns, visit the [Don't Ignore It page](#).

## Religious Accommodations

Campus policy requires faculty to provide reasonable accommodations for students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please communicate the need for a religious accommodation in a timely manner. In this class, contact me at [zax@colorado.edu](mailto:zax@colorado.edu) as soon as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

## Mental Health and Wellness

The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to the well-being of all students. If you are struggling with personal stressors, mental health or substance use concerns that are impacting academic or daily life, please contact [Counseling and Psychiatric Services \(CAPS\)](#) located in C4C or call (303) 492-2277, 24/7.

Free and unlimited telehealth is also available through [Academic Live Care](#). The Academic Live Care site also provides information about additional wellness services on campus that are available to students.