

-Course Outline and Syllabus-

Economic Analysis of Politics

ECO 4532

Randall Holcombe

Fall 2005

TEXTBOOK: Randall G. Holcombe, *From Liberty to Democracy: The Transformation of American Government*. Also, Randall G. Holcombe, *Public Finance*, chapters 1, and 6-9, found at <http://garnet.acns.fsu.edu/~holcombe> and at www.randallholcombe.com under "course materials."

OFFICE HOURS: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, 1:30-2:30, or by appointment. Office location: 162 Bellamy. e-mail address: holcombe@coss.fsu.edu

COURSE OBJECTIVES: This course uses economic models and methods to analyze political behavior. The primary objectives of the course is to try to understand political behavior within an economic framework, and to apply that understanding to American political history. The first objective can be broken down into three related parts: (1) understanding how governmental institutions can be designed to enhance the social welfare, (2) understanding how democratic decision-making produces public policies, and (3) applying the theories of public choice to understand the evolution of American government. The second objective is to apply this theoretical framework to understand how the role of government in America has changed over several centuries. A related objective of the course is to use public choice ideas as a foundation for writing an analytical paper on the growth of government.

EXAMINATIONS AND GRADES: Grades will be assigned based on a mid-term examination, a final examination, and a paper. The mid-term will be worth 30 percent, and the paper and final 35 percent each, of the final course grade. Both exams will be essay exams. The mid-term will be given on Friday, October 14. The final will be given at the regularly scheduled examination period for the class, which is Friday, December 16, from 10:00am-12:00pm. The final examination will be comprehensive over all of the material in the course.

PAPER: Your paper topic will be "Government Growth in the 20th Century." Your paper should address the growth of federal, state, and local governments in the United States. A paper that completely addresses the assignment should be composed of two parts: the first part should give an overview of the statistics which show how much the government has grown in the 20th century, with an analysis of those statistics. The second part should try to explain this growth, using public choice theory as a foundation for your explanation.

An excellent source of statistics on government growth through 1970 is *Historical Statistics of the United States*, which is available in the Strozier Library. For more recent data, the *Statistical Abstract of the United States* is a good source. The *Statistical Abstract* can be found on-line at www.census.gov/statab/www/. Your paper should show how government expenditures have grown as a percent of GNP. A good paper should look at federal as well as state and local expenditures, and should look at the components of federal spending as well. The data should be presented in graphs and/or tables, with your explanation and analysis to show that you understand how government has grown in the 20th century. All sources of information for your paper should be appropriately referenced. Additional material, such as evidence on the growth of government regulation, can also be used to support your analysis.

The second part of your paper should be an explanation of this growth of government, based on the public choice theory we cover in class, as well as from the textbook and any additional sources you wish to use.

Any material you obtain from outside sources should be referenced in an appropriate manner, and your paper should have a list of references at the end. Any material quoted directly from your references should be enclosed in quotation marks and referenced. Any references from Strozier library should include the call numbers. References from the internet should include the full URL and date accessed. For references from other sources, you should explain where you found that reference. Your paper should be your own work, and you should adhere to the standards of the FSU honor code, which is in the FSU General Bulletin. This means (1) upholding the highest standards of academic integrity for your own work, and (2) refusing to tolerate violations of academic integrity. I will check some papers to see if they are taken from internet sources and not appropriately referenced. **PAPERS THAT DO NOT REFERENCE MATERIALS AS SPECIFIED IN THIS PARAGRAPH WILL RECEIVE GRADES OF F.**

The paper should be typed, double-spaced, and the text of the paper should be about 20 pages in length. The paper will be due at the end of the class period on Wednesday, November 23. Papers handed in after 3:15 pm will be counted as handed in the next day. One letter grade will be deducted from your paper for each day it is handed in late.

Students with disabilities should register with the Student Disability Resource Center, and provide documentation to me indicating any accommodations needed as a result of the disability.

COURSE OUTLINE

The course lectures will follow the book, *From Liberty to Democracy*, and discuss the evolution of American democracy in chronological order. You should read ahead so you will be familiar with events in the book when we discuss them in class. Also, you should read the material in *Public Finance* as soon as practical because this material will be used as background for our discussion in class. I hope to have an extensive class discussion of the issues in the book, but we can only do this if you read the material before we cover it in class.