

**PPUA 6502: ECONOMIC ANALYSIS FOR POLICY AND PLANNING**  
**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND URBAN AFFAIRS**  
**NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**FALL 2021**

**Instructor**

Professor Alicia Sasser Modestino  
E-mail: [a.modestino@neu.edu](mailto:a.modestino@neu.edu)  
Office: 310 Renaissance Park, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 360M  
Office Hours: TUES 3-4pm PM (in-person)  
THURS 11-12 PM (over [Zoom](#))  
By appointment (email to inquire)

**Teaching Assistant**

Marisa Sotolongo  
E-mail: [sotolongo.m@northeastern.edu](mailto:sotolongo.m@northeastern.edu)  
Office: 310 Renaissance Park, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Office Hours: Mondays 11-12pm

**Course Time and Location**

TUES 5:15-8:35PM, Snell Library 002

Zoom link is for remote students:

<https://northeastern.zoom.us/j/93636946694?pwd=UlhxbURWWWJ4d3ljOUZlYmxVUINLZz09>

**Correspondence**

When emailing about class-related issues, **please put [PPUA 6502] in the subject line**. For most issues it's likely that if you have a question, then so do your classmates. As such, it would be useful if you can post those questions to the class discussion board.

**Course Description**

Our goal is to see how learning to **think like an economist** can illuminate the world of public policy. This course is designed to introduce the essential ideas and methods of economics and their applications to a wide range of domestic public policy issues at the national, state, and local level. Students should develop a solid understanding of how economic analysis can be applied in the formulation and administration of public policy. The course will be delivered in lecture format with ample time for discussion of critical economic theories and applications each week.

In this course, students will develop a fundamental understanding of:

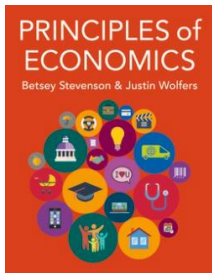
- **The key building blocks of economics** – the four big ideas of cost-benefit analysis, opportunity cost, marginal analysis, and interdependence – and how they can guide you to make better decisions.
- **The “economic approach”** and how economic concepts such as supply and demand and models of economic behavior can help us understand social issues such as climate change, labor market discrimination, and income inequality.
- The critical **differences between “market goods” and “rights”** – between the role of the private market and the role of government – and how to use economic tools to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies.
- The historical context of **racial, ethnic, gendered, and sexuality based economic differences** from a multidisciplinary perspective.

## Course Materials

All course materials and assessments will be made available online through our **class Canvas page**. In addition, we will be using various electronic resources (described below), but to simplify things, these materials will always be accessed from our Canvas page. That means that if you're ever wondering where to find a resource, there's a simple answer: It's on Canvas. Always.

Ideally, the study of economics would be completely objective. Yet, the research process is a subjective one and the field has been built on a small subset of [privileged voices](#). Despite my best efforts to diversify the course materials, I acknowledge that the readings, and the economic actors that they study, are disproportionately represented by white, male, and heterosexual points of view. Nonetheless, rest assured that I encourage and welcome a greater diversity of thought in our policy debates, discussion board posts, and written assignments.

## Online Textbook



**The textbook for this class is "Principles of Economics," by Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers.**

Note that you will need to **buy a version that includes the Achieve digital platform** through which I will assign problem sets and also give you access to online tutorials and other learning tools.

The cheapest approach is to buy one-term access to Achieve which includes the electronic version of the textbook. If instead, you want to have access to a paper copy of the book, the cheapest bundle involves buying a loose-leaf version of the book, plus Achieve. There are other options, and you're welcome to buy whatever format you choose, but it must include access to Achieve. You can purchase the textbook through the Northeastern bookstore or directly using this [link](#).

▼ Achieve \$99.99  
ISBN:9781319252922

Online course materials that will help you in this class.

Access ( 1 term ) ⓘ \$99.99

Subscribe until 02/02/2022

You will need to find your course in order to purchase Achieve.

[Find Your Course](#)

A grace period may be available for this course.  
[Visit Achieve to find out.](#)

You will be asked to find this course using the following code: 4dqpbo

Find Your Course ✕

Enter the course ID provided by your instructor

 Q

You'll know you have the right one if you see this:

Confirm Your Course ✕

We found the following course. Does this look correct?

**Economic Analysis for Public Policy**

Course ID: 6ea86fe3-f7f7-4c5a-99ba-c444cfcaf3be

Status: active

ISBN: 9781319252212

---

Back Purchase Access

When you are ready to access Achieve, you will need to launch it from Canvas.

