# PUBP 4226
# Business and Government
SPRING 2027
CRN 33586, Section RDC

## I. Introduction
This course serves as an introduction to public policy via the interdependence of business and government. Businesses produce private goods & services fundamental to a functioning economy. Government supplies public goods, regulations, and redistribution enabling business and society to thrive. But where might we draw the line between them, and upon what basis? What functions (if any) do business and government need each other to play? To answer these questions, this course investigates the different roles and capacities of business and government for solving economic and social problems. It draws upon theory and evidence rather than philosophy or political ideology. Students will consider the questions:

- Upon what scientific basis might one decide if government action is justified?
- What instruments or tools of action are at the government's disposal and how might policymakers choose amongst them?
- How do we identify stakeholders, and how should we expect stakeholders to respond to various actions?

Along the way, students will learn professional communications techniques: brief and memo writing, the proper use of presentation software, and basic data visualization. Finally, although this course helps students understand which functions government and business *may* or *may not* perform well, it will not dictate judgments about which functions they *should* or *should not* perform; this is for students decide for themselves.

## II. Required Materials
No purchases required. Assigned materials will be made available on the course Canvas site or as part of the GT Library's digital collection. Materials may take the form of readings, audio files, or video files. All should be taken with equal seriousness, and students are responsible for knowing each with equal familiarity.

## III. Course Objectives
The primary goal of this class is for students to learn the scientific basis for/against government regulation of business and the limitations thereof. In doing so, students will be exposed to a wide variety of contemporary public policy controversies. The work you do outside of class will be as important as the work in class. In addition to the primary goal given above, by the end of this course you should be able to:

- Analyze, interpret, and explain major developments in fiscal, trade, monetary, and regulatory policy
- Identify an economic or social problem, define its scope, and evaluate claims about the potential roles of business vs. government in solving it
- Identify policy options for solving the problem, use policy analysis tools to compare the merits and disadvantages of different policy approaches to a particular problem, and estimate the likely consequences of proposed policies
- Develop and strengthen skills in research, analysis, and problem-solving
- Develop and strengthen skills in written and oral communication, including negotiation and persuasion

## IV. Class Conduct:
- Students are required to check their email at least once per day.
- Students are responsible for all materials, discussions, etc. covered in class, whether present or not.
- Absences for medical or personal emergencies will be excused upon verification.
- If you do miss class for a non-emergency or non-approved event, do not apologize or explain why. I completely understand that "life happens" and that you have priorities other than this class. If you miss class for some awesome extra-curricular adventure or opportunity, I'm not offended...but I cannot grant you a special tutoring session, extension, or make-up either. You will be responsible for any material, assignments, or announcements covered in class that you missed.

- ***There is no Zoom option for this class.***
- **Random websites and online material are generally *not* accepted as legitimate sources for use or citation in your papers and presentations. Exceptions to this policy will be discussed in class.**
- Students will treat each other and the professor with respect. Constructive questioning and criticism are welcome & encouraged. Personal attacks & insults are not. The rule of thumb here is that critical comments and questions should be maturely phrased in a manner that encourages constructive and open debate; they should not be phrased as insults, threats, or in a manner that shuts down conversation or debate.
- Students are expected to read and abide by the Georgia Tech Student Code of Conduct and the Academic
- Honor Code. All violations will be reported. The complete text of these two Codes may be found at:
    - https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/student-code-conduct
    - https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code

## V. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services (404-894-2563) as soon as possible to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me as soon as possible in order to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

## VI. Email Policy

- General communications from the professor to the class will be sent by email *and* posted on Canvas.
- Students are required to check their email and/or the Canvas site (Announcements section) daily.
- Personal or confidential communications from the professor to you will sent by email. **You are therefore required to have a functioning email account**, alert the professor if you are not receiving emails on it, and provide a functioning email address if this one fails to operate properly.
- Your emails will be responded to within 24 hours of receipt, if not faster, conditional on the following:
    - Include the course number in the "Subject" line of your emails.
    - Write a meaningful subject line (e.g. "PUBP 4226—is recycling a good topic for final paper?")
    - Check the syllabus and Canvas *before* emailing the professor to see if answers are already posted.

## VII. AI Policy

- Students *may not* use AI when conducting research. A major goal of this course is to learn how to identify, find, digest, and interpret expert sources. Also, students who conduct research at the level of AI may not receive a passing grade.
- Students *may not* use AI when writing. One goal of this course is to build skills and experience in critical thinking, communication, and original thought (i.e., avoid plagiarism). Also, students who write at the level of AI may not receive a passing grade.
- Students *may* use AI to assist in reading and understanding books and articles. But students should never rely mostly or entirely on AI for this purpose because AI gets much of it wrong. It also remains important to develop the ability to read and understand advanced materials without the aid of AI.
- Students *may* use AI when creating graphics and data visualizations. While one goal of this course is to learn how to identify high vs. low quality visualizations, students need not become skilled graphic designers. Grading will be based on quality, accuracy, source ID, etc. but not the use of AI.

