



HSE University St. Petersburg

1. Course name; ECTS; quarter/semester; contact hours

Public Choice and Public Policy; 6 ECTS; Quarters 3 and 4 in Semester 2; 80 contact hours.

2. Author of the course

Professor Christopher J Gerry

3. Outline

Public Choice addresses the questions of how, why and when a government should intervene in the economy through Public Policy. It answers these questions by applying the tools which economists usually employ to explain markets, to the field of political science. **Public Policy** emerged as a prominent subfield within the discipline of political science in the mid-1960s. It is the study of government decisions and actions designed to deal with a matter of public concern. In thinking about **Public Policy from a Public Choice perspective**, this module adds an essential skill and methodology to the toolkit for all scholars of the social sciences and humanities (political science, sociology, economics, applied history and public administration) concerned with the justification for, design of and application of government policy.

4. Structure and content

The module objective is to provide an introduction to public choice theory and the ways in which it analyses the political and policy processes of governments in market democracies. Essentially it involves a technique for studying political institutions and processes in order to understand better the structural forces that lead to public policy outcomes that different types of institutions lead to. The techniques involve going under the surface of politics and political institutions to analyse the structural and causal forces that lead to types of outcomes. Topics covered include voting (the choice of voting rules, voting behaviour, paradoxes); Government (size and performance, bureaucracy, problems); Lobbying (interest groups, rent seeking, incentives)

5. Prerequisites

Public choice theory has a high level of technical sophistication. For this module, you are **not** expected to understand the mathematical proofs on which some of the arguments are based. The emphasis is on introducing key concepts to simplify and analyse broad classes of situations. You should follow and understand the tools presented in the lectures.

6. Assessment

Summative: (i) Oral Presentation (15%): there will be an end of term oral presentation based on an independent research exercise done individually or in pairs; (ii) Written assignment (35%): during the module there will be 4 short pieces of written work set. Your best two pieces of work will each contribute 17.5% to the final module grade. (iii) Final written examination (50%).

Formative: There will be formative assessment throughout the module in the form of discussion, based on assigned readings, as well as oral and written presentations.