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UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER
PUBLIC ECONOMICS
ECON 4211-581

SPRING 2024: JAN 22-MAY 2ND

MIDTERM: MARCH 7-10, FINAL: MAY 2-5

INSTRUCTOR: DR ALPNA BHATIA

OFFICE: ECON 06A (BASEMENT OF ECON BLDG, INSIDE GRADUATE STUDENT COMPUTER LAB)

OFFICE HOURS: Mon, Tues, Fri: 9-10:30 am, and via appointment on [Zoom](#)

ZOOM: <https://cuboulder.zoom.us/my/alpnabhatia>

EMAIL: alpna.bhatia@colorado.edu

CLASS WEBSITE ACCESS VIA [CANVAS](#).

INSTRUCTOR

Dr Alpna Bhatia (Dr B)- that's me, has a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Colorado at Boulder and has taught for 20+ years. My academic research and interests include gender issues, sustainable development, current macroeconomics, and teaching pedagogy. I like economics, and I like teaching, building communities, and working in a diverse yet supportive environment. Outside of class, I am the chief experimenter in my kitchen, a master list maker, Bollywood music blaster, and (more than) occasional killer of plants. I am also the faculty sponsor of the Women in Economics club.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

General Catalog: Focuses on taxation and public expenditures. Topics include economic rationale for government action, economic theory of government behavior, and effects of government policies on allocation of resources and distribution of income.

Public Economics is an optional applied course in one of the key field areas of economics. My aim is to help you dive into crucial questions about public policy and learn to use practical tools in public finance to evaluate government economic policies. These skills will enable you to analyze the government's role, understand why certain economic activities happen in the public sector, and think critically and impartially about different economic policies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- **Apply** theoretical and empirical tools to understand how the government intervenes in the economy.
- **Analyze how the government** affects economic behavior and resource distribution.
- **Discuss equity (fairness)** considerations of non-rival and non-excludable resources, such as public goods and externalities.
- **Discriminate between** different approaches to equity in income distribution.
- Further your analytical, research and writing skills.

COURSE PREREQUISITE

Requires prerequisite courses of ECON 3070 (Intermediate Microeconomic Theory) and Introduction to Statistics with Computer Applications (ECON 3818) or STAT 4520 or APPM 4570 or CHEN 3010 or CSCI 3022 or CVEN 3227 or MATH 4520 (all minimum grade C-).

COURSE WEBSITE

Our course is on [Canvas](#). You will access your notes, any further additional readings and most importantly your grades via Canvas. To access Canvas

- Login using your CU-Boulder identikey and password at <https://canvas.colorado.edu>
- Under Course List, **click “Econ 4211-581”**

TEXTBOOK (REQUIRED)

- Public Finance and Public Policy, 7th Edition by Jonathan Gruber, Macmillan Learning Publishing, ISBN 9781319105273. You can choose a paper or an e-text.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS AND DATA EXERCISES

Supplemental readings and other materials will be provided in the Canvas system. Unless marked as optional these are REQUIRED readings. **I will test you on these.** You will need to activate the University provided subscription to [Wall Street Journal](#) and [New York Times](#).

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODOLOGY AND DELIVERY

This course is entirely online through CU Canvas, **asynchronously**, with no live meetings. We will engage through readings, online discussions, and web-based resources. You will submit assignments in accordance with the course outline using Canvas.

GENERAL COURSE ANNOUNCEMENTS

I share important updates on the Canvas home page and through email. Expect a friendly announcement at the beginning of each module and whenever there's something important. I recommend you set up canvas to [“notify”](#) you immediately for course announcements.