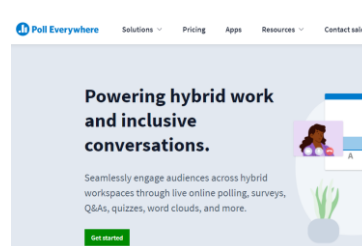
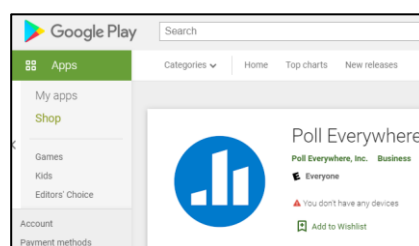
### Supplemental Readings

There will also be **mandatory supplemental readings posted on Canvas** that relate to the policy debate we will have in class each week.

### **In-Class Polling**

To make life more interesting, we will use some in-class polling this semester.

1. Download the PollEverywhere app for free via the [Apple store](#) or [Google Play](#) or on a laptop, go to <https://www.polleverywhere.com/>
2. Join my presentation: ALICIAMODESTINO342
3. Enter your first name and last initial as your screen name
4. You will be asked to login and register using your MyNortheastern credentials
5. Then answer the poll when I make it activated during class!



## Course Meetings

**Attendance is mandatory.** Our lectures will be a combination of my lecturing from "the front of the room" for the first 90 minutes followed by group discussion work culminating in a class-wide policy debate. There will also be an optional midterm review session conducted by the TA.

- At this time, I will plan to lecture **in-person**. If conditions change, lectures will be conducted over Zoom. We will use the link above that has already been posted for remote students on Canvas.
- For your convenience, I will post a set of **skeleton powerpoint slides** before each class.

To get the most of out of lecture, I would strongly urge you to:

- **Print out the skeleton powerpoint slides before class.** (These have strategic blanks in them throughout so that you can work through the material for yourself. I don't plan on posting the "filled in" version that will appear during lecture.)
- **Take notes on those slides during class.** Studies show that the best way to retain information is to take notes, using pencil and paper. Yes, this is stone-age technology, but it also [aids retention](#) enormously.
- **Interact with your classmates** – whether through the discussion board or in class. Ask questions, pose hypotheticals, draw links to ongoing policy debates. Conversation is a strength of the classroom, and I invite you to chat along, but please keep your conversation respectful and relevant to the material we're discussing.

## Online Discussion Board

You will be required to participate in an online discussion board each week by posting a 300-500 word response. The writing prompt will be based on the readings for that week and will be preparation for the policy debate that will take place in class. The goal is to ensure students come prepared each week for the policy debate and have the opportunity to learn directly from their peers. Students will be assigned to discussion groups of 4-5 individuals and will be expected to read each other's posts. These same groups will be used for the in-class group discussion work.

The discussion board writing prompt will be assigned each Thursday and will be based on the readings for that week. The response is required to be posted **no later than Monday at midnight**. Note that the writing style in a discussion forum is generally a bit more casual than in formal papers or weekly written assignments but should still maintain proper grammar, spelling, punctuation and sentence structure. I highly suggest following these [guidelines](#).

## Policy Research Seminars

Students will also be required to attend one policy research seminar during the semester—either virtually or in-person. It does not need to focus on economics but must be related to public policy. The idea is to see first-hand the development of policy-related research. Students will write a discussion board post summarizing the seminar for their classmates. Below are some suggested seminar series, however you may attend any research seminar of your choosing (subject to prior approval):

- **Myra Kraft Open Classroom** (Wednesdays 6-8pm)  
<https://cssh.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter/events/myra-kraft-open-classroom/>
- **Harvard Inequality and Social Policy Seminar** (Mondays 12:15-1:30)  
<https://inequality.hks.harvard.edu/seminar>

## Assignments and Grading

Assignment	Weight	Notes
Class Participation	10%	See below what constitutes solid class participation. Your best 12 out of 13 classes count
Discussion Board Post	15%	Due Mondays by midnight. Your best 10 out of 13 count.
Problem Sets	15%	Due Sundays by midnight. Your best 5 out of 6 count.
Midterm Exam	20%	Take-home exam that covers basic economic concepts learned from Parts I and II of the course.
Research Brief	15%	5-7 page paper describing a policy problem using economic concepts
Policy Brief	15%	5-7 page paper analyzing a policy solution using economic concepts
Op-Ed	10%	800 word op-ed advocating for a policy solution based on what you learned from your research and policy briefs.

