SOC 865
Political Economy for Social Policy and Research
S1 Day 2016
Dept of Sociology

Contents

General Information 2
Learning Outcomes 2
General Assessment Information 3
Assessment Tasks 3
Delivery and Resources 6
Unit Schedule 6
Policies and Procedures 7
Graduate Capabilities 9
Changes from Previous Offering 12

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
Ben Spies-Butcher
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Contact via ben.spies-butcher@mq.edu.au

Credit points
4

Prerequisites
Admission to MPASR or PGDipPASR or PGCertPASR or GradDipPASR or GradCertPASR or MPPP or GradDipPP

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
This unit offers students an introduction to key concepts and theories in political economy used by social theorists and policy analysts. It takes a comparative approach, looking to different theoretical traditions within political economy and economic sociology, as well as an applied focus. Key concepts will be discussed in terms of their application to different policy issues in areas like health, education and the labour market. Discussion includes the use of quasi-markets, issues of inequality, commodification and consumerism, risk and globalisation, budgets, taxes and spending, and macroeconomic issues of labour supply, inflation and aggregate demand.

Important Academic Dates
Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at http://students.mq.edu.au/student_admin/enrolmentguide/academicdates/

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
2. Understand the historical development of different theoretical traditions in political economy
3. Critically apply concepts from political economy to understanding contemporary policy issues
4. Explain in verbal and written forms the economic implications of policies clearly to an educated, non-expert audience
5. Identify and integrate policy and theoretical information for a specific topic
6. Read critically across social scientific disciplines

General Assessment Information

You have a choice of either the Issue Analysis OR Budget Analysis. You are not required to do both.

Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Exercise</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29th March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue/Budget Analysis</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20th May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10th June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Short Exercise

Due: **29th March**

Weighting: **20%**

Word length: 750-1,000 words

This exercise is designed to familiarise you with some of the key economic concepts in the course. The task is to take one of the key concepts from the beginning of the course and relate it to the interests of social policy and research. You will need to explain what the concept is and how the reading develops it. You then need to link this concept to a current policy or social research concern. You are not expected to go into depth. Rather the exercise is designed to demonstrate your understanding and ability to apply concepts. Briefly explaining the key aspects of the concept and one potential implication is all that is required. The key concepts and readings are available in iLearn.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
- Understand the historical development of different theoretical traditions in political economy
- Explain in verbal and written forms the economic implications of policies clearly to an educated, non-expert audience
Issue/Budget Analysis

Due: 20th May
Weighting: 30%

Option 1: Issues Analysis

Word limit: 1,500 words

This assignment is linked to the Policy Analysis. The topic you choose in this assignment should be related to the policy you analyse in the next assignment. The task here is to engage with a significant economic and policy debate. In the next assignment you discuss how the current policy discussion has utilised economic arguments and frameworks. But here, you are focused on the issues in a more general sense. This is a research task, so you are expected to read widely, and to go beyond the material presented in this course outline.

The aim of this exercise is to demonstrate an understanding of how an economic issue impacts on social relationships, and to ground your analysis in a firm research base. The broader research done here should also assist in the next assignment. This task should be structured as an essay. Topics will be discussed in class and posted in iLearn.

Option 2: Budget Analysis

Word limit: 1,600 words (400 brief + 1,200 background)

For this exercise you will be required to do an analysis of the Commonwealth Budget. The exercise is due at the end of the week after the Budget will be delivered. You should look to the readings in Weeks 6, 7 and 9 in particular to assist you. The exercise is in two parts. The first involves a short brief (400 words) that is designed to give the reader a quick overview of the main changes in the budget and a quick assessment of likely impacts. This section can use headings and dot points, but should be kept to 1 A4 page. It can also reference material in the longer second section (see below). The analysis should be largely factual and objective in tone, similar to a report.

The second section (1,200 words) is similar to an appendix, and should provide more detail on the main changes. As a general guide you should be looking to cover 4-6 areas in the budget (a change being a particular spending initiative, change in tax rates or change in rules governing a program). Then give a brief discussion of what the likely effects of the changes are in terms of both over fiscal policy (is it net expansionary or contractionary), and in terms of the distribution of resources (who wins and who loses). It should end with an overall assessment on the budget. This may involve drawing conclusions about overall effects and impacts.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
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Policy Analysis
Due: 10th June
Weighting: 40%

Word length: 2,500

In this assignment you will explore the application of market economics to social and environmental policy making. You will need to select a case study where policy has changed (or is proposed to change) to provide a greater role for market forces in the production or allocation of resources. This should ideally be related to the topic of your last assignment.

Your analysis will need to outline the policy changes and the rationale for the change. You should then explore the effects (or predicted effects) of the policy change and address arguments both in favour and against the policy change. You should conclude by suggesting ways forward, has the policy been effective and what might make it more effective?

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:
• Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
• Understand the historical development of different theoretical traditions in political economy
• Critically apply concepts from political economy to understanding contemporary policy issues
• Explain in verbal and written forms the economic implications of policies clearly to an educated, non-expert audience
• Identify and integrate policy and theoretical information for a specific topic
• Read critically across social scientific disciplines

Seminar participation
Due: Ongoing
Weighting: 10%

As part of your involvement in the course you are expected to actively participate in seminars. This involves reading and thinking about the required readings each week. It also involves making some contribution to discussion. You will be assessed on the basis of your contributions...
in terms of both your understanding of the issues and your effort to engage with the subject matter. This is not a measure of how much you contribute, but of the quality of your contributions.

It is also important that everyone contributes in a way that promotes reasoned discussion and includes all. If you find it easy to contribute, be careful not to dominate debate. If you find it difficult, make an effort to get involved, or discuss the issue with your tutor so they can help you participate fully. Debating and discussing ideas is an important part of academic life and sociological inquiry.

