



SOC 865

Political Economy for Social Policy and Research

S2 Evening 2017

Dept of Sociology

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

Unit Convenor

Ben Spies-Butcher

ben.spies-butcher@mq.edu.au

Contact via ben.spies-butcher@mq.edu.au

Credit points

4

Prerequisites

Admission to MPASR 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 <https://www.mq.edu.au/study/calendar-of-dates>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

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

General Assessment Information

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

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Hurdle	Due
Short Exercise	20%	No	24th August
Budget Analysis	30%	No	13th October
Policy Analysis	40%	No	10th November
Seminar participation	10%	No	Ongoing

Short Exercise

Due: **24th August**

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.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- Understand and interpret concepts from political economy
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Budget Analysis

Due: **13th October**

Weighting: **30%**

Word limit: 1,200

For this exercise you will be required to do an analysis of the Commonwealth Budget. You should look to the readings in Weeks 5 and 8 in particular to assist you.

A detailed brief template is included in the resources under the Assessment tab in iLearn.

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 would cover the material in the 'Key Points', 'Summary', and 'Key Changes' sections of the template. You can use different headings and dot points if you think it will convey the information more clearly, but this part 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 (800 words) reflects the material under the 'Discussion' heading in the template, 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.

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Policy Analysis

Due: **10th November**

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?

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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.

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- 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 6pm – 8pm Monday in W5C 302.

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.

You may also want to consult Stilwell (2012), *Political Economy: The contest of economic ideas*, 3rd ed. Oxford. Copies are available from the Co-op Bookshop. This book covers much of the economic content of the course in an accessible way.

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

Week	Date	Topic	Lecturer
1	31st July	Introduction	BSB
2	7th August	Competition and Trade	BSB
3	14th August	Embeddedness and Market Society	BSB
4	21st August	Marx, Commodification and Exploitation	BSB
5	28th August	Keynes and the Role of the State	BSB
6	4th September	Inequality	AS
7	11th September	Fiscal Limits of Welfare/ PUBLIC HOLIDAY	
8	2nd October	Fiscal Limits of Welfare/ PUBLIC HOLIDAY	BSB/TBC
9	9th October	Sustainability	BSB

10	16th October	Quasi-markets and Marketisation	BSB
11	23rd October	Financial Crisis	BSB
12	30th October	Case Study	BSB
13	6th November	Conclusion	BSB

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:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

Assessment Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy (in effect until Dec 4th, 2017): http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html

Special Consideration Policy (in effect from Dec 4th, 2017): <https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>

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/

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.

Sociology Policies

Referencing guide http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/faculties_and_departments/faculty_of_arts/departments_of_sociology/current_students/undergraduate/useful_links/sociology_reference_guide/

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/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (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](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and 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.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

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 - 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

- Budget Analysis
- Policy Analysis
- Seminar participation

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
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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
- Budget Analysis
- Policy Analysis
- Seminar participation

Changes from Previous Offering

A number of readings have been updated to reflect advances in various debates. The second written assignment has been clarified to focus on the Federal Budget and a new template provided.