## VIII. Plagiarism Policy[1]

Plagiarism is defined, for the purposes of this class, as: copying, borrowing, or appropriating another person's work **and** presenting it as your own in a paper or oral presentation, deliberately or accidentally. Acts of plagiarism will be reported in accordance with the Honor Code. To avoid being charged with plagiarism, if you use the words, ideas, phrasing, charts, graphs, or data of another person or from published material, then you must: 1) use quotation marks around the words **and** cite the source, or 2) paraphrase or summarize acceptably

[1] Brennecke, Patricia. 2005. *Academic Integrity at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology: A Handbook for Students* (MIT: Cambridge, MA).

using your own words **and** cite the source. The plagiarism policy is not restricted to books, but also applies to video & audio content, websites, blogs, wiki's, and podcasts. Plagiarism produced by AI still counts as plagiarism. **Plagiarism includes putting your name on a group project to which you have minimally contributed.**

## IX. Graded Assignments

**05% Mini-Briefs**
**10% In-Class Discussion**
**15% Landscape Memo**
**20% Team Policy Brief Presentations and Memos**
**20% In-Class Debate**
**30% Final Policy Memo**

*The descriptions below serve as high-level introductions to the major assignments due in this class. Additional details on assignments will be provided throughout the semester.*

*Mini-Briefs:* We will spend some time at the beginning of each class discussing relevant news from the prior week, stories from your internships, and other timely topics. As aspiring policy professionals, students are expected to be engaged with the world around them. Students should be prepared to share updates orally. While additional research is encouraged, there will be no mark-downs for simply sharing an anecdote or having a question about a news story without conducting extra research. Participation will be tracked throughout the semester.

*In-Class Discussion:* Students are expected to critically engage with the assigned homework materials and in-class presentations. This class will be significantly more interesting and enjoyable for students (and the professor) if students aspire to reach beyond the face-value of the texts provided. As a reminder, well-informed and respectful debate is encouraged. Students are likewise expected to respect the group norm of "Stepping Up and Stepping Back". Ensure all students' voices are heard. If you are naturally outgoing, create room for those who may less often speak up. If you are naturally reserved, challenge yourself to engage more. Both skills will serve you well in the professional world.

*Landscape Memo:* Students will complete a memo (one to two pages) summarizing an area of current policy debate, including providing examples of market and government failures with supporting evidence. This memo is meant not only to assess your comprehension of the assigned materials but also your ability to research, succinctly and fairly present information from multiple perspectives, and practice memo structure. Feedback provided and should be applied as guidance for other memos this semester.

*Team Policy Brief Presentations and Memos:* Students will sign up for two policy topics from among those covered after Spring Break to present in-class to the professor, who will play the role of a policymaker (e.g. Senator Smith). In one case, your team will take the position of policy analysts presenting an issue and proposing a government intervention. In the other, your team will take the position of lobbyists presenting the same issue and proposing a free-market solution. ***You must do one case on each "side".*** I will ask questions as you go and may push to determine how prepared you are to address concerns both nationally and specific to my constituents. Students not presenting should listen respectfully and take notes to provide peer feedback. Presenters will have a **three page memo** (individually, not as a team) due the week following their presentations, which should incorporate feedback from class and the Landscape Memo.

*In-Class Debate:* For our final class together, students will be split into teams and will participate in a policy debate on a topic of my choosing. Grading will be based on a variety of factors such as participation (including teamwork), quality of argument, quality of sources, application of knowledge and skills from the course, and representation of the roles assigned. More details will be provided as we approach the end of the semester. No sneak peeks!

*Final Policy Memo:* Students will take the role of Senior Policy Advisor to a freshman member of Congress. Write a 5 page memo to the principal that puts forward your top 3 policy recommendations that your principal should consider championing. Your recommendations can be substantive (i.e. policy positions), they can be process-oriented (ex: proposals to change HOW the budget is produced), and they can be political (ex: ideas for how the principal should engage with, leverage, or "protect" industry leaders). Critically, they must be *actionable* for a member of Congress. In other words, please do not include any proposals which would require Executive powers. Your memo should provide the necessary context, as well as a compelling rationale for each of your recommendations, and it should directly grapple with and address any trade-offs that your recommendations may entail. Successful memos will address government and private-sector potential solutions and provide reasoning for why one or the other is the "best case" for this Congressperson. Students may choose topics from the syllabus or beyond. If students use a syllabus topic, substantial research and source citation beyond the syllabus are expected. Remember, at the end of the day, this memo is intended to give you room to write about whatever policy topic(s) most interest you, as well as give you the opportunity to draw on everything we've learned this semester.

