Social Welfare 553
Seminar in Contemporary Social Welfare Policy
Winter 2004

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Office hours by appointment and generally when door is open

Overview

As the second of two parts in the first-year doctoral social welfare policy sequence, SW553 is intended to link the conceptual material from SW552 to empirical research in policy analysis and evaluation. The central objectives of this seminar are threefold: 1.) to overview the analytic contributions of economic theory to social policy analysis, 2.) to introduce students to major social policies and programs including social insurance, non-cash transfers such as health and child care, and the social welfare aspects of the tax system, and 3.) to further students’ understanding of conceptual issues in empirical research through discussion and critique of data-based studies.

Specifics

Format: Although there will be some content delivered by lecture (particularly in the first four weeks), the bulk of class time will be spent in seminar discussion. The seminar will work best if all contribute both comments and listening in a thoughtful manner. I expect you to have read and thought about the readings before the class in which they are to be discussed. Bringing copies of the readings and/or detailed notes with to class is recommended.

Web page: Bookmark http://faculty.washington.edu/romich/553/resources.htm and check it throughout the quarter. This site will be a source for updates to the syllabus, links to on-line readings, and other class resources.

Discussion starters: Each seminar member is expected to prepare two written questions or comments that could be used as a starting point for class discussion. Draw on the week’s readings, material from other courses, current events, or other experiences to develop questions that interest you. Questions/comments should be related to the week’s topic and preferably at least one should be based on the readings.

Please post questions to the class discussion board by noon on the day before class (Monday in most cases). Questions are not required for students presenting a paper that week. These discussion questions should be substantive, but please also use this opportunity to ask for clarification on details from readings or to request an explanation of material that is particularly unclear.

Problem sets: Problems sets covering the materials in weeks 1-4 will be distributed and discussed in class. The purpose of these assignments is to encourage grappling with the ideas in the text and to provide a double-check on understanding. Students are strongly encouraged to work together on these problems. Problem sets will not be collected or graded, but will be discussed in class or in an additional scheduled problem session as needed.
**Mid-term evaluation:** There will be a written mid-term exam covering material from weeks 1-5. The format will be similar to the problem sets with one or two more conceptual questions. It is my hope that this exam will provide an opportunity for you to consolidate background knowledge before tackling the applications in the second half of the course. Students will be encouraged to provide mid-term feedback to me at this time as well.

**Research article presentations:** In Weeks 7-10 students will present empirical research articles in a conference or seminar format. More details will be provided in Week 6.

**Paper:** Students will write a final paper on an economic analysis of a policy question related to their research interest. This may cover a class topic, one of the other social policy topics listed under the final class or another area of interest as approved by instructor. Sample questions might be “At what age should DCFS wards be terminated? A cost-benefit analysis” or “What would a state income tax mean for the working poor in Washington State? Evidence from the other 49 states”. A description of the topic and a preliminary outline are due in Week 7. The final paper will be due in class on Tuesday, March 16th.

**Grading:** Grades will be calculated with assignments and activities are weighted as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (including weekly questions)</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-term</td>
<td>20%*</td>
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<td>Papers (short and final)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td>Presentation of research article</td>
<td>10%</td>
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*Students who feel that their midterm grade does not reflect their commitment to the course may request the midterm, presentation and papers be weighted at 10%, 15% and 45% respectively.

**Academic Accommodations:** If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services 448 Schmitz 206-543-8924 (V/TTY). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please let me know so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for the class.
## Course Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Frank readings, assignments, notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ANALYTICS</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Tuesday, 1/6</td>
<td>Economic thinking</td>
<td>Frank chapters 1, 2</td>
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<td>marginal analysis, supply, demand</td>
<td>Problem set</td>
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<td>2. Monday, 1/12</td>
<td>Supply, demand and equilibrium</td>
<td>Frank chapters 3, 4</td>
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<td>Problem set</td>
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<td>Additional session if needed</td>
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<td>3. Tuesday, 1/20</td>
<td>Perfect competition, market failure</td>
<td>Frank chapters 11, 16-17</td>
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<td>Problem set</td>
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<td>4. Tuesday, 1/27</td>
<td>Government intervention</td>
<td>Frank chapter 18</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cost-benefit analysis</td>
<td>Problem set</td>
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<td>5. Tuesday, 2/3</td>
<td>Causality, endogeneity, natural experiments</td>
<td>Midterm review</td>
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<td>6. Monday, 2/9</td>
<td>Transition to empirical studies</td>
<td>Take-home midterm due 2/13 by noon</td>
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<td>Room 306</td>
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<td>Guest speaker: Marieka Klawitter</td>
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<td><strong>APPLICATIONS</strong></td>
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<td>7. Tuesday, 2/17</td>
<td>Social insurance applications:</td>
<td>Frank chapter 6</td>
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<td>Social Security, SSI, UI, Worker’s Compensation</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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<td>Paper topic and outline due 9:00am 2/23</td>
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<td>8. Tuesday, 2/24</td>
<td>Health care applications:</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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<td>Medicare, Medicaid</td>
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<td>9. Tuesday, 3/2</td>
<td>Human capital development (human v. social capital, welfare</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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<td>reform and work-support)</td>
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<td>10. Tuesday, 3/9</td>
<td>Taxation and tax-based social policy (equity, efficiency)</td>
<td>Student presentations</td>
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<td>11. Tuesday 3/16</td>
<td>Wrap-up</td>
<td>Catch-up / topics from student interest</td>
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<td>No exam, Final papers due in class</td>
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Readings by week