## Grading

At the conclusion of the class, I will curve the entire class. The final curve will reflect both School of Public Policy norms, and the overall progress of our cohort through the semester. Given that the class will be curved, I ask you **not to over-interpret the raw scores you get on any individual piece of the assignment.** (I anticipate most students getting very high scores on the discussion boards and problems sets, and in my experience, exam scores are often a bit lower.)

## Writing Requirements

All three writing assignments will be submitted via Canvas prior to class along with a paper copy to be handed in at the beginning of class on the due date. **Please put your NUID, but not your name, at the top of the front page.** All papers should be double-spaced with 1" borders and carefully proofread before submission to the instructor.

The definition of plagiarism includes not only copying text from another source without citation, but also paraphrasing without citation. As you research, ensure that you properly source your references. Please be aware that lack of citing sources constitutes plagiarism and an assessment of "F" followed by academic disciplinary action.

We will be using APA style for all written assignments. To assist you, see the [Purdue OWL](#).

## **Emergencies and Extensions**

The world is still a complicated place at the moment, and so are many of our lives. In an attempt to make our class "robust," you will notice that each of the assignments builds in safety valves. Specifically, your three lowest discussion board scores won't count, your lowest problem set score won't count, and your lowest class participation score won't count. **Given that these safety valves exist, no extensions will be offered on weekly assignments.**

The writing assignments and take-home midterm exam will be penalized 10% per day unless you have a medical or family emergency. Any of these assignments submitted more than 48 hours after the due date receive no credit.

## **Staying Organized**

There's a lot to keep track of here! That's why I've made sure that every class meeting and assignment will show up in the Canvas calendar. My advice is to **subscribe to the Canvas calendar**, so these show up in your personal calendar. (That's what I do!)

### How to subscribe

To do this, follow this four step recipe...

- **Step one:** Navigate to your canvas calendar, and click on "Calendar feed"
- **Step two:** Copy the calendar feed link
- **Step three:** Switch over to your Google Calendar, and under "Other calendars", click the "+" button , then click on "From URL"
- **Step four:** Now just paste in that link, and you should be done! Watch your calendar populate with Economics goodness...

## Course Schedule and Modules

Date	Activity	Assignment Due
<b>I. FOUNDATIONS OF ECONOMICS</b>		
<b>Week 1 - Introduction to Economics and Core Principles</b>		
September 13	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 1 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 1 Tuition Free Community College
September 14	LECTURE 1 The Core Principles of Economics	
September 19	POST-CLASS Assignment	PROBLEM SET 1
<b>Week 2 - Individual and Market Demand</b>		
September 20	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 2 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 2 Should Naloxone be Widely Available?
September 21	LECTURE 2 Demand: Thinking Like a Buyer	
September 26	POST-CLASS Assignment	PROBLEM SET 2
<b>Week 3 - Individual and Market Supply</b>		
September 27	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 3 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 3 How Should Zoning be Decided?
September 28	LECTURE 3 Supply: Thinking Like a Seller	
October 3	POST-CLASS Assignment	PROBLEM SET 3
<b>Week 4: Equilibrium and Elasticity</b>		
October 4	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 4 & 5 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 4 The Fight for \$15 per Hour
October 5 LECTURE 4	LECTURE 4 Where Supply Meets Demand & Measuring Responsiveness	
October 10	POST-CLASS Assignment	PROBLEM SET 4
<b>II. ANALYZING MARKETS</b>		
<b>Week 5: Government Intervention</b>		
October 11	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 6 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 5 Should Eviction Moratoriums Expire?
October 12	LECTURE 5 When Governments Intervene in Markets	
October 17	POST-CLASS Assignment	PROBLEM SET 5
<b>Week 6: Welfare Economics</b>		
October 18	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 7 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 6 Should UI Benefits be Extended?
October 19	LECTURE 6 Welfare and Efficiency	
October 24	POST-CLASS Assignment	PROBLEM SET 6
<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>		
October 25	TAKE HOME MIDTERM ASSIGNED	