COURSE OUTLINE

I've organized the course content into 14 lecture modules, and we will cover 1 module a week. I generally maintain the course due dates and content as laid out. If any changes are necessary, I will notify you through Announcements. You can find the "Course Outline" under the "Syllabus" link on Canvas.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

I use multiple performance measures throughout the course to assess student mastery of the content and learning outcomes. Course grades will be determined as shown below:

Type of Assessment	Times offered	Number counted towards grade	Points per Assignment	Grade Points	Grade Percentage
Prep Work	14	13	15	180	18
Assignment	11	10	40	400	40
Connections & Check-Ins	6	5	20	100	10
Midterm	1	1	150	150	15
Final	1	1	170	170	17
Grade	Total			1000	100

COURSE GRADING CRITERIA

I employ a diverse range of assignments across various modalities to assess your understanding and application of the material. By incorporating a mix of written assignments, projects, discussions, and potentially other formats, I aim to create a more inclusive and engaging learning experience. This diverse assessment strategy allows you to showcase your strengths and enables me to gain a better perspective on your academic progress throughout the course. *A grading rubric and more detailed information is available with each assignment.*

PREP: Prep activity revolves around math or writing about economics being used that week or concepts necessary to be successful in that module. Each Prep Assignment is worth 15 points. These are open book and open note. There will be 14 Prep activities, in total, and the lowest of these prep assignments will be dropped from your final grade calculation. These are due by **Thursday** midnight of each module. Credit is awarded only when completed by the due date. Budget about **45-75 minutes** per prep.

ASSIGNMENTS: Most modules have a 40-point problem set, discussion, or data exercise (or a combination thereof) assignment. There will be eleven (11) Assignment activities, in total, and the lowest of these will be dropped from your final grade calculation. These are due **Monday** midnight and credit is awarded only when completed by the due date. Budget around **2-3 hours** per module assessment.

- **PROBLEM SETS:** Problem sets will include a combination of multiple choice, calculations, and short answer questions and will be open book and open notes. Take these seriously to prepare for exams. You will only be allowed one take on these.
- **Data exercises** will require you to manipulate and interpret data.

CONNECTIONS and **CHECK-INS** are opportunities for you to make connections with the instructor and with your peers: meet and greet with the instructor, raise a discussion question, answer a discussion question, make concept maps, lead a study group, help a classmate with exam prep and so on. Budget about **30-45 minutes** for these.

EXTRA CREDIT

I typically offer up to 50 points of extra credit (= maximum 5% of the course grade) during the semester for completing certain activities. These extra credit opportunities will be available to all and announced on Canvas. Extra class activity points will also roll over for extra credit (max 50 points)

EXAMS

- **PRACTICE EXAMS** – You'll have two practice exams—one before each main exam. These are there to help you prepare for the actual exam and you can take them as many times as you want.
- **EXAMS**- You'll have two exams in this course. These exams will include multiple choice, calculations, and short answer questions. They will be completed under proctored conditions.
- **SCHEDULED TIMES FOR EXAMS:**
 - **Midterm:** Thursday March 7th- Sunday March 10th
 - **Final:** Thursday, May 2nd – May 5th

You will need to plan for proctored examinations in this course. Proctors oversee exams according to University of Colorado Boulder guidelines to ensure academic integrity. So, *who can be my proctor?*

If you are in Boulder or nearby, you can take your exam:

1. **In Person:** You have the option to take the exam in person, under the supervision of an online class instructor. This choice comes at no additional cost. Please be aware that this opportunity is available during specific times within the exam period. A sign-up sheet will be distributed prior to the exams.
2. At the **University Testing Center** on-campus in Boulder, CO. There may be a cost to using the testing center. This option is only available M-F during regular business hours.
3. With **Proctorio**, an online proctoring is a service to ensure academic integrity. You must have access to a computer with a webcam and a microphone. There is no cost for using Proctorio.

If you outside of Boulder, you can take your exam:

1. At an **accredited college or university testing center** in your town or nearby. There may be a cost for using this testing center.
2. With **Proctorio or a comparable online proctoring service as determined by the Online Economics Dept.** to ensure academic integrity. You must have access to a computer with a webcam and a microphone. There is no cost for using Proctorio.

The course on Canvas has more detailed information about proctoring. If you are in a rural area or on a military base, you may need to be approved to use a person as a proctor and information is provided on Canvas for this approval process.

EXPECTATIONS OF INSTRUCTOR

I take my role as your instructor very seriously. I care about how well you do in this course and that you learn. To that end, it is my commitment to respond individually to the work you submit in this class and to return your work in a timely manner. I usually take a week to grade assignments. IF the grading of your work takes longer, I will keep you informed of my progress and make every effort to return your work with feedback as soon as I can.

I also believe in protecting Student privacy ([Family Education Rights and Privacy Act](#)). I do not publicly post grades and do NOT give out grades on email. You will have to check your grades in the grade book area of Canvas. Often, I will leave comments in the comment box or rubric of the assignment. You should check the comments and rubrics section of your grades to check why your work was assessed in a certain way. For more detailed feedback, if you wish to rework your assignment, or a grade review, we will need to meet in office hours or via appointment.

COMMUNICATION WITH DR B:

- **STUDENT DROP IN HOURS (AKA OFFICE HOURS):** I will hold online office hours each week on [Zoom](#). I welcome you to contact me outside of that time and will be happy to arrange a different meeting time in Zoom, on campus, or via phone that accommodates both of our schedules. I encourage you to meet with me frequently. This time is set aside for you and me and I hope to talk with you about the course, the assignments, or just chat about life.
- **EMAIL:** Email is absolutely the best way to get in touch with me, except in case of emergencies. I try to be prompt about replying to e-mail. However, you should give me about **24-48** hours to respond depending on the nature of the question. All email correspondence must take place using your **Colorado.edu** email address (in which case your email must include your name, and your course

number) or your **canvas** account. **Sometimes email gets lost (goes into spam), or slips my notice, so if you have not heard back from me in 2 days, do not hesitate to send another email.**

- **GroupMe and Discussion Boards on Canvas:** I check the class group me and discussion boards once a day. I will create a groupme only if there is interest.

COURSE POLICIES (THINGS THAT AFFECT YOU)

LATE WORK: I understand that life can be unpredictable and challenging. However, to ensure fairness and consistency, I expect you to submit your assignments by the due date. If you miss a deadline for most assignments, you can still turn in your work within three days, but you will receive a 5% grade penalty for each day it is late. Please note that I drop some of your lowest grades, so you have some flexibility in case of unforeseen circumstances.

Late Work is not accepted for Exams, Connections - Check Ins, and some time bound Assignments. They must be turned in on time!

Anticipated Responsibilities: If you have any planned events or activities that might interfere with your ability to meet a deadline, such as school, ROTC, family, religious, or extracurricular obligations, please let me know as soon as possible. I will try to accommodate your needs and adjust the deadline accordingly if you have a reasonable and verifiable excuse. However, I reserve the right to determine what constitutes a valid reason for requesting an extension.

Please be aware that personal vacations, visits, ski breaks, or travel delays are not acceptable excuses for late work. There is usually a week or more between when I publish the assignment and when it's due and I trust you to manage your time wisely and responsibly.

EMERGENCIES: In case of an illness, physical or mental health issues or family emergency talk to me, as soon as you can, and we'll do our best to find a way for you to keep up.

ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to me in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. Accommodations cannot be retroactive, so please reach out as soon as you can.

If you have a temporary medical condition, or require medical isolation for which you require accommodation, contact me for due date flexibility. See [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website for other accommodations.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

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.

REQUIREMENTS FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Members of the CU Boulder community and visitors to campus must follow university, department, and building health and safety requirements and all applicable campus policies and public health guidelines to reduce the risk of spreading infectious diseases. If public health conditions require, the university may also invoke related requirements for student conduct and disability accommodation that will apply to this class.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19 or if you have tested positive for COVID-19, please stay home and follow the [guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) for isolation and testing](#). If you have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 but do not have any symptoms and have not tested positive for COVID-19, you do not need to stay home but should follow the [guidance of the CDC for masking and testing](#).