This Assessment Task relates to the following Learning Outcomes:

- Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
- Understand the historical development of different theoretical traditions in political economy
- Critically apply concepts from political economy to understanding contemporary policy issues
- Explain in verbal and written forms the economic implications of policies clearly to an educated, non-expert audience
- Read critically across social scientific disciplines

**Delivery and Resources**

Each week there will be one two-hour seminar between 5pm – 7pm Monday in W5C 311. Attendance is compulsory.

All reading material for the course is available through e-reserve and the iLearn unit. Lectures will also be recorded, but as the class is based on a seminar format recordings may not cover all of the content as class discussion cannot be recorded.

All written assignments for this unit are to be submitted through iLearn and Turnitin. Feedback and results will also be given through iLearn. There is no hard copy marking in this unit.


Some of the more sociological content is also covered in Spies-Butcher, Paton & Cahill (2012), *Market Society: History, theory, practice*, Cambridge, also available from the Co-op Bookshop.

**Unit Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Lecturer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29th February</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>BSB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7th March</td>
<td>Competition and Trade</td>
<td>BSB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from Policy Central. Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

**Student Code of Conduct**

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: [https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/](https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/)

**Results**

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in eStudent. For more information visit [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au).

**Sociology Policies**


**Late Submission of Work**

To help students submit their work on time, staff will endeavour to hand out essay and assignment questions at least three weeks in advance of the due date.

All assignments which are officially received after the due date, and where no extension has been granted by the course convenor or tutor, will incur a deduction of 5% for the first day, and 1% for each subsequent day including the actual day on which the work is received. Weekends and public holidays are included.

**Student Support**

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit [http://students.mq.edu.au/support/](http://students.mq.edu.au/support/)

**Learning Skills**

Learning Skills ([mq.edu.au/learningskills](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills)) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Workshops
- StudyWise
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](http://mq.edu.au/learningskills/
- Ask a Learning Adviser

**Student Enquiry Service**

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at [ask.mq.edu.au](http://ask.mq.edu.au)
Equity Support
Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

IT Help
For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

PG - Discipline Knowledge and Skills
Our postgraduates will be able to demonstrate a significantly enhanced depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content knowledge in their chosen fields.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
- Understand the historical development of different theoretical traditions in political economy
- Identify and integrate policy and theoretical information for a specific topic

Assessment tasks

- Short Exercise
- Issue/Budget Analysis
- Policy Analysis
- Seminar participation

PG - Research and Problem Solving Capability
Our postgraduates will be capable of systematic enquiry; able to use research skills to create new knowledge that can be applied to real world issues, or contribute to a field of study or practice to enhance society. They will be capable of creative questioning, problem finding and problem solving.

This graduate capability is supported by:
Learning outcomes

• Understand the historical development of different theoretical traditions in political economy
• Critically apply concepts from political economy to understanding contemporary policy issues
• Identify and integrate policy and theoretical information for a specific topic

Assessment tasks

• Short Exercise
• Issue/Budget Analysis
• Policy Analysis
• Seminar participation

PG - Capable of Professional and Personal Judgment and Initiative

Our postgraduates will demonstrate a high standard of discernment and common sense in their professional and personal judgment. They will have the ability to make informed choices and decisions that reflect both the nature of their professional work and their personal perspectives.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

• Critically apply concepts from political economy to understanding contemporary policy issues
• Read critically across social scientific disciplines

Assessment tasks

• Issue/Budget Analysis
• Policy Analysis
• Seminar participation

PG - Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

Our postgraduates will be capable of utilising and reflecting on prior knowledge and experience, of applying higher level critical thinking skills, and of integrating and synthesising learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments. A characteristic of this form of thinking is the generation of new, professionally oriented knowledge through personal or group-based critique of practice and theory.

This graduate capability is supported by:
Learning outcomes

- Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
- Understand the historical development of different theoretical traditions in political economy
- Critically apply concepts from political economy to understanding contemporary policy issues
- Identify and integrate policy and theoretical information for a specific topic
- Read critically across social scientific disciplines

Assessment tasks

- Short Exercise
- Issue/Budget Analysis
- Policy Analysis
- Seminar participation

PG - Effective Communication

Our postgraduates will be able to communicate effectively and convey their views to different social, cultural, and professional audiences. They will be able to use a variety of technologically supported media to communicate with empathy using a range of written, spoken or visual formats.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Explain in verbal and written forms the economic implications of policies clearly to an educated, non-expert audience
- Identify and integrate policy and theoretical information for a specific topic
- Read critically across social scientific disciplines

Assessment tasks

- Short Exercise
- Issue/Budget Analysis
- Policy Analysis
- Seminar participation

PG - Engaged and Responsible, Active and Ethical Citizens

Our postgraduates will be ethically aware and capable of confident transformative action in relation to their professional responsibilities and the wider community. They will have a sense of connectedness with others and country and have a sense of mutual obligation. They will be able
to appreciate the impact of their professional roles for social justice and inclusion related to national and global issues

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- Critically apply concepts from political economy to understanding contemporary policy issues
- Explain in verbal and written forms the economic implications of policies clearly to an educated, non-expert audience
- Read critically across social scientific disciplines

**Assessment tasks**

- Short Exercise
- Issue/Budget Analysis
- Policy Analysis
- Seminar participation

**Changes from Previous Offering**

The unit this year is structured around three key sections: ideas, challenges and case studies. This has meant changes to readings in some weeks. There are two public holidays on Mondays this semester, so we will discuss some alternatives for dealing with this in Week 1.