	Parts I and II	
TBD	MIDTERM REVIEW SECTION	
November 5	TAKE HOME MIDTERM DUE	SUBMIT BY MIDNIGHT
<b>III. APPLICATIONS AND POLICY ISSUES</b>		
<b>Week 7: Externalities and Public Goods</b>		
October 25	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 10 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 7 Should the U.S. Adopt Carbon Pricing?
October 26	LECTURE 7 Externalities and Public Goods	
October 31	POST-CLASS Assignment	RESEARCH BRIEF PROPOSAL
<b>Week 8: Labor Markets</b>		
November 1	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 11 & 12 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 8 How Should We Ensure Pay Equity?
November 2 (Election Day!)	LECTURE 8 Labor Markets and Discrimination	
<b>Week 9: Income Inequality</b>		
November 8	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 13 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 9 Equality of Outcomes v Opportunity
November 9	LECTURE 9 Inequality, Social Insurance and Redistribution	
November 14	POST-CLASS Assignment	RESEARCH BRIEF OUTLINE
<b>Week 10: Market Structure</b>		
November 15	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 14 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 10 Should the U.S. Regulate Competition?
November 16	LECTURE 10 Market Structure and Market Power	
November 21	POST-CLASS Assignment	RESEARCH BRIEF
<b>Week 11: Decision Making</b>		
November 22	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 20 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 11 How Should the U.S. "Fix" Obamacare?
November 23	LECTURE 11 Decision Making Involving Private Information	
November 28	<b>THANKSGIVING BREAK</b>	
<b>IV. MONETARY AND FISCAL POLICY</b>		
<b>Week 12: Monetary Policy</b>		
November 29	PRE-CLASS: SW: Chapter 34 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 12 Should the Fed Raise Rates?
November 30	LECTURE 12 Monetary Policy	
December 5	POST-CLASS Assignment	POLICY BRIEF
<b>Week 13: Fiscal Policy</b>		
December 6	SW: Chapter 35 Supplemental readings-Canvas	DISCUSSION 13 Should Congress Raise the Debt Limit?
December 7	LECTURE 13 Government Spending, Taxes and Fiscal Policy	
December 12	POST-CLASS Assignment	OP-ED



## Other Policies and Procedures

- **Electronics:** All cell phones, tablets, iPods and other electronic devices should be completely turned off and put away during class time or your class participation grade will be lowered. If use of personal technology becomes a recurrent issue, you will be asked to leave class and will not be given the opportunity to make up any missed work.
- **Laptops:** Computers, laptops, and tablets are not to be used in class without prior permission. I strongly encourage you to take notes during class by hand because of the amount of graphing we will do. However, if you need to use your laptop or tablet to take notes for accommodating a learning disability, I expect that it will be used solely for note-taking during the class session.
- **Accommodations:** Please let me know as soon as possible if you believe that you require accommodations for any type of disability. All requests for accommodations must be cleared through the University's Access Office before I can work with you to develop an accommodations plan. University rules do not permit me to provide any retroactive accommodations.
- **Participation:** Over the course of the semester, we will be discussing a number of controversial policy issues, including welfare reform, tax policy, affirmative action and immigration policy. I expect that each of you will approach the readings and lectures with an open mind and that class discussions will always be conducted at a scholarly level and in a tolerant and respectful atmosphere.
- **Exams and assignments** may not be made up without official written verification (from your doctor or the NU residence life office) of serious illness or a death in the family. If you anticipate a conflict with a scheduled exam you *must* come and talk to me as soon as possible.
- **Extra Help:** If you find yourself having trouble with the material, please see me or the TA for help as soon as possible. As is true in most economics courses, material in this course is cumulative. Therefore, if you do not fully master the theory presented at the early in the course, your chances of doing well as the semester progresses will be significantly reduced. I hold open office hours and can usually meet with you at other times by advance appointment. Please do not wait until the day before an exam or homework deadline to ask for help!
- **Academic Integrity:** All students are expected to do their own work on the take-home exam, the research brief, the policy brief, and the OpEd. All works referred to in these assignments must be cited in a bibliography and/or footnotes. Please be aware that all students in the course are responsible for knowing and understanding the academic policies and procedures of the university to which they are expected to adhere. These regulations are outlined in the Graduate Student Handbook, which can be found [here](#).

## Class Participation Grading Rubric

Your class participation grade will reflect your regular attendance in class and your active participation in discussions and small group work for our policy debates. The grades will be assigned using the following scale. At mid-semester, if you would like, you may submit to me an e-mail letting me know where you think you fit on the scale and why. We will then discuss any differences between your perceptions and mine, and go over strategies for improved participation.

