Background

The concept of political economy is central to almost every operational or policy problem arising across all levels and forms of government. Every problem facing government agencies involves economic analysis, using concepts, tools, and techniques developed in the field of economics, and yet the decisions involve political processes and their execution occurs in political settings and contexts. Politics in this sense provides the setting or battlefield in which economically driven problem analyses and outcomes are executed. It is in fact this marriage between politics and economics that governs how public administrators and policymakers are situated, how administrative or policy decisions are made, who is impacted, and how such impact is assessed. Students of public administration and policy need to be equipped with a good grasp of theories, frameworks, and approaches that undergird how administrative or policy problems are conceptualized and addressed and how individuals, the private market, and other sociopolitical institutions interact with the government.

Catalogued Course Description

This course examines the interplay of political and economic forces that impact roles and capacities of public administrators in the governmental and non-profit sectors. The course also reviews trends in the global economic system affecting the roles of public-serving organizations in the economy in regulating, stimulating, and mitigating the social and political impacts of the private economy. Covered topics may include: the administrative politics of interest group influence and agency constituency building; the politics of bureaucratic accountability, performance, and legislative control; interactions between citizens and bureaucracy; bureaucratic ethics; the economic roles of government and the non-profit sector in the global economy; and ties between the administration of public-serving organizations and economic institutions and
processes. Students are encouraged to obtain a fundamental knowledge of basic economic concepts prior to taking the course.

**Course Objectives**

While the concept of political economy is quite broad touching on human nature and the evolution of societies, this course focuses on theories, frameworks, and approaches that are relevant to framing and analyzing problems in the field of public administration and policy. This course exposes students to the fundamental concepts of political economy that condition the environment faced by public administrators. The specific learning objectives include:

1. To explain the fundamental interactions among individuals, the private market, and sociopolitical institutions;
   1.1 To evaluate the relevance of politics including freedom, security, order, fairness, and democracy to the economy;
   1.2 To evaluate the influence of the market and other economic institutions on the political systems and governance;
   1.3 To evaluate the influence of sociopolitical institutions and the bureaucracy in regulating, stimulating, and mitigating the adverse impacts of the private economy;
2. To identify the potential conflict, contradiction, and ambiguity in the concepts of political economy;
3. To compare and contrast political economies of the market, collective problems, regulation, corporations, labor, redistribution, economic crises, and globalization;
4. To demonstrate knowledge and skills needed for critical thinking, analysis, and communication of the broader political and economic environment facing public administrators.

**Course Delivery Method**

This course is offered in a face to face format. Classes are structured as discussion sessions where students' active engagement plays a vital role. Discussions are used to stimulate inquisitiveness and active learning. Active participation is at the center of course activities here requiring students to not only participate in class discussions but more importantly initiate discussions of their own in which other students join in and express their informed opinions. Typical classes begin with general discussions on the assigned readings, followed by an interactive lecture and then by group discussions on some assigned topics. These discussions will allow students an opportunity to hone their understanding and provide their developing perspectives and ask meaningful questions. It must be noted that students are required to complete the assigned readings prior to the session in which they are discussed.

This course may also utilize the e-Learning facility to facilitate interaction. Discussion on specific topics may also be held online where students will be expected to post thoughtful comments to spark further ideas and perspectives. Some of the course materials and learning aids
will be posted online for convenient access as will be other materials related to assignments.

**Course Materials**

The following two required textbooks can be bought from the WMU Bookstore at the Bernhard Center or University Bookstore in Kalamazoo or the LCC Bookstore for courses offered in Lansing.


A set of readings listed below will be either in the form of e-Reserve or to be accessed electronically from the Waldo Library. In the reading list to follow, each of the readings assigned a code of LRE is included in the e-Reserve whereas rest of the readings can be accessed from the Waldo Library website or other electronic sources as described in the first class.

**Assignments and Grading**

Given the theoretical and applied nature of the contents, this course includes both traditional and non-traditional assignments. Assignments include three review papers, one midterm exam, and one group project.

