Econ 447 Syllabus        Spring 2011
Seminar – Privatization of Local Public Services

Course Meets: Wednesdays, 2.30 – 4.20 pm, King 121

Contact Details
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Office: Rice Hall 212
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1.30 – 3 pm; Wednesdays, 11 am – 12 pm; Thursdays, 1.30 – 3 pm; other times by appointment.

Course Description and Objectives
This seminar examines an increasingly popular phenomenon in the local public sector. As budgets become tighter, cities and counties have been turning to private agents to provide many of our public services. We will read papers that investigate theoretically and empirically the effect that privatization has had on our concept of government. We begin by examining the various mechanisms through which privatization can occur. We then move to economic analyses of privatization of various major local public services. Finally, we will look into privatization of governance itself.

Objectives for this course: (1) learn about the issues and complexity facing local privatization and how economic analysis can provide insights; (2) execute a thoughtful scholarly economic research paper; (3) improve your oral presentation skills by leading class discussion and by presenting the results of your paper.

Readings
Readings for this course will come mostly from academic journals, supplemented with articles from popular sources. All readings will be posted on Blackboard for you to download. I will announce required readings in class and on Blackboard. The attached schedule gives you a tentative list of dates and readings. This list is subject to change.

Grading
There are four components to your course grade.

Participation (10%). I value your participation and expect you to take an active role in this class. You are expected to attend every class and to be prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day.
**Reading Responses & Data Exercise** (15%). You must bring in to class and hand in a write-up of your thoughts on the assigned readings for each day, starting in week 3. In the response, you should mention (at least) two things you found interesting about the readings, two potential questions or shortcomings of the paper or ways in which the analysis can be extended and anything you found unclear. The write-up must be completed before the class, and late work will not be accepted. The data exercise will be handed out after our data refresher and will familiarize you with working with datasets.

**Presentations** (15%). You will present several times in this course. First, beginning in week 3, each class will have a student responsible for giving a 15-20 minute presentation of the reading(s) for the day. Then you will lead the in-class discussion for the day. Second, twice in the course, you will give a brief discussion of your progress in the term paper. Finally, sometime in the last two weeks of class, you will give a 15-20 minute presentation of your paper.

Note: The most challenging aspect of presentations (of any type) is to distil your understanding of the material, your ideas and your questions into a very limited amount of time. As such, time limits for presentations will be adhered to strictly – so it’s always helpful for you to do a run-through before you present!

**Research Paper** (60%). The research paper will be an economic analysis of a question related to public service privatization, preferably focused on a local or regional level. You should select a topic yourself and clear it with me. I will be happy to consult with you regarding topic choice, data collection and paper writing.

Length: The paper should be between 15 and 25 pages in length, not counting references, figures and tables, double-spaced. Type should be between 10 and 12 point font.

Content: A good paper addresses an interesting and well-defined issue, presents relevant data and methodology and applies economic analysis intelligently. Relevant policy recommendations are desirable. A good paper is also well organized, clear, free of writing errors and coherent. Please choose a standard format for citing your sources and apply it consistently.

Important Dates: (Note: When something below needs to be submitted to me, you may either bring a printed copy to class, or you may email it to me by 10 pm the day it is due. Be sure to put your name into the file name of the attachment.)

1. **Wed., 2 March 2011**: By this date you should pick a general topic. It does not have to be well-developed. In one short paragraph, write something along the lines of: “I want to write a paper on this topic, and here is a rough idea for a question.” Bring this statement to class, and we will share and discuss the feasibility of your desired topic.

2. **Wed., 23 March 2011**: You must submit a short outline (6 pages or so) of your paper. At this point, you should have focused your research on a specific question. Lay out your research question, agenda and relevant data sources. This outline should also incorporate a brief literature review of readings related to your question. Late outlines will incur a daily penalty of 5% off the final paper grade.

3. **Wed., 13 April 2011**: We will have another class discussion of your progress of your research paper.
4. **Wed., 27 April 2011**: A complete draft of your paper is due. This will be shared with the class in time for the paper presentation sessions.

5. **Wednesday, 4 and 11 May 2011**: You will be required to present your paper to the class. The other members of the class will have read your draft and should offer comments and feedback. Presentation schedules will be determined later.

6. **Saturday, 21 May 2011**: The final draft of your paper is due by 10 pm.

**Honor Code**

The College requires that students sign an "Honor Code" for all assignments. Presenting the work of someone else as your own is a serious affront to the other students in the course and to me. On each assignment and policy brief that you submit, you must write "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment" and sign your name in assent. For further information, please see the student Honor Code, via Blackboard>Lookup/Directories>Honor Code.

**Students with Disabilities**

If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.
### Course Outline – revised 2/14/11

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Coursework</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>9 Feb.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>30 Mar.</td>
<td>SPRING BREAK – no class</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>4 May</td>
<td>Paper presentations</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>11 May</td>
<td>Paper presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>21 May</td>
<td>Paper presentations</td>
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<td>Papers due, 10 pm.</td>
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* Caveat: The course outline and the readings are subject to change.

### Reading List

Grouped by Week; readings marked with a **plus sign are optional** and will not be discussed in class. If you are writing your term paper on a specific topic, it is recommended that you read the appropriate optional readings.
Week 2:

Week 3:

Week 4:

Week 5:

Week 6:
Week 7:

Week 8:

Week 9:

Week 10:

Week 11:
Hounston Jr., Lawrence, editor, Business Improvement Districts, excerpt.