In this course students will learn the economic and political influences of policies on family decision-making and interest-group efforts to alter constraints imposed by these policies. Policy topics will vary depending on the class. Some examples are child support guidelines, education tax credit, Social Security, and Medicare.

This course will use a seminar format. Students will form groups. Depending on the number of students in the class, each group will select one or two economic policy or policies to study. I will have a list of policy topics for students to choose from. Students can also propose topics of their interest for my approval.

For the first three weeks, we will go over the basics of policy evaluation and review some basic economic concepts. I will cover the policy topic of Child Support Guidelines in detail. Starting from Week four, student groups will present the policy of their choice, and lead discussions in class. Each topic will be given one week. Below is a guideline for the group project:

1. a reading list about this policy with at least 3 references, including at least one scholarly article.
2. the history of the policy and a description of the policy and/or any alternative proposals
3. the intended purpose of the policy
4. identification of economic concepts related to this policy.
5. reasons (including theoretical reasoning if applicable) as to why this policy would achieve its purpose.
6. possible side effects of the policy and interest-group conflicts
7. possible ways to evaluate the policy
8. a summary assessment as to whether the policy serves its purpose
9. 20 multiple choice questions regarding all aspects of this policy

I would like to meet with the group no later than Thursday of the week before the presentation. Please come with a sheet similar to my topic on Child Support Guidelines. All initial group research on the topic is supposed to be done before the meeting. I will create a content link in the “Learning Module” on WebCT that will link to all reading material at least one day before the presentation. Students should read the assigned readings and bring the printed reference articles to class. A final version of the project sheet, together with the multiple choice questions, should be submitted to the instructor Thursday of the week after the presentation. Also, you need to submit an effort grade of your group members (including yourself) by Thursday of the week after the presentation as a private email on WebCT.

The group projects will count for 50% of your final grade. Because participation of discussion is particularly important for a seminar format class, class participation will be 10% based on your presence in class. There will be two exams with 20% each. For the group project, I will give an overall grade for the group. Then group members are to grade all members (including self) in the group on a scale of 0 (no effort) to 10 (most effort) based on the effort each individual member has put into the project. The average will be computed and used to weigh the project grade I give. For the group project grade, 10% will be taken off for each day the material submission is delayed. Note if one component is delayed, the project material is considered delayed.

The final letter grade will be determined using the following criteria:

- 90% or higher: A;
- 85%-89.9%: A-;
- 82.5%-84.9%: B+;
- 75%-82.4%: B;
- 72.5%-74.9%: B-;
- 70%-72.4%: C+;
- 62.5%-69.9%: C;
- 60%-62.4%: C-;
- 57.5%-59.9%: D+;
- 50%-57.4%: D;
- 47.5%-49.9%: D-;
- 47.4% or lower: F

The instructor reserves the right to curve the grades if she feels it is warranted.
**Textbook**
There is no textbook for this class. However, for general policy evaluation, I will use Chapter 12 of Earl Babbie’s “The Basics of Social Research (3rd Edition). Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, Belmont, CA.” This is the textbook for FCS 3200 Research Methods.

Readings as assigned in class.

**Things to Note**

(1) **Withdrawal:**
For information regarding withdrawal policy and related tuition and fees, please contact the Registration Division (581-8969).

(2) **Learning Disabilities:**
Students who need special accommodations due to learning disabilities should contact the instructor during the first two weeks of the semester. We will then work with the Center of Disabled Students Services to make sure that your disability is properly defined and accommodated.

(3) **Extra Credit:**
No extra credit will be offered in this class. Please respect this policy and do not ask for extra credit.

(4) **Project material due date**
All project material should be submitted through WebCT unless otherwise noted. The deadline is midnight on the due day.

(5) **Disagreement about Grades:**
If you disagree with the grading of an exam or project, you need to submit a written statement to the instructor explaining why you think you deserve more or less points, together with the exam or project in question. I will then regrade your exam or project. Be aware that your grade can be lower, higher, or unchanged as a result of the regrading.

(6) **Make-Up Exams:**
Make-up exams will be given only if you have a very good reason and have notified the instructor before the exam. Otherwise, no credit will be given for the exam. All makeup exams will be administered during the final exam week and will be in essay format. All make-up exams will be arranged through University Testing Center. The Testing Center charges $5.00 for each exam processed.

(7) **Incomplete:**
An incomplete will only be granted if you can justify to the instructor that you cannot finish the course because of circumstances beyond your control and if the majority of course work (80%) is already completed.

**FCS 6400 Additional Requirement**
For graduate students taking FCS 6400, a term paper of your chosen topic is required. The paper should be a fairly thorough literature review of scholarly research on that topic. Depending on the quality of your paper, your final grade may be increased, decreased, or unchanged by one letter grade. The first draft of this paper is due two weeks after the midterm exam (Oct. 25). You will be given one chance to revise and resubmit. The final paper is due on the day final exam is given (Dec. 6).
Group Topics

Below is a list of topics we covered in the past. Note the topics are different every semester based on students’ interests.

Education: education tax credit, education saving plans, tuition tax credit
Marriage and divorce: marriage tax penalty/benefits
Housing: mortgage tax subsidy, downpay subsidy
Food: sales tax on food
Gasoline: sales tax on gasoline
Child related topics: child tax credit, child support guidelines, adoption policy
Health care: Medicare
Debt: personal bankruptcy and credit issues
Retirement and financial planning: Social security, retirement saving plans, estate tax
Other topics: globalization

Because government policies related to the poor are covered extensively in another class (Families and Social Policy), we are not going to cover welfare, rental subsidy, Medicaid, and Earned Income Tax Credit in this class.

FCS 5400/6400 Class Outline and Project Signup Sheet

Week 1 (8/23): Project signup, Evaluation Research (Fan)
Week 2 (8/30): Child Support Guidelines Part I (Fan)
Week 3 (9/7): Child Support Guidelines Part II (Fan)
Week 4 (9/13): Group project 1: Debt, Personal bankruptcy: Megan, Mandeep, Neil, Paul, Jeff
Week 5 (9/20): Group project 2: Divorce: Heather, Christine, Spencer, Brenna
Week 6 (9/27): Group project 3: Medicare: Michael, Katie, Aimee
Week 7 (10/4): Exam I
Week 8 (10/11): Fall Break.
Week 9 (10/18): Group project 4: Immigration: Mike, Thayes, Sonnaly, Mandeep
Week 10 (10/25): Group project 5: Housing: Spencer, Ryan, Megan, Brenna
Week 11 (11/1): Group project 6: Sales tax on food: Aimee, Paul, Heather, Thayes
Week 12 (11/8): Group project 7: International: Sonnaly, Sandra, Dan, Mike, Michael
Week 13 (11/15): Group project 8: Retirement: Jeff, Neil, Nune, Katie, Sandra
Week 14 (11/22): No class. Thanksgiving break
Week 15 (11/29): Group project 9: Sales tax on gasoline: Nune, Ryan, Dan, Christine
Week 16 (12/6): Exam II