



Econ 379: Economic Policy Analysis

Units: 4

Term: Maymester 2025

Class Days and Time: Mondays and Wednesdays 5:00pm-9:00pm

First Day of Class: Monday May 19th, 2025

Last Day of Class: Friday June 13th, 2025

Contact Time: 50 Hours (eight 4:00 classes & four 4.5hours networking events)

Location: USC Capital Campus, Washington DC

Instructor: Jaime A. Meza-Cordero, Ph.D.

Office: TBD

Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 4:00-5:00pm

Contact Info: Jaime.Meza@usc.edu

Course Description

This course offers an exciting opportunity for students to study and analyze the design, implementation, and evaluation of economic policy in Washington, DC—a global center of international public policymaking. A review of the leading policy frameworks will be combined with an assessment of real-world issues that arise in the practice of economic policy. Economic policy is a field that invites practitioners from several fields. For this reason, the course will emphasize robust discussions of economic policymaking from various viewpoints and academic disciplines founded on micro- or macro-economic principles. This course will especially cater to students interested in pursuing careers as elected public officials, central bank personnel, public administrators, regulators, multilateral organization staff, nonprofit executives, implementers, and external evaluators. However, it will also interest students whose private-sector careers intersect considerably with public policy. Notably, the Washington, DC, location provides unique opportunities for students to interact with and learn from our guest speakers at the heart of public policymaking in various Federal government institutions and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, the IMF, and the Inter-American Development Bank.

The course starts by covering the fundamental aspects of economic policy formulation, target populations, public finance and budgeting, and the law approval and program award process. The second part of the course focuses on the design, implementation, and monitoring plans. The course concludes by covering evaluation theory, and cost-benefit analysis, combined with training on report elaboration, presentation of results to different stakeholders and audiences, and general dissemination practices. The course is offered in the evenings to allow students to engage in summer internships in the capital or other professional practices during the daytime with the objective of developing complementarities in the learning experience. The course will also 4 visits and events in which local experts, recruiters, alumni, and students from other programs will meet on campus to share information about job openings in their field and affiliation.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify economic and social problems that require a form of public or third-sector intervention.
- Learn about the process for funding for these interventions to materialize and for projects, programs, or policies to be approved and/or awarded.
- Craft appropriate interventions.
- Develop implementation, monitoring, and evaluation plans, as per OECD standards.
- Report on findings and recommend corrections.

Prerequisite(s): Econ 203 or Econ 205.

Course Notes

The grading type is letter. The course will be offered fully in-person and course materials and problem sets will be distributed in class or via email.

Recommended Readings and Supplementary Materials

Recommended Books:

- Benassy-Quere, A., Coeure, B., Jacquet, P. & Pisani-Ferry, J., (2010). Economic Policy: Theory and Practice. Oxford University Press.
- OECD (2021), Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/543e84ed-en>.
- World Bank. Impact Evaluation in Practice. (2nd Ed) <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/sief-trust-fund/publication/impact-evaluation-in-practice>
- Fink, A. (2015, 3rd edition). Evaluation fundamentals: Insights into program effectiveness, quality, and value. SAGE Publications

Supplementary Materials:

1. Krueger, Ann. 1990. Government Failures in Development (9-23). Journal of Economic Perspectives. Vol. 4
2. Data-Chaudhuri, Mrinal. Summer 1990. Market Failures in Development (25-39). Journal of Economic Perspectives. Vol. 4
3. Government Accountability Office (2012). Designing Evaluations. GAO-12-208G
4. W.K. Kellogg Foundation (2004) Introduction to logic models, Creating a basic logic model for your program, Logic model development guide: Using logic models to bring together planning, evaluation, and action., pp. 1-25, https://www.naccho.org/uploads/downloadable-resources/Programs/Public-Health-Infrastructure/KelloggLogicModelGuide_161122_162808.pdf
5. Sabatier, Paul and Mazmanian, Daniel. 1979. The Conditions of Effective Implementation: A Guide to Accomplishing Policy Objectives. In Policy Analysis, 5:4
6. United States Government Accountability Office (2012) "Defining the evaluation's scope, The process of selecting an evaluation design, Designs for assessing program implementation and effectiveness". Designing Evaluations. (pp. 10-49). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-12-208g.pdf>
7. American Evaluation Association (AEA) (2018). Guiding principles for evaluators. <https://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>
8. Frechtling, J. A., Mark, M. M., & National Science Foundation (NSF) (U.S.). (2010). The 2010 user-friendly handbook of project evaluation. Arlington, VA: NSF. <https://evalu-ate.org/external-resource/doc-2010-nsfhandbook/>
9. Mourmouras, A. & Rangazas, P. (2023). US Economic Policy in the 21st Century (Professional Practice in Governance and Public Organizations). Springer Publications.

