

PUBLIC CHOICE SEMINAR
445-001
Professor Zywicki
July 29, 2026

COURSE SCHEDULE/MEETING TIMES/TYPE:

Monday & Wednesday 9:40-11:10

From time-to-time it will not be possible for class to meet in person, in which case we will meet virtually if possible or reschedule the class meeting. It is also possible that the starting or ending time of a class might be adjusted in order to make it possible to meet at approximately our regularly scheduled meeting time.

As a matter of routine I will livestream and record classes on Zoom and in the event we have to meet remotely because of weather or otherwise, we will use Zoom to conduct class.

OFFICE HOURS: Monday and Wednesday 11:15-12:15 and Tuesday 1:00-1:30 and 4:00-4:30. Circumstances occasionally will require me to rearrange my office hours schedule. Thus, if you anticipate that you will be coming for office hours, please drop me an email, note, or let me know after class that you will be coming. If my door is open, feel free to drop in.

REQUIRED TEXT: MAXWELL L. STEARNS, TODD J. ZYWICKI, AND THOMAS J. MICELI, *LAW AND ECONOMICS: PRIVATE AND PUBLIC* (WEST 2018).

COURSE OVERVIEW/DESCRIPTION:

Public choice seminar will introduce students to the basic ideas of public choice economics, including economic rationality, interest-group theory, social choice theory, and game theory. It will also provide an overview of the ways in which legal scholars have applied those concepts to questions relevant to the legal process.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: By the end of the course students should have acquired/be able to:

- Understand the fundamental ideas of public choice economics
- Understand how to construct testable economic hypotheses and models
- Write a substantial original term paper of approximately 25 pages long on a topic in public choice.

BASIS OF EVALUATION & ASSESSMENTS

Grades in the course will be based on the following elements, as explained in more detail below. All grades shall be based on timely submission of each assignment—failure to submit each assignment in a timely manner will result in a reduction in grade:

- Paper Topic: 5%
- Paper Outline: 10%
- First Draft of Paper: 15%
- Final Term Paper: 48%
- Twelve “reaction” writing assignments on assigned reading: 12%
- Class participation: 10%
- NOTE: This is a writing seminar and there is no final exam

INSTRUCTOR EXPECTATIONS

- Students are expected to be prepared for class each day and meet all required deadlines.

COURSE RULES/STRUCTURE:

- This class is intended to be discussion-oriented and students will be expected to have done the reading and contribute to the class discussion each week..
- Students who are participating online will be expected to have your cameras on and prepared to participate if called on. At all other times, please mute your mic.
- Protocol for how online students can be recognized to participate in the discussion will be announced at a later date.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION: Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class. The law school is adopting more widespread use of Canvas, which I will attempt to master sufficiently to communicate with you in addition to email.

ATTENDANCE: Regular and punctual attendance are required to earn academic credit. Attendance requirements for academic credit will follow the policies set forth in Academic Regulation 4-1. Should circumstances occur where you anticipate the possibility of missing a substantial number of class sessions (e.g. a serious illness), you should immediately contact the Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs.

CLASS RECORDINGS PROHIBITED: Pursuant to Academic Regulation 4-2.2, no portion of a class session or an examination may be preserved by means of a recording device such as an audio recording device or camera. Any exceptions to this policy must be expressly permitted in writing by me. For those students who are unable to attend a particular class for health reasons, a video recording of the class will be made available to stream through the law school.

EXAM CONFLICTS: In accordance with AR 4-4.1, excuses and requests for permission not to sit for an examination when scheduled must be presented, with appropriate documentation, to the Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs. Except in emergencies, such requests should be presented no later than two weeks before the date of the examination. All requests for extensions or rescheduling of deadlines will be processed through the Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs, whose decision will be final.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: It is expected that students adhere to the Antonin Scalia Law School Honor Code. The Honor Code prohibits lying, cheating, or stealing. This includes a student obligation to never represent the work of another as their own, and to never provide or accept unauthorized assistance on any school related assignment. The Honor Code is available at [Academic Standards](#).

COMMITMENT TO OPEN DIALOGUE AND DEBATE: Class sessions will be conducted according to the principles established in the law school's Statement of Faculty Principles on Classroom [Commitment to Open Dialogue](#) and Debate.

CLASSROOM ACCOMMODATIONS: Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding

laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please visit [Disability Services](#) for detailed information about the Disabilities Registration Process. Faculty may not receive or respond to requests for an accommodation. All requests must be handled by the office of Disability Services. You may contact Disability Services directly via email at ods@gmu.edu or phone at (703) 993-2474. If you have any questions about how in-class or testing accommodations are implemented at the law school, please contact the Assistant Dean, Student Academic Affairs for more information.

ADDITIONAL SCHOOL POLICIES AND RESOURCES:

STUDENT HONOR CODE

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

UNIVERSITY LIFE: University Life provides student support resources such as **Counseling and Psychological Services ([CAPS](#))**, **Student Health Services ([SHS](#))**, and the **Student Support and Advocacy Center ([SSAC](#))**. For more information about University Life on the Arlington Campus, please visit: [University Life Mason Square](#)

READING ASSIGNMENTS

Week	Assignment
Week 1	Chapters 1-2
Week 2	Chapters 11-12
Week 3	Chapters 13-14 McGinnis, <i>Consensus of the Conclave</i> ,
Week 4	Chapters 15-16
Week 5 Topic Due	Chapters 17-18
Week 6	Chapters 19-20 Zywicki, <i>The Supreme Court's Restoration of Executive Prerogative</i>
Week 7	Chapter 21 Chapter 10, pp. 391-399; Chapter 22, pp. 877-903
Week 8	Chapters 23-24
Week 9 Outline Due	Student Presentations
Week 10	Student Presentations
Week 11	Student Presentations
Week 12 First Draft of Paper Due	Student Presentations
Week 13	No Class—In lieu of class I will schedule meetings with each of you to discuss your papers.
Last Date of Regular Exam Period	Final Papers Due Dec. 14, 2026 (last day of regularly scheduled exams)