Readings will be available on e-reserve or available via links on the class web page. I’ll provide details on next week’s readings at each class meeting.

Abbreviations and notations

p article to be presented
0 optional reading


Green book  U. S. House of Representatives. 2003 Green Book: Background material and data on programs within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means. Will be posted to class web page

1. Tuesday, 1/6 – The economic perspective; introduction to marginal analysis
   Frank, chapters 1 & 2 [Read for 1/12]

2. Monday, 1/12 – Supply, demand and equilibrium
   Frank, chapters 3 & 4

3. Tuesday, 1/20 – Government intervention, government failure,
   Frank, chapters 11, 16, 17

4. Tuesday, 1/27 – Cost-benefit analysis
   Frank, chapter 18

5. Tuesday, 2/3 – Causality, endogeneity, natural experiments
   Half of this class will likely be devoted to a review of theory for midterm exam
6. **Monday, 2/9 – 11:00 – 12:30 (Rm 306AB) Introduction to empirical work**

**Guest Speaker – Marieka Klawitter, Evans School**


7. **Tuesday, 2/17 – Social insurance**

Frank, chapter 6 (skip part on Von Neumann-Morgenstern Expected Utility Model)

**Social Insurance**


Green Book – Sections 1, 3, 4 & “Worker’s Compensation” in Section 15

**Social Security**


**Unemployment Insurance**


**Worker’s Compensation**

8. Tuesday, 2/25 – Health policy

Green Book – Section 2 & “Medicaid” in Section 15


**SCHIP and Medicaid**


**Inequality and health**


9. Tuesday, 3/2 – Human capital and social capital development

Green Book – “Workforce Investment” & “Head Start” in Section 15


10. Tuesday, 3/9 – Taxation, tax-based social policy and household decisions

Green Book – Section 13


11. Tuesday, 3/16 – Wrap-up

Final papers due in class


TBA Topics from student interest – could include

Education Local development—urban or rural
Disability/ADA Marriage / fertility / family formation
Housing Homelessness
Crime and criminal justice Faith-based organizations
Child support enforcement Food Stamps / WIC / school lunch program
Immigration and others…
Final paper assignment

**Goals:**
Substantive engagement with theories in the class
Application of how economic considerations could apply to own empirical analysis

**Options:**
- Policy option: Answer a policy question using an analytical tool from economics such as marginal analysis, cost-benefit analysis, supply/demand equilibrium, etc. Discuss how your hypothesis could be empirically tested.
- Theory option: Apply economic models to a topic of interest. How do economists think about _____? Discuss how that framework applies to your area of research.

Make a real attempt to argue from within a mainstream economic framework. Depending on your topic and interests, you may choose to include a separate critique comparing the economic approach to that of another discipline, a critical-theoretical position or an ideological perspective.

**Specifics:**
Keep background material to a minimum – argumentation is key. Papers should be no more than 15 pages of text and figures (not counting references). If you chose to write a critique, please devote at least 11 pages to the economic analysis.

The most important criteria are the application of the economic models and the strength and clarity of your argument. I will assign small but significant weights to mechanics, organization and style.

Please hand in paper with your name and the paper title on a cover sheet. Use a standard 12 point font such as Times Roman or Arial (not Courier or Bookman, please) with margins of at least an inch on all sides. Any consistently-applied citation style is fine although you should strive to master the format used in a journal in which you aspire to publish. Students are strongly advised to use a bibliographic program such as Endnote. Please number pages and staple in the upper left hand corner.

I am available for consultation at any time in this process. A one or two-page description of your topic and preliminary outline is due via hard copy or e-mail by 9:00 am Monday, February 23. The final paper will be due in class Tuesday, March 16th.