



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Economics

Syllabus

Public Choice

Course Code:	NEGB16
Course Title:	Public Choice <i>Public Choice</i>
Credits:	7.5
Degree Level:	Undergraduate level
Progressive Specialisation:	First cycle, has less than 60 credits in first-cycle course/s as entry requirements (G1F)

Major Field of Study:

NAA (Economics)
SKA (Political Science)

Course Approval

The syllabus was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2022-02-25, and is valid from the Autumn semester 2022 at Karlstad University.

Prerequisites

NEGA01 Economics (30 ECTS credits) or NEGA07 Economics for Political Science Majors (30 ECTS credits), and upper secondary level English 6, or equivalent

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. give an account of and discuss central political theories based on the theory of rational choice,
2. analyse and discuss different political phenomena through application of the theory of rational choice, and
3. identify and discuss positive and normative problems for politics and democracy when individuals act rationally in accordance with the theory of rational choice.

Content

This course is based on a view of human beings as rational maximisers of utility. This means that people want as much well-being for themselves as possible, and choose the best ways of getting there. Many economists and other social scientists assume that humans behave that way, and the course applies this view of human behaviour to political issues. Some of the most important concepts and analytical methods that students have encountered in previous studies in Economics include public goods and game theory.

The idea of politics as an arena where people act rationally has generated a large area of research usually called "Public Choice", and the course covers many classical research results from this area, such as for instance the median voter theorem, the Tiebout model, and Condorcet's paradox. Various theoretical reasons why rational people vote, or abstain from voting, are discussed and compared to empirical results. The course also helps students understand phenomena such as why many people are so ignorant of and indifferent to politics, despite the fact that politics has a great impact on their lives; why politicians often tend to gravitate to the "centre"; advantages and disadvantages of political decisions made at the local or the central level; how financially disadvantageous policy can come about; and how interest groups, which are small minorities in relation to a population, can sometimes have a great impact on political decisions.

Reading List

See separate document.

Examination

Assessment is based on active participation in seminars and a written exam.

If students have a decision from Karlstad University entitling them to Targeted Study Support due to a documented disability, the examiner has the right to give such students an adapted examination or to examine them in a different manner.

Grades

One of the grades Distinction (VG), Pass (G), or Fail (U) is awarded in the examination of the course.

Quality Assurance

Follow-up relating to learning conditions and goal-fulfilment takes place both during and upon completion of the course in order to ensure continuous improvement. Course evaluation is partly based on student views and experiences obtained in accordance with current regulations and partly on other data and documentation. Students will be informed of the result of the evaluation and of any measures to be taken.

Course Certificate

A course certificate will be provided upon request.

Additional information

The local regulations for studies at the Bachelor and Master levels at Karlstad University stipulate the obligations and rights of students and staff.