The textbook for this course is Jonathan Gruber, *Public Economics and Public Policy*. Early in the semester, you should read Chapter 1 on your own. The classes will cover the following topics; please do the reading before each class.

Keep in mind, while doing the reading, that the Gruber casebook is designed for students with more of a formal economics background than I would expect from students in this class. While it therefore uses a lot of equations, it is meant to be understandable through its non-mathematical text and graphs. In general, *you need only skim math-heavy paragraphs, and you can skip the equations*.

In illustration, consider “Utility Mapping of Preferences,” at pages 27-29 (part of the assignment for Week 1). After reading this section, you should understand intuitively the definition of the following concepts: a well-defined utility function, marginal utility, diminishing marginal utility, and marginal rate of substitution. But you need not be able to derive or describe any of these concepts mathematically.

1) **September 5** – Theoretical Tools of Public Finance, pp. 23-55.

2) **September 12** – Tools of Budget Analysis, pp. 86-114.


4) **September 26** – Political Economy, pp. 215-244.

5) **October 3** – Social Insurance, pp. 301-325.

6) **October 10** – Social Security, pp. 331-364.

7) **October 17** – Income Distribution and Welfare Programs, pp. 452-483.


9) **October 31** – Equity and Tax Incidence, pp. 517-543.

10) **November 7** – Tax Inefficiencies, pp. 547-577.

11) **November 14** – Taxes on Savings, pp. 607-631.


13) **November 28** – Corporate Taxation, pp. 657-686.

14) **December 5** – Fundamental Tax Reform, pp. 689-716.
Some important administrative details are as follows. First, the course grade will be based on your final exam grade, but subject to being raised or lowered by a third of a letter grade for class participation, preparedness, and attendance. Second, the exam will be in-class and open book, running 3 hours. Third, I do not keep specific office hours, but am generally available in my office from about 9 to 5 on weekdays. On Thursday afternoons, however, I am teaching another seminar. Feel free to come in without an appointment, but you can e-mail me for an appointment if you are having trouble finding me. Fourth, my secretary is Rosemary Simon. She sits in room 416, and can be reached at 212-998-6183 or simonr@juris.law.nyu.edu.