## X. Grade Structure

Your grade will be determined by: how well you ***communicate*** to me that you ***understand*** the ***fundamental*** definitions, concepts, and causal relationships of policy analysis ***as presented in the lectures, readings, discussions and other assigned materials***.

It bears repeating that your personal (dis)agreement with the definitions, concepts, & relationships presented in this class will not affect your grade. You do however need to show that you understand these fundamentals as they are currently accepted by the community of top researchers in public policy. You need not agree with them, but you do need to show that you understand them.

Students should note that, for individual assignments (papers, tests, etc.), grades in this course are not rigidly related to numerical scores, distribution functions, predetermined percentages, or your knowledge of academic jargon. As can be seen from the following grade descriptions, individual assignment grading in this course is related more directly to a student's demonstrated mastery of the material. This also means that the relative performance of one's peers is less important, though not irrelevant, to one's grade. Finally, in determining an assignment's grade, consideration is given for elegance of presentation, creativity, imagination, and originality *only* where these have been appropriately called for, and where mastery of the fundamentals has already been demonstrated. A satisfactorily completed individual assignment will receive one of the following grades:

**A**: Exceptionally good performance demonstrating a superior understanding of the subject matter, a foundation of extensive knowledge, and a skillful use of concepts and/or materials.

**B:** Good performance demonstrating capacity to use the appropriate concepts, a good understanding of the subject matter, and an ability to handle the problems and materials encountered in the subject.

**C:** Adequate performance demonstrating an adequate understanding of the subject matter, an ability to handle relatively simple problems, and adequate preparation for moving on to more advanced work in the field. Writes at the level of ChatGPT.

Other grades awarded include:

**D:** Minimally acceptable performance demonstrating at least partial familiarity with the subject matter and some capacity to deal with relatively simple problems, but also demonstrating deficiencies serious enough to make it inadvisable to proceed further in the field without additional work.

**F**: Failed. Has not demonstrated familiarity with the subject matter, nor the capacity to deal with simple problems in a manner recognizable to the consensus of mainstream academic practitioners within the field. This includes:

- citation of non-existent sources
- citation of an irrelevant source or one that fails to support the claim cited
- blatantly inaccurate facts, data, or quotations
- failure to use the citations guidelines (see handout)
- inability to knowledgably discuss written deliverables
- use of ChatGPT or other LLM in research, analysis, or writing

Note that this course's internal grading system includes plus (+) and minus (-) modifiers for use with the letter grades A, B, C, D, and F. However, they are not officially part of students' grades, they do not appear on Georgia Tech transcripts, and they do not affect internally or externally reported grade-point averages.

## XI. Late Assignments

Due dates are listed for every assignment in the week-by-week schedule in the syllabus. Students should submit assignments with strict adherence to the due dates. Assignments submitted after the deadline listed will have half a letter grade deducted from their score per day late. If a student is unable to submit on time, best efforts should be made to communicate any delays to the professor ***as far in advance*** of the due date as possible. Emergencies with reasonable verification may be adjudicated on a case-by-case basis at the professor's discretion, in accordance with Georgia Tech university policies.

## XII. Grade Change Policy

Legitimate requests for grade changes are welcome and encouraged. However, you should resist the temptation to file a frivolous request just hoping to "get lucky". Simple computational or clerical errors should be brought to the professor's attention immediately. Otherwise:

A) Requests for grade changes must:
  i) be submitted in writing, both electronically and in hard-copy, and
  ii) be submitted not sooner than 7 days and not later than 28 days after receiving the graded assignment, and
  iii) be no longer than 600 words, and
  iv) be accompanied by the original completed test/paper (attached to the hard copy)

B) Requests for grade changes should:
  i) identify what was required in the assignment, and
  ii) describe *precisely* how these requirements were fulfilled at a level above the received grade, and
  iii) address any relevant comments written by the professor on the graded assignment (if applicable) and explain why they do not apply.

Approach a grade change request as if arguing a legal case: you should have strong and convincing arguments and evidence to support your request. Be aware that appeals to the practices of other professors generally do not constitute good argument or evidence. Note also that grade changes requests can result in re-grades both up or down (or left unchanged). That is, if the greater scrutiny demanded by a grade change request reveals your assignment to deserve a lower grade than previously awarded, then the lower grade may be assigned (i.e. be sure that you are not "looking a gift horse in the mouth" *before* you file a grade change request).