

ECON 101: Economics of Good Policy

Instructor: Jonas Jin

Fall 2025

Email: jjjin@northwestern.edu

Class Hours and Location: Monday and Wednesday, 12:30 - 1:50 PM, Annenberg G28

Course Description

Why is policymaking so difficult, and why are there so many disagreements over the right policy? In this class, we will discuss policy tradeoffs from an economic and philosophical lens. We will only be covering very basic economics to build a framework that allows us to analyze the economic and social goals of government policy.

The point of this class is **not** to “decide” what’s right or wrong, but to critically think about the tradeoffs involved. Your thoughts and discussion will be the main driver of the course. While I will moderate discussion, **please be respectful of your classmates. Everyone has a different background with different experiences, and much of the learning and broadening of your viewpoints in this class will come from understanding *why* they think in a certain way rather than dismissing any disagreement.**

Textbook

The textbook is *Economic Analysis, Moral Philosophy, and Public Policy* by Hausman, McPherson, and Satz, 3rd edition. There will be required reading from the chapters that will guide in-class discussions and help structure your arguments for assignments. **It can be dense at times!** When reading through it, don’t try to understand every word or argument, but just get the gist of what they’re trying to say.

Grading

- **20% In-class quizzes**
 - Starting on Monday of week 3, there will be weekly 15-minute reading quizzes.
 - The second quiz will include some economics and thus be a bit longer (30 minutes).
 - Each reading quiz will test whether you read and *attempted* to understand the book. **You only need to receive a 50% on the quiz for full credit.**
- **30% Writing Assignments (2 x 15%)** Details to be provided in separate documents.
 1. "Write" a 1000-word paper about any policy tradeoff using AI which cites sources for its arguments. Summarize the argument as a whole, then verify the validity of its sources.
 2. What is "fair?"
- **30% Final Paper**
 - Create a presidential platform, using what we've discussed in class to justify your position. Schedule a 30-minute time slot with me during exam or reading week to discuss and defend your platform.
- **20% In-Class Discussion**
 - Discussion will be the main driver of the in-class component of the course.
 - (Tentative) Each week, I'll send the class a discussion question via e-mail that we'll discuss during class. It could concern economics/policy, moral philosophy, a social issue, etc. You may find it useful to find evidence supporting the points you want to make in class, but this is not required; I just want you to critically think about and justify the different sides of the discussion question.

Accessibility and NUHelp

AccessibleNU: Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

NUHelp: Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the NUHelp website and app at <https://www.northwestern.edu/nuhelp/>.

Other: Each class will begin with a check-in, which is an opportunity for you to ask any questions regarding administrative tasks or just provide an update on how things are going. This will be very informal! Please don't be afraid to ask anything; your questions will surely help your classmates as well.

Course Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** Students are expected to comply with Northwestern's academic integrity policy found at <https://weinberg.northwestern.edu/undergraduate/courses-registration-grades/integrity/index.html>. All assignments must be submitted electronically unless otherwise instructed and may be tested for plagiarism.

Keep in mind that the Provost's definition of plagiarism "includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized use of generative artificial intelligence to create content that is submitted as one's own." Using AI in this class for assignments is permitted *only* when explicitly designated. However, any other parts of the assignment (including, but not limited to, written responses and interpretation) must be done without any AI assistance.

- **Late Assignments and Extensions:** Assignments must be submitted by 11:59 PM on the submission date, usually over the weekend. Extensions may be granted on an individual basis **with advance notice of at least two days before the deadline** (though later extensions can be granted with a medical note). Otherwise, late assignments can be turned in with 25% of the total possible points deducted from the grade for each day that has passed after the deadline. For example, an assignment due on Sunday night at 11:59 PM and turned in on Monday morning at 4 AM will receive at most 75%.
- **Recording by Students:** Unauthorized student recording of classroom or other academic activities (including office hours) is prohibited. Unauthorized recording is unethical and may also be a violation of University policy and state law. Students requesting the use of assistive technology as an accommodation should contact AccessibleNU.

Under the University's Copyright Policy, faculty own the copyright to instructional materials – including those resources created specifically for the purposes of instruction, such as syllabi, lectures and lecture notes, and presentations. Students cannot copy, reproduce, display, or distribute these materials. Students who engage in unauthorized recording, unauthorized use of a recording, or unauthorized distribution of instructional materials will be referred to the appropriate University office for follow-up.

- **Changes to the Syllabus:** this syllabus is subject to change, especially regarding the topics of discussion (please bear with me as this is my first time teaching the seminar!). I'll definitely try to keep the changes to a minimum; I'll provide at least a week's notice before making any changes to assignments or due dates (i.e. anything that affects your grade).
- If you've made it this far, send me a picture of your favorite Pokemon.

Reading Schedule

The following schedule is subject to change, but will be adhered to as closely as possible. Remember that you will have quizzes on the reading each Monday starting in Week 3, with the Week 3 quiz also including some Economics.

Week 1 (September 16 - 21): None

Week 2 (September 22 - 28): Chapters 1 - 3.1

Week 3 (September 29 - October 5): Chapters 4 - 5 plus slides on Economics

Week 4 (October 6 - 12): Chapters 6 - 7

Assignment 1 due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, October 12

Week 5 (October 13 - 19): Chapters 8 - 9

Week 6 (October 20 - 26): Chapters 10 - 11

Assignment 2 due by 11:59 PM on Sunday, October 26

Week 7 (October 27 - November 2): Chapter 12

Week 8 (November 3 - November 9): Chapters 13 - 14

Week 9 (November 10 - November 16): Chapters 15 - 16

Week 10 (November 17 - November 23): None

Final Assignment (including in-person discussion) due Thursday, December 11