

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### I. OFFICE AND HOURS

Office: 1149 Heller Hall

Hours: 1:30 — 3:30 PM T, F, or by appointment, or any time you find me in.

Note: You are welcome to come by my office without an appointment, either during office hours or at other times, but if you make an appointment first you are more likely to find me in (I often work at home). Or, most days, I am available immediately before or after class, in the classroom.

If I cannot meet my office hours at any time, I will try to announce that in class, in advance, and send an e-mail to the class list. But if you want to be sure that I will be in when you come to see me, phone or see me after class for a firm appointment.

e-mail: foster@umn.edu

Office: (612) 624 6567

Cell: (612) 418 5246

Home: (612) 823 2932 (after 6:30AM and before 9:00PM please).

Office fax: (612) 624 0209

Home fax: (612) 823 6236

### II. TEXT BOOK AND OTHER READINGS

Text (available in West Bank Bookstore):

P.J.O'Rourke, *Eat the rich: A treatise on economics* (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1998, paperback).

Other readings will be on reserve in Wilson Library, or distributed in class. Books and articles on reserve for the first half of the course include the following (some have only short reading assignments; readings average about 40 pp./week, including the text):

Anderson, Terry L., and Hill, Peter J. *The birth of a transfer society* (Lanham [Md] University Press of America, 1989), Ch. 1 – 2, pp. 1 – 12.  
HC110.15 .A72 1989

Binmore, Ken. *Essays on the foundations of game theory* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1990), pp. 1- 4.  
QA269 .B46 1990

Friedman, Milton. *Capitalism and freedom* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1962), Ch. 2.  
HB501 .F7 1982

Hardin, Russell. *Collective Action* (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1982), Ch. 1, 2 (pp. 1 – 3, 6 – 37).  
300.1 H219

Lerner, Abba P. *Everybody's Business* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1962), Ch. 1 – 5 (pp. 1 – 31).  
330 L5615

McKenzie, Richard B. *Constitutional Economics* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath , 1984), Ch. 1 (pp. 1 – 15).  
KF1570 .A75 C66 1984

Stiglitz, *The Economic Role of the State* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1989), pp. 12 – 66.  
HD87 .S75 1989

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS (continued)**

Thaler, Richard H. *The Winner's Curse* (New York: The Free Press, 1992). Ch. 2 (pp. 6 – 20).  
333 .T365

Wolf, Charles Jr. *Markets or governments: Choosing between imperfect alternatives*. (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1988). Ch. 1, 2, 4. (pp. 1 – 29, 57 – 92).  
HB501 .W89 1993

**III. REQUIRED SUPPLIES**

Please bring 8 1/2 x 11 inch lined paper, and a pen or pencil, to class. Most of the writing for the class will be done in class, in the form of brief summaries of your understanding of points covered in lectures or readings, to be submitted at the end of the class.

**Sorry, writing assignments on half-sheets, torn sheets or small sheets of paper will not be accepted.**

**IV. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

My main objective for this course is to focus on what you will remember 10 years from now, not on what you might memorize for a test and forget the next day. That means, in general, to concentrate on general principles, not on technical details. However the course will deal with some technical concepts, listed in the syllabus, that are useful for thinking both about the role of government and about economics as a social science. I will ask you to understand them and to be able to demonstrate that understanding in an examination.

“Understand” in this context means to be able to explain and illustrate the concept, and to be able to apply it in solving problems or in analyzing situations.

The course is designed:

- To introduce you to the reasons for government, from the viewpoint of economics, to the choices that must be made in designing a government system, and to some of the consequences of those choices.
- To introduce you to the economist's way of thinking about social issues.
- to illustrate the abstract theory by examining some specific government programs. About half of the course will be devoted to this. **The class will help to choose what specific programs we consider. See the syllabus.**

**V. BASIS FOR GRADE**

1. **50 minute midterm exam (Tues., Oct. 15): 20% of grade.**
2. **Final exam (4:00 – 6:00 PM Sat. 12/15): 40% of grade.**
3. **Participation in discussion (requires attendance and prior reading of assignments) 20% of grade.**
4. **Short writing assignments: 20% of grade (10% for daily assignments, 10% for short review of O'Rourke's book)**

**VI. WRITING ASSIGNMENTS**

Brief writing assignments will be made almost daily, to be completed in class. A final short (2 – 4 page, typed) paper will be due on the last day of class: a review of O'Rourke's *Eat the Rich*.

**The daily assignments** are to give me feedback on whether or not you understood some aspect of the lecture or readings. About half will be graded, the others will simply be checked as submitted or not submitted. **Late papers will not be accepted.** In setting your course grade, the

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS (continued)**

grade will be ignored on 2 of the daily assignments (so you could miss 2 classes without penalty in the grade on these assignments).

**The other paper**, due on the last day of class, is your review of O'Rourke's *Eat the Rich*. The review might be written in the style of a book review (e.g., for the *Minnesota Daily*), it might simply describe what you believe is the message of the book, or (better) it might describe with what points you agree and disagree, and why. Or it might explain in detail why you think that this was an inappropriate book to assign for this course, and why. Anything is fair game. The paper must be typed, double spaced, and contain approximately 500 to 1000 words (more if you get fired up). — about 2 to 4 pages with standard font size and margins

To help you judge what 500 to 1,000 words means, the boxed section at the bottom of page 2 and the top of page 3 describing the writing assignments contains 230 words, according to Microsoft Word's word count feature.

**VII. SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY**

The College of Liberal Arts defines scholastic dishonesty broadly as any act by a student that misrepresents the student's own academic work or that compromises the academic work of another. Examples include cheating on assignments or exams, plagiarizing (misrepresenting as one's own anything done by another), unauthorized collaboration on assignments or exams, or sabotaging another student's work.

The penalty for scholastic dishonesty in this course will be failure (grade of zero) on the entire assignment: midterm exam, the final examination, or writing assignment. If I suspect plagiarism on an exam or paper, you may be asked to submit to an examination on the topic of the suspect material, to demonstrate your familiarity with sources you have cited, vocabulary used, and other aspects of the argument.