Description and Assessment of Assignments

There will be 4 individual assignments, each of them worth 10% of the final grade. The first assignment consists of creating a 2-page memorandum identifying an economic or social program that requires an intervention. The second assignment consists of the development of a 5-page request for proposals (RFP) to develop a project to address the problem stated in the memorandum. The RFP will detail the scope of work (SOW), deliverables, and timeline for the project. The third assignment consists of drafting a 5-page implementation and monitoring plan for the project, including data collection plans and detailing the required indicators. The fourth assignment consists of the preparation of a 5-page evaluation design plan. Each student will be responsible for providing feedback on one peer's assignment before submission. Feedback will be worth 10% of the final grade. There will be one group assignment worth 40% of the final grade (30% a report and 10% a presentation). The first part of the group assignment will develop an evaluation report for a topic assigned by the professor. The second part of the assignment will consist of an in-class presentation of the report.

Problem Identification Memorandum

Each student will identify a problem that requires a policy intervention at a local, national, or global level. This topic of interest will serve as the unit of analysis for the remainder of individual assignments of the semester. The memo should clearly state the background, relevant problem, target population, and suggested feasible intervention for the government or NGO. The memo should not exceed 2 pages.

Request for Proposals

Each student will develop a request for proposals, under the role of officer in the funding agency. The RFP will include a background section that clarifies the geographic location, jurisdiction, and target population. The document will include a scope of work that details the project, timeline, and objectives. The RFP will also include a deliverable schedule and budget. The RFP should not exceed 5 pages.

Implementation and Monitoring Plan

The implementation plan will address the RFP. The document will propose the activities to take place to match each project objective, a timeline, and a monitoring plan that will allow for the documentation of progress. The monitoring plan will also detail how data about the implementation will be collected and how relevant indicators will be constructed and presented periodically, as appropriate. This plan should also list the relevant stakeholders and responsibilities as well as a Gaant Chart. The plan should not exceed 5 pages.

Evaluation Design Plan

The last individual assignment consists of an evaluation design plan to analyze the implementation. The evaluation design plan will include a logic model to describe the relationships between the program activities and the effects they are expected to generate. The plan will also include a data collection plan, both qualitative and quantitative to identify these effects. The final section should include a timeline of evaluation activities. The plan should not exceed 5 pages.

Evaluation Report

The evaluation report will be conducted in groups of 5 students and will address a topic assigned by the professor. The report should not exceed 10 pages (plus appendices) and should include the following sections: Background, Intervention Description, Theory of Change, Data Sources, Analysis, and Conclusion. The report must use APA style for in-text citations and the final reference list.

Participation

Class participation is strongly encouraged and will account for 10% of the total grade. You are expected and strongly encouraged to attend all scheduled classes and events, to engage in asking questions, and to participate in discussions. It is recommended to read beforehand the chapters that are going to be covered each week. If you do not attend a class or event, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to ensure you catch up on the material covered and on any other information provided.

Grading Breakdown

Table 1 Grading Breakdown

Assessment Tool (assignments)	Points	% of Grade
4 Individual Assignments	40	40
1 Group Assignment Report	30	30
1 Group Assignment Presentation	10	10
Feedback to Peers	10	10
Participation	10	10
TOTAL	100	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale:

Table 2 Course Grading Scale

Letter grade	Corresponding numerical point range
A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be submitted via email.

Grading Timeline

Assignments and the final report will be graded within a week of the submission deadline.

Attendance

Attendance to class is not mandatory. However, a student with low attendance not be able to obtain participation points. To obtain 10 participation points the student needs to participate in the class at least 10 times. For example, a student who participates 5 times through the course will only receive 5 participation points. The professor will take the record.

Classroom norms

Smartphones must be on silent mode and placed away during class. Laptops and tablets may be used only to take notes or to refer to course materials. Every student is expected to pay attention during class and can be asked to participate at any time. Lectures, announcements, problem sets, and additional resources will be distributed in class or via email. Email will be used for official submissions.

Email is the best way to contact me for any material clarification questions or administrative requests. If any material is unclear, please schedule an office hour time slot with me by sending me an Outlook calendar meeting invite.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit the recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Course Evaluations

Course evaluation will take place at the end of the semester.

Course Schedule

Table 3 Course Schedule

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Preparation	Deliverables
Monday May 19 th	Introduction to Course and Learning Activities / Overview Economics Policy and Policy Need Assessments	Benassy-Quere et al. Chapter 1 Krueger	
Wednesday May 21 st	Market Failure and Government Intervention Contracts, Grants, and Cooperative Agreements Theories of Change and Program Design	Benassy-Quere et al. Chapter 2 Data-Chaudhuri United States Government Accountability Office Fink Chapter 1 W.K. Kellogg Foundation	Policy Needs Memorandum
Monday May 26 th	Memorial Day – No Class		
Wednesday May 28 th	Implementation Practices Monitoring Plan	Sabatier and Mazmanian Frechtling, Mark, & National Science Foundation	Request for Proposal
Monday June 2 nd	Performance/Process Evaluation	Fink Chapter 2 OECD (2021) Government Accountability Office	
Wednesday June 4 th	Impact Evaluation (Quantitative)	Fink Chapters 3 & 7 World Bank (2016)	Implementation Plan
Monday June 9 th	Impact Evaluation (Qualitative & Mixed Methods) Report Elaboration, Dissemination Practices, and Program Corrections	Fink Chapters 3 & 9 World Bank (2016)	
Wednesday June 11 th	Individual & Group Presentations		Evaluation Plan
Friday June 13 th	Final Event		Group Report

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity:

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services

(though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.