---

<b>Grade = A</b>	You attend almost every class and come prepared, demonstrating that you have done the assigned readings. You contribute readily to the conversation but do not dominate it; make thoughtful contributions; show respect for other viewpoints and are actively engaged in small group work.
<b>Grade = B</b>	You attend class regularly and are usually prepared for discussion. If you contribute frequently to class discussions, you either talk too much, make only tangential contributions or do not take an active role in small group work. Or you may be an active listener and small group participant, but are shy and make infrequent contributions to the full class discussion.
<b>Grade = C</b>	You have missed more than a handful of classes. Or you are often unprepared and rarely participate in a way that meaningfully advances our discussion.
<b>Grades = D/F</b>	You rarely attend class. Or you attend but do not participate at all in class or participate in a way that is rude, hostile or disruptive. You may also disrupt class by arriving late, leaving early or using cell phones or other personal technology.

---

## RESEARCH BRIEF GRADING RUBRIC

REQUIREMENT	POINTS POSSIBLE	POINTS EARNED
<p><b>Research proposal:</b> describes an appropriate research question using correct format with no spelling or grammar errors</p>	20	
<p><b>Outline of paper:</b> uses high-quality references and identifies data sources to answer research question using correct format with no spelling or grammar errors</p>	20	
<p><b><u>Final paper that meets the following criteria:</u></b></p>		
<p><b>Introduction:</b> You form a strong testable hypothesis in the first paragraph and provide evidence to answer your research question throughout the rest of the paper.</p>	10	
<p><b>Literature Review:</b> You cite 5 <i>high-quality</i> references (other than your textbook or an assigned reading on the syllabus) that provide evidence on your research question. All of these references should be books or academic journal articles. From these references, you pull <i>specific</i> examples and/or statistical evidence to investigate the topic.</p>	10	
<p><b>Data and Methodology:</b> You make use of basic economic theory and empirical data to test your hypothesis. You can explain the theory in a non-technical way. When you refer to data, you explain it clearly and use tables/graphs appropriately.</p>	10	
<p><b>Key Findings:</b> You explain clearly the findings of your research in an unbiased way. You highlight how the research furthers our understanding of economics and/or potential policy solutions. You discuss any limitations or caveats that the reader should be aware of.</p>	10	
<p><b>Conclusion:</b> Your conclusions follow logically from your key findings and answer the research question posed at the beginning of the paper.</p>	10	
<p><b>Format:</b> You do not have any problems with writing fundamentals (spelling, punctuation, and grammar). Your paper is well organized and clearly written. You cite reference appropriately in the text and use appropriate format for the reference list at the end. Your paper has a professional appearance and enhances the exposition.</p>	10	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	

## Self-Authored Integrated Learning (SAIL) Mapping

SAIL, the latest advance in experiential learning at Northeastern, starts with a simple idea: Learning happens everywhere. In every imaginable context. Not just in class and on co-op, but throughout your everyday lives. Your ability to learn from every experience helps you to move more easily among lanes—coursework, jobs, tasks, cultures—and transfer skills to new challenges in today’s fast-paced world.

<b>SAIL Dimension</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>In this Course</b>
Intellectual Agility	Learners develop the ability to use knowledge, behaviors, skills, and experiences flexibly in new and unique situations to innovatively contribute to their field.	<p>Connect data to real-world issues to provide context for understanding</p> <p>Use quantitative methods to identify patterns and find solutions to policy issues</p> <p>Adjust project goals in response to new information and/or insights</p>
Global Mindset	Learners develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors to live, work, and communicate with people whose backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are different from their own as well as to consider the global impact of their decisions.	<p>Identify civic needs across local, federal, and global contexts</p> <p>Create inclusive environments for discussion of sensitive policy issues</p> <p>Recognize how to use data to better understand policy challenges and advocate for data-driven solutions</p>
Social Consciousness & Commitment	Learners develop the confidence, skills, and values to effectively recognize the needs of individuals, communities, and societies and make a commitment to constructively engage in social action.	<p>Demonstrate empathy and concern for individuals, communities, and societies facing common challenges</p> <p>Negotiate and engage in dialogue to discuss social policy conflicts</p>
Professional & Personal Effectiveness	Learners develop the confidence, skills, behaviors, and values to effectively discern life goals, form relationships, and shape their personal and professional identities to achieve fulfillment.	<p>Coordinate individual- and group-level efforts on collaborative teams</p> <p>Redirect efforts in response to setbacks and constructive feedback</p> <p>Continually reflect on learning and experience to build competencies</p>
Well-Being	Learners develop knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary to live balanced and fulfilling lives.	<p>Build and sustain meaningful relationships with peers through class discussion</p> <p>Effectively balance autonomy and interdependence through group work</p>