

Course Syllabus
POLS 5440
(core course in the MPA curriculum)
Principles and Processes of Government Budgeting
Spring 2008

Instructor: Dr. R. A. Schuhmann
Office: 328 A&S Building
Office Hours: 1:00-2:00 Monday, 2:00-4:00 Wednesday, and by appointment
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Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce you to basic concepts and processes of public budgeting. In addition, various topics in public financial management will be treated as they relate to budgeting. The context and characteristics of the budget process, and the norms, roles, and behaviors of participants will be examined and their impact on policy will be explored as well.

Public financial administration has both political and managerial dimensions. The public administrator is often caught in the middle of these, at times, conflicting value systems. Public budgeting is perhaps the area of greatest conflict because it reflects so many different priorities. For example, in raising revenue issues of equity and efficiency are important but because of the political sensitivity of taxing issues these considerations may take a back seat to other concerns. Political considerations and the need for making administrators accountable for the use of public funds often lead to irrational results and/or patterns of behavior. Throughout this course, you should be aware of these tensions and the role of the public administrator in them.

The general focus of the course will be upon acquainting you with the basic concepts and issues associated with financial administration. This means that, in some respects, the perspective of the course will remain fairly broad. You will probably not leave the course as a "budgeting expert." However, you should expect to understand the various functions that budgets serve, the major elements of the budgetary process, what patterns of budgetary behavior are exhibited by various actors, and the significance of various methods of budgeting.

Course Objectives:

- * To enable students to understand and utilize key terms and concepts of budgeting and financial management.
- * To provide students with an understanding of the multiple purposes of budgeting and of alternative budgetary concepts, and of the problems and possibilities inherent in each.

- * To provide students with an understanding of the multiple roles, expectations, and strategies of the various actors in the budget process and their impact on policy.
- * To appreciate the relationships between budgeting and other aspects of financial management and the economy.
- * To impart to students an understanding of the impact of the context, structure, and processes for budgeting upon policy outcomes.
- * To enable students to function as novice participants in public budgeting processes and provide a knowledge and skill base which they can quickly expand.

Course Requirements and Evaluation:

This class will follow a seminar format. That is, in large part, students will drive class discussion within the framework provided by the material read for class. Class sessions will include both presentations by the professor (me) and students (largely the latter). Therefore, it is extremely important that students be prepared to discuss the required readings in class. It is critical that each of you complete the readings in a timely fashion, which means **before** each class begins.

Reading Assignment Presentation/Class Participation	10%
Mid-Term Essay Exam	30%
Issue Papers	30%
Research Paper	30%

This class uses a 4.0 grading scale where letter grades are translated into a numerical score at the end of the semester.

A	=	4.0	C+	=	2.3
A-	=	3.7	C	=	2.0
B+	=	3.3	C-	=	1.7
B	=	3.0	D+	=	1.3
B-	=	2.7	D	=	1.0

Final Overall Grades:	A 90-100	D 60-69
	B 80-89	F 59 and below
	C 70-79	

I. **Class Participation** - Well, you know how this works.... I expect lively and thoughtful discussion. This requires consistent and timely attendance. In addition, I typically request "volunteers" to summarize each reading assignment and make a brief presentation to the class. Volunteering for one of these is mandatory and will influence your class participation grade. When you decide to volunteer to present the material you should **come to class with prepared remarks rather than just thumbing through the chapter. This is a formal presentation of**

the material – not a regurgitation. Think through this material carefully and decide how best to remind the class what’s going on in the chapter but most importantly to share your insights into what is interesting, important, and useful for us to know. I will make certain to touch on issues that are important – your role is to re-introduce the material in a useful way, highlighting the most important dimensions and pointing out the relevancy.

Attendance at the intensive weekends is mandatory. If you anticipate missing all or part of an intensive weekend, consider taking this course the next time it is offered. Also, there is a course web page for this class. Class participation includes consistent involvement in the discussions posted to this page when required.

II. **Four issue papers** will be written during the semester. This assignment is designed to assess whether you understand many of the conceptual matters embedded in the reading material and to evaluate how you understand the material’s importance. In addition, they stand as an incentive for you to read and analyze the assigned readings prior to attending class. They are limited to 3 pages (using 12 point font, double-spaced, and standard margins). In each paper you must **identify** what you believe are the **four** most important concepts from the entire set of readings. For each of the concepts you must identify and explain the concept AND articulate how and why it is important to the study of public administration. You may use examples from your personal and professional life to bring these concepts into sharp relief. This is not an easy task to complete in only three pages. Therefore, there is an incentive to be clear and concise. These are to be considered formal writing assignments and are expected to be well written. The quality (and therefore the grading) of these assignments is based on how well you address the above elements.

The purpose of this assignment is to have you engage the material, as stated earlier, prior to attending class -- this is where the benefit comes from -- and to convey to me that you have read and thought about, in some detail, the reading. If all students read and analyze the material before class, each session becomes something more than simply a regurgitation of the material. Papers should be emailed as Word attachments. When you email your papers PLEASE name your file something that can uniquely identify it to you, e.g., **smith 5440 1**.

III. **The mid-term essay** consists of answering an essay question in no more than four double spaced pages (1000 words) on a topic assigned by your instructor. You will have a choice of which question you choose to answer. I will post the essay questