Dr. Daniel O Murgo

ECO 4933 | Topics in Theory | Fall 2014 (83927)

Course Overview

The purpose of the course is to study different topics of Political Economy, which is the application of economic theory to the analysis of political problems.

Meeting Times

Class lectures will take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:00AM to 9:15AM in GL 139.

Required Textbook

There is not suitable undergraduate textbook for Political Economy. I will provide students with Lecture Notes on a regular basis and probably assign some papers to read.

Office Hours, Website and Contact Information

I will hold office hours in the Department of Economics on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 9:15AM to 10:00AM.

Phone: 305-348-3281

Fax: 305-348-1524

email: dmurgo@fiu.edu

web page: faculty.fiu.edu/~dmurgo/teaching_current.html or (bit.ly/dm_fiu1)

Rules

Attendance is not mandatory, however it is strongly recommended. Given the fact that there is no textbook your class notes are going to be essential study material. Assigned Homework will be previously discussed in class. Additionally, changes of schedule, changes of topics and other events related to the course will be announced in class and posted in the web page. If you are absent when those announcements are made, you are responsible for learning about these in-class happenings.

There are no late make-up tests. No exceptions. If you know in advance that you will not be able to take a scheduled exam, you can take it beforehand. But you have to let me know via email at least two week in advance. If some unanticipated event prevents you from taking an exam, proper documentation must be submitted to justify you absence so that it does not affect your grade.
Courtesy

You are expected to turn off your cell phone during classes and exams. If you need to make calculations during an exam you will only be allowed to use a regular calculator (scientific or financial). You cellphone or smart phone calculator cannot be used.

Tentative Content

These are the topics I intend to cover in class, time permitting. The specific topics and their order are subject to change.

1. Math and Statistics Refresher
2. Preferences and Institutions
3. Electoral Competition
4. Agency
5. General-Interest Politics
6. Special-Interest Politics
7. Electoral Rules and Electoral Competition
8. Political Regimes
9. Dynamic Policy Problems
10. Growth
11. Credibility of Monetary Policy

Homework Assignments

There will be five homework assignments. They may be submitted individually or as a group of no more than five students. Members of each group are responsible for avoiding free riding. The content of each Homework assignments will be announced in class. The due dates are final. No extensions will be granted to complete the Homework. No exceptions. Homework has to be turned in at the beginning to the class on the designated due date.

Homework #1: Due date: Thursday, September 18, 2013.
Homework #2: Due date: Tuesday, October 9, 2013.
Homework #3: Due date: Thursday, October 30, 2013.

Exams

Exams will draw material from the lecture notes and other assigned readings. Tests will consist of essay questions and/or exercises. There will be two Midterm Exams only. The scheduled dates and times are:

Midterm #1: Thursday, October 2, from 8:00AM to 9:15AM.
Midterm #2: Thursday, November 6, from 8:00AM to 9:15AM.

The topics covered in each exam will be announced in class beforehand and posted in the webpage. It will closely follow what was covered in class up to the lecture previous to the day of the exam.
**Presentation**

In lieu of the Final Exam students will prepare a presentation. It can be done individually or in teams of no more than five students. I will provide a list of papers related to the topics discussed in class and each team will select a paper they will prepare for the presentation. No two teams can select the same paper. Teams will have to inform about their preferences and papers will be assigned on a first come first served basis.

The deadline to form the groups and select the papers to present is **October 30**. Those students that did not choose a paper or group by said date will be assigned one by default. Below you will find the tentative schedule for the presentations. If extra time is needed, some presentations will take place during the exam week. Each team or individual student must submit a written summary of the topic presented from three to five pages long, along with a copy of the PowerPoint file on, or before the day of the presentation. Each group will choose a representative who will be the sole person responsible for communications with me and submission of the requested material.

**Tentative Presentation Schedule**

- **Presentation Day #1:** Thursday, November 20, from 8:00AM to 9:15AM.
- **Presentation Day #2:** Tuesday, November 25, from 8:00AM to 9:15AM.
- **Presentation Day #3:** Tuesday, December 2, from 8:00AM to 9:15AM.
- **Presentation Day #4:** Thursday, December 4, from 8:00AM to 9:15AM.

**Grading**

The final grade of the course will result from the three exams and the homework. Each exam will have the following weight: Midterms: 20% each; Presentation: 30%. Homework will account for the remaining 30% of the grade. Although you will be assigned a grade for each exam or homework, the final grade will be curved taking into account the performance of the class as a whole. Chances are that your final grade will be better than the one resulting from the grading scale below.

**Grading Scale**

- **A:** 96–100
- **A-:** 90-95
- **B+:** 87-89
- **B:** 83-86
- **B-:** 80-82
- **C+:** 75-79
- **C:** 70-74
- **D:** 69 and below

**Grade Postings**

After each exam or homework do-date I will post information about the grades in the web page. This information will contain individual grades and also statistics about the performance of the class as a whole (average, standard deviation, median, mode, maximum and minimum). This way you will have a clear picture of where you stand individually and relative to the class. If you have questions or concerns about your grade see me ASAP. It pays to be proactive in this matter.