1. **Review of Readings** (20%): There will be three separate opportunities for students to exemplify a good grasp of the reading materials assigned for the week. This will involve three-page written reports based on the readings from any three sessions as signed up in the first class. For this exercise, students will choose one session each from Parts B, C, and D (other than the session with the topic selected for Group Project; this part of the sign up will take place once the groups have been formed and have selected their topics for research). The intent in this exercise is not to regurgitate the course material that you read in order to prepare for the class but more importantly to apply the understanding from readings to specific practical issues. (More specific expectations will be handed out in the first class.)

2. **Midterm Exam on Theories of Political Economy** (40%): This exam due in the 9th class covers materials from Parts A, B, and C.

3. **Group Project on the Application of Political Economy** (15% on written paper; 5% on presentation): Students will have an opportunity to demonstrate a deeper understanding of political economy and its application to contemporary issues covered in the course. I will provide more detailed instructions and expectations for this group project (with three to four members each) but the paper will discuss the problem, survey the relevant literature,
conduct the needed analysis, and draw meaningful conclusions. This assignment, the written report (not exceeding 15 pages) of which is due at the beginning of the final class, will also have an oral component. This oral component will take the form of a group presentation in the last class, where you will also have an opportunity to clarify issues and get feedback from other students.

4. **Participation (20%)**: Albeit not a formal assignment, participation is a centerpiece in this course. Counted toward this are the magnitude and quality of your participation in general discussion, assigned in class and group activities, and online discussions (if applicable).

I will use the following guidelines (all in percentage terms) to determine your letter grade for the course. As you can see from the percentage distributions, grading is not taken lightly and earning grades such as A and BA will indicate superior mastery of all course activities and assignments.

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\begin{align*}
A & \geq 94; \\
94 & > BA \geq 88; \\
88 & > B \geq 82; \\
82 & > CB \geq 76; \\
76 & > C \geq 70; \\
70 & > DC \geq 64; \\
64 & > D \geq 58; \\
D & > E \text{ (Fail)}
\end{align*}
\]

**Note for All Written Assignments**

I will provide more detailed information on the assignments with expectations and instructions when appropriate. But some general rules apply to each of these—as far as written assignments go. All written papers need to be typed on 8½ X 11 pages with at least one inch margin on all four sides. Use double space throughout with 12-point size in Times New Roman. References or bibliographic entries are to be properly formatted using the APA style. I encourage you to consult the appropriate style manuals.

Each assignment needs to be submitted to eLearning Dropbox prior to the assigned class or by the specified due dates and times. Delayed submissions are subject to reduction of grade by one or more categories. I will not accept assignments submitted longer than seven days after the due date.

**Policies on Student Behavior and Conduct**

Disruptive behaviors can seriously affect student learning and therefore will not be tolerated. Behaviors that show disregard of the class participants and take the attention of students away from the class will impede class activities regardless of whether they involve individuals or groups. They can be in the form of inappropriate verbal or written language or in the form of behavioral or gestural expressions; they can occur in dealing with fellow students or the instructor; and they can occur in or outside of the classroom. While I do not expect these behaviors to take place in this graduate class with serious learners, I will take seriously if and when they occur and report to the Office of Student Conduct.
**Academic Honesty**

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. [The policies can be found at http://catalog.wmich.edu under Academic Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities.] If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

**Special Needs**

I would like to fully honor WMU policies regarding special accommodations for those with learning disability or such other concerns. Anyone with these concerns should contact me at the first meeting with appropriate documentation(s).
Course Modules and Readings

A: Background

1. Political Economy and Public Administration (9/10)

Eisner. (2014). Ch. 1; pp. 3-16.


B: Approaches to Political Economy

2. Classical and Neoclassical Approaches (9/17)


3. Marxist or Socialist Critiques of Capitalism (9/24)


Polanyi, Karl. (1944). The Great Transformation. Chs. 5 and 6; pp. 56-76. (LRE)

4. Keynesianism and Managed Capitalism (10/01)


Eisner. (2014). Ch. 6; 104-122.


C: The Role of Institutions and Bureaucracy

5. Political Institutions and Their Influence (10/08)


6. The State and Regulatory Regime (10/15)


7. Working Break for Group Projects: No Class Meeting (10/22)

8. Bureaucratic Politics (10/29)


D: Contemporary Issues


**10. Welfare State and Redistribution (11/12)**


**11. Labor Relations and Unionism (11/19)**


12. National Debt and the Size of Government and Student Group Presentations (12/03)


