

Department of Economics

Master of Arts in Economics

Public Choice

Prof. Dr. Bruno Jeitziner

Spring Semester 2025

Wednesday, 15:15-18:00; Room PER 21 E130

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Course description

The course covers major topics of Public Choice, also known as economics of politics. The rational choice approach is applied to political actors in a representative democracy (models of voter behavior, interest group behavior, party politics, legislative behavior, behavior of the executive branch, bureaucratic behavior). The interaction between political decision making and the economy is analyzed (e.g. political business cycles, size of government, macroeconomic performance). The focus is on positive theory and empirical evidence. The course is complementary to Prof. Mark Schelker's course «The Economics of Politics».

Required textbook

Dennis C. Mueller, Public Choice III, Cambridge University Press, 3rd edition, 2003 (parts III, IV, VI). Additional and more recent reading material will be covered in class.

Exam

The written exam lasts one hour. There will be short questions and an essay. Questions and essay may include applications to current issues under discussion.

Course outline

Dates	Chapters	Topics
19.02.25		Introduction and overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course outline • Public-choice perspective; Public-choice schools
26.02.25	11	Two-party competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median voter result, relevance and criticism
05.03.25	13	Multiparty systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of multiparty systems
12.03.25	14	The paradox of voting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voter behavior: Why do rational, self-interested voters (not) vote?
19.03.25	15	Rent Seeking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics as redistribution: theory of rent seeking; economic theory of regulation (Stigler/Peltzman)
26.03.25	16	Bureaucracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Traditional” theory of bureaucracy: discretionary behavior of rational, self-interested bureaucrats
02.04.25	17	Legislatures and bureaucracies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “New” theory of bureaucracy: legislative control of bureaucracies (including role of executive branch and judiciary)
09.04.25	19	Political competition and macroeconomic performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the state of the economy affect how voters vote? Do politicians try to manipulate the macroeconomic environment? Theories of political business cycles
16.04.25	20	Interest groups, campaign contributions, and lobbying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of interest groups in the political process
30.04.25	21	The size of government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanations for the size and growth of government (government as dependent variable)
07.05.25	22	Government size and economic performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effects of government policies on economic activity (government as explanatory variable)
14.05.25	28, 29	What have we learned? Has public choice contributed anything to the study of politics?
21.05.25		Application: Political Economy of Taxation
28.05.25		<i>Reserve</i>