PPA (ECON) 251: URBAN PROBLEMS, ECONOMICS, AND PUBLIC POLICY

PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

Fall 2006

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m. and if necessary by appointment.

Course Held: 1025 Tahoe Hall on Saturday (1) October 28, (2) November 4, (4) December 2, (5) December 9, and (6) December 16; and in Amador 220 on (3) November 11. All meetings will last from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The hour longer time frame, and one week earlier start, is to make up for the class that I will need to miss on November 18 due to a prior commitment of attending an academic conference in Boston and the desire to not meet on December 23 as we were scheduled to do.

Required Texts:


(3) ArcView 9.1 Evaluation CD Set, available free by signing up at http://www.esri.com/software/arcgis/arcview/eval/evalcd.html. This is a 60-day trial so please do not sign up for it before October 1.

WebCT, Internet, Windows PC Access:

Outlines of much of the material covered in class are posted on WebCT. Information on WebCT can be found at https://online.csus.edu/. Please visit the site after you have secured a SacLink account number and password from CSUS. I will also correspond with you by e-mail through WebCT. You will also be asked to read things off the Internet. Thus, access to the Internet and WebCT is required for this class. If you do not have Internet access at work or home,
access to it is provided to students at the Sacramento State’s library or various computer labs. Access to some links may require the use of CSUS Internet portal. We will further discuss the use of WebCT on the first day of class. In addition, the free trial version of ArcView is only a Windows version so you will need to install it on such a computer.

Student Photos:

One of my downfalls is the ability to remember the names of people. This is a real hindrance to facilitating discussion in class. Thus I have decided to try and do something proactive to enable my name-learning process. I ask that each of us, including myself, subject ourselves to having a digital picture taken on the first class meeting that I will then post on our WebCT site with identifying names attached. I hope this also assists you in a quicker learning of your classmates’ names.

Overview:

This course is structured around some of the most pressing problems facing central cities and urban areas in the United States (poverty, education, housing affordability, traffic congestion, urban abandonment/suburban sprawl, edge cities, deteriorating infrastructures, fiscal stress, segregation, etc.). The historic development of each problem is discussed, the economics behind it is presented, and possible policy solutions are discussed. Much of the first half of the course deals with the shape and look of U.S. metropolitan areas with a focus on Sacramento. While much of the second half of the course looks at contemporary issues and problems within U.S. metropolitan areas. Examples are drawn from California and Sacramento.

PPA 251 is intended to be an elective course for Master’s students in the PPA program, a required course for Master’s students in the ULD program, an elective for Master’s students in economics (cross listed as ECON 251), an elective for undergraduate majors in economics, and an elective for others who satisfy the prerequisite of a course in intermediate microeconomics (PPA 220A or ECON 100B at Sacramento State).

The course consists of one six and a half hour meeting a week on the dates noted above. We will take a 15-minute break at 10:30 a.m. and a 45-minute break for lunch at 12:15 p.m. To measure your attendance, and prepare you for participation in class discussions, I ask that you submit a typed, double-spaced, two-page maximum answer to the numbered discussion questions that are listed below for the readings for each meeting and corresponds to the first letter in your last name. These can only be turned in by you on the day of the meeting you attend. I will look them over and return them to you by the next class meeting with a check plus, check, or check minus. These will be assigned based upon not just a “right or wrong” answer, but the writing style (grammar, punctuation, organization, etc.), thought, effort, and thoroughness that I judge you put into
your answer. **One of these write ups should be turned in at our first class meeting (October 28).**

You will also be asked to complete two assignment sets that will be given out on November 11 and December 9. These will be geared to each take no more than a few hours to complete and be due the next time we meet for class. If you cannot make class, please submit you answer via the e-mail option in WebCT.

I would very much like to conduct this class in an active learning format. In my mind this consists of about 1/3 lecture and 2/3 organized discussion amongst us. To accomplish this you will need to complete all of the assigned reading before the Saturday it is covered.

Questions and comments pertaining to that day’s material should be asked during class. Other questions will be answered during my office hours or during class breaks. Office hours can also be used to handle a complaint or suggestion on how the class is taught, a general discussion of economics and policy, the PPA or ULD program, or your career plans.

If there are concepts or ideas that were covered in a Saturday session that you did not understand, it is important to your overall success in the course that you get these misunderstandings resolved before the next time that we meet. You can do this by talking to your fellow classmates (I would encourage you to form study groups or electronic study networks), visiting me in my Wednesday office hours, sending an e-mail question to me at rwassme@csus.edu (please do not send by WebCT because I check less often), or phoning me at 278-6304. My promise to you is that if I am not in my office, I will respond to your Monday through Friday e-mail or call within 24 hours.

Previously I have devoted more class time to lecturing on material that is contained in the outlines available on WebCT. Some students objected to this lecture format and instead wanted a more student-based discussion of the material. I have changed the structure of the course to try and accommodate this suggestion and am pleased to do so. But in return, students will need to come well prepared to class in the form of completing all reading assignments, looking over my notes, formulating answers to the discussion questions poised each week, and actively participating in the discussion. I will call on students who chose to not voluntarily participate.

**Final Project:**

Part of the grade I assign to you for this course will be based upon the completion of a report that revolves around an urban policy problem that the Sacramento Metropolitan Area is currently facing. Possible topics include: traffic, air pollution, lack of socio-economically integrated neighborhoods, poorly performing urban schools, over reliance on the auto, lack of affordable housing, high crime rates in certain urban neighborhoods, spraw/loss of farmland, a lack of greater downtown redevelopment, retention/attraction of major league sports,
lack of regional planning, etc. These are just few ideas and I will entertain others you may have. More details on the method and structure of the write up for this report will be forthcoming by the second Saturday we meet. The two week period we have off in mid-November would be the perfect time to get a majority of the work done for this final assignment.