TUTORING

The Economics Department provides a [free drop-in tutorial office](#) which offers assistance on all core courses in the major, and occasionally on other undergraduate courses in the Department. The department also maintains a list of tutors [available for hire](#)

ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Students have access to a range of instructional support services, including the [writing center](#), [guidance on personal or educational issues](#), and [library resources](#). You can find more information about their services by visiting the websites linked under Resources tab on Canvas or by discussing them with me!

CLASS BEHAVIOR

You and I, both, play a vital role in creating an appropriate learning environment. It's important for us to treat each other with respect and kindness. 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](#).

PREFERRED STUDENT NAMES AND PRONOUNS

CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. You can update your preferred names and pronouns through the student portal; your preference will then appear on the class roster. If you choose not to make these updates, your legal name will appear on the class roster. Your comfort is important to me, so please feel free to make any necessary changes.

HONOR CODE

*"On my honor, as a University of Colorado Boulder student
I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance."*

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, 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](#) for more information on the academic integrity policy.

Please note that plagiarism, from websites, essay bots, and LLMs, is a form of academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgment. Examples of plagiarism include failing to use quotation marks when directly quoting from a source; failing to document distinctive ideas from a source; fabricating or inventing sources; and copying information from the Internet.

ChatGPT, AI help: New AI tools like ChatGPT can be an amazing assistant much like a calculator. The best way to use it is for idea generation, synthesis, rephrasing, essentializing and gathering information about the typical understanding of a topic. **However, it should be you that guides, verifies, and crafts your ultimate answers, so please don't just cut, and paste without understanding.** The material generated by these programs may also be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic. Be aware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity. In short:

1. You may not use AI-based tools to cheat on assessments.
2. You may not submit any work/answers generated by an AI program as your own.
3. You may use AI programs e.g., ChatGPT to help generate ideas and brainstorm.
4. If you include "any" material generated by an AI program must be clearly marked as such, including the specific tool(s) used. For example, if you use ChatGPT-3, you must cite "ChatGPT-3. (YYYY, Month DD of query). "Text of your query." Generated using Open AI. <https://chat.openai.com/>"
5. You must be transparent in how you used the AI-based tool, including what work is your original contribution.
6. You must ensure your use of AI-based tools does not violate any copyright or intellectual property laws.

SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION

CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits [protected-class](#) discrimination and harassment, sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. These behaviors harm individuals and our community. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these concerns, and individuals who have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and [support resources](#) can be found on the [OIEC website](#)

Please know that I have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents related to these policies regardless of when or where something occurred. This is to ensure that individuals impacted

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

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

I am committed to treating all students fairly and reasonably when it comes to conflicts arising from religious obligations. If any scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance clash with your religious commitments, please reach out to me. Given the flexible timeline for completing assignments in this class, it's important that you contact me at least two weeks before hand if you expect a religious holiday to affect your coursework completion. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

INCOMPLETE POLICY

Incomplete grades (IW or IF) are NOT granted based on low academic performance. You may initiate requests for incomplete grades when circumstances prevent you from fulfilling class requirements within the semester. To be considered for an incomplete grade, you must have completed a significant portion of coursework. If approved, I will specify the conditions for completing the coursework, the time frame for completion, or whether the class needs to be retaken. You can look up the policy at <https://catalog.colorado.edu/undergraduate/credits-grading/>

WITHDRAWAL POLICY:

You can drop or withdraw from the course using [Buff Portal](#). You may also submit an [online withdrawal form](#) or send an email to ceregistration@colorado.edu. Dropping by 11:59 p.m. on Tuesday, September 19, won't cost you any tuition, and it won't show up on your transcript. If you withdraw after this deadline, you'll get a "W" grade on your transcript, and you won't get a full refund. If you miss the deadline and don't drop, you might end up with an F grade and still have to pay for the course.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND SUPPORT

- The [Canvas Computer Specifications Page](#) lists recommended system requirements.
- The [Supported Browsers Page](#) for the detailed list of internet browsers in Windows, MacOS, iOS and Android.

TECHNICAL HELP

- Canvas technical support: Click the "help" (?) icon on the left side of Canvas, once logged in.
- Connect: Help Click the "help" (?) icon on the right side of your webpage, once logged in.
- CU Boulder OIT - 303-735-4357 (5-HELP) or help@colorado.edu
- Students are responsible for maintaining or accessing a computer system capable of participating in all aspects of this course. This includes, but is not limited to, running the Canvas and proctorio software. If for any reason you are having technical difficulties that are limiting or preventing your full participation in the class, **please contact the appropriate Help desk immediately, and then notify the instructor.**

NETIQUETTE

I hope that we will all strive to develop a positive and supportive environment for each other. Due to the nature of the online environment, there are some things to remember regarding one's online behavior and how it may impact others:

1. Always think before you write. In other words, without the use of nonverbals with your message, your message can be misinterpreted. So please think twice before you hit submit.
2. Keep it relevant. There are places to chat and post for fun everyday stuff. Do not stray from the discussion in the assigned questions.
3. Never use all caps. This is the equivalent of yelling in the online world. It is not fun to read. Only use capital letters when appropriate.
4. Make sure that you are using appropriate grammar and structure. In other words, I do not want to see anyone writing "R U" instead of "are you". There are people in the class that may not understand this type of abbreviation, not to mention it does nothing to help expand your writing and vocabulary skills. Emoticons are fine if they are appropriate. A smile ☺ is welcome, anything offensive is not.
5. Treat people the same as you would face-to-face. In other words, it is easy to hide behind the computer. In some cases, it empowers people to treat others in ways they would not in person. Remember there is a person behind the name on your screen. Treat all with dignity and respect and you can expect that in return.
6. Respect the time of others. This class is going to require you to work in groups. Learn to respect the time of others in your group and your experience will be much better. Always remember that you are not the only person with a busy schedule, be flexible. Do not procrastinate! You may be one that works best with the pressures of the deadline looming on you, but others may not be that way. The same is true for the reverse. The key to a successful group is organization, communication, and a willingness to do what it takes to get it done.

Website: <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html> Compiled by Melissa Landin, Instructor, Dept. of Communication, Inver Hills Community College, mlandin@inverhills.edu

SOME TIPS FROM DR B

- Recognize that most students find economics to be challenging and time consuming.
- Show up for drop-in (office) hours or make an appointment.
- Prioritize your tasks based on their importance and urgency.
- Break down large projects into smaller, manageable steps and focus on one task at a time.
- Budget smaller chunks of time spread over the week complete any work due that module.
- Create a calendar or planner to keep track of your deadlines and upcoming events. Set reminders for yourself to stay on track and avoid surprises.
- Use tools that work for you, such as apps, websites, or software, to help you organize your work, study, and personal life. Some examples are Google Calendar, Outlook Calendar, Fantastical, Calendly, RescueTime, etc.
- Make sure you pencil in due dates or sync [Canvas calendar](#) to your main calendar for reminders.
- Take regular breaks to refresh your mind and recharge your body. Don't forget to eat well, exercise, and sleep enough. Avoid distractions such as social media, phone calls, or web browsing during your study time.
- Ask "specific" questions by e-mail and in class discussion. When emailing me, please let me know which course you are taking with me and please be as specific as you can. The more specifics you provide, the faster I can get back to you with the answer.
- Create virtual study groups: [Zoom](#) is a great resource.
- Check in with yourself regularly about how you're spending your time. How much time are you dedicating to reading and assignments? Are you underestimating the time it takes to get things

done? Are you cramming the night before for exams and other assignments? Use this self-reflection to adjust your routine.

- Do not wait until the end of the semester when it is difficult, if not impossible, to correct any difficulties or makeup any missing work.
- Communicate with your instructors and family if you need help or have any issues. Be honest and proactive about your situation and seek support when necessary.
- **Please always remind me of what course you are taking! Especially in the beginning of the semester.**

You have worked hard to be here; you belong here. I'm excited you are in the course, and I hope it will be a great semester. I look forward to working with you - Dr B