Grading Procedure:

Exam grades will be calculated using the following formula:

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<th>Percent Correct</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Number Grade</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>A+</td>
<td>4.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>93-89</td>
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<td>88-84</td>
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<td>&lt;40</td>
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With the exception of weekly answers to assigned discussion questions, a number grade will eventually be assigned to everything you do. I will assign an overall number grade to all of your weekly answers to discussion questions based upon the pattern of check minuses, checks, and check pluses you receive. Your final grade will be calculated based on these number grades. Anything above a B- in the course is considered a passing grade.

The average grade assigned to the answers you provide to discussion questions each week will account for 30% of your grade. The average grade assigned the two homework exercises you complete will account for another 30% your grade. Your written report will be worth another 30% and your classroom participation makes up the remaining 10%.

University policy for dropping this course will be followed. You must complete both of the two homework assignments and the final report to receive a passing grade in this course.
Schedule:

The following schedule lists the major topics covered and the assigned reading that accompanies them. I reserve the right to make minor changes and additions to the following schedule. Underlined material is hyperlinked and can be had by clicking on it from your web browser.

You need to also print out and review the outlines I have prepared for each week’s meeting. They will be available on WebCT on the Monday afternoon before the next week’s class.

October 28: Market Forces in the Development of Cities (Part 1)

- O’Sullivan, Chapter One, Introduction and Axioms of Urban Economics
- Sacramento Urbanized Area Map

HW Question 1: (Last Name A-I) Using your own words describe the difference between an urbanized area (UA), a PMSA, a CMSA, and an MSA. What are the benefits of using the UA definition to quantify what is truly “urban” in the Sacramento Region? Is there any downside to using the UA definition?

- O’Sullivan, Chapter Two, Why Do Cities Exist?

HW Question 2: (Last Name J-P) Concept Question #5, p. 32 in O’Sullivan.

- O’Sullivan, Chapter Three, Why Do Firms Cluster?
- A Long-Term View of the Sacramento’s Region’s Economic Potential, March 2005

HW Question 3: (Last Name Q-Z) Concept Question #4, p. 52 in O’Sullivan.

November 4: Market Forces in the Development of Cities (Part 2) and Land Rent

- O’Sullivan, Chapter Four, City Size

HW Question 1: (Last Name J-P) Concept Question #1, p. 69 in O’Sullivan.

- O’Sullivan, Chapter Five, Urban Growth
- The Benefits of Growth
- Economic Effects of State and Local Government Capital Projects
- Business Economic Development Incentives in Sacramento City
- Sports, Jobs, and Taxes, (Go to this link and search for this article by looking for articles by Timothy J. Bartik)
HW Question 2: (Last Name A-I) Concept Question #5, p. 91 in O’Sullivan.
- O’Sullivan, Chapter Six, Urban Land Rent

HW Question 3: (Last Name Q-Z) Concept Question #4, p. 124 in O’Sullivan.

November 11: GIS Mapping

Assignment One Given Out
- ArcView Tips and Tutorials, University of Texas at Austin
- A Regional View of Social Disparities

December 2: Land Use Patterns
- O’Sullivan, Chapter Seven, Land Use Patterns
- White Paper on Smart Growth Policy in California
- Truly ‘Smart’ Growth

HW Question 1: (Last Name J-P) Concept Question #3, p. 151 in O’Sullivan.
- O’Sullivan, Chapter Eight, Neighborhood Choice
- Urban Spatial Segregation

HW Question 2: (Last Name A-I) Concept Question #3, p. 183 in O’Sullivan.
- O’Sullivan, Chapter Nine, Zoning and Growth Controls
- Sacramento County USB Map
- Sacramento Blueprint Project

HW Question 3: (Last Name Q-Z) Concept Question #4, p. 203 in O’Sullivan.

December 9: Urban Transportation

Assignment Two Given Out
- O’Sullivan, Chapter Ten, Externalities from Autos

HW Question 1: (Last Name A-I) Concept Question #1, p. 232 in O’Sullivan.
- O’Sullivan, Chapter Eleven, Mass Transit
HW Question 2: (Last Name J-P) Concept Question #5, p. 253 in O’Sullivan.

- Downs, *Still Stuck in Traffic*
  - Chapter Two (Benefits of Peak-Hour Traffic Congestion)
  - Chapter Three (How Bad is Traffic Congestion?)
  - Chapter Six (Reducing Congestion and Four Basic Principles of Traffic)
  - Chapter Fifteen (Local Growth Management Policies), pp. 258-271
  - Chapter Seventeen (Regional Anti-congestion Policies), pp. 298-320
  - Chapter Eighteen (Summary and Conclusions), pp. 321-354

HW Question 3: (Last Name Q-Z) After reading these chapters in Downs, offer a brief statement on your opinion whether peak-hour traffic congestion in the Sacramento Area will ever go back to the level it was at 15 years ago. What would it take to get it back to that level? Do many people consider the cure worse than the problem?

December 16: Urban Crime and Housing

- O’Sullivan, Chapter Twelve, Crime
- *Welfare and Poverty Trends in California*

HW Question 1: (Last Name Q-Z) Concept Question #4, p. 279 in O’Sullivan.

- O’Sullivan, Chapter Thirteen, Why is Housing Different?

HW Question 2: (Last Name A-I) Concept Question #4, p. 299 in O’Sullivan

- O’Sullivan, Chapter Fourteen, Housing Policy
- *Inclusionary Zoning: The California Experience* (concentrate on pp. 1 – 8)
- *Sacramento City Affordable Housing Ordinance*
- *Sacramento County Affordable Housing Ordinance*

HW Question 3: (Last Name J-P) Concept Question #4, p. 319 in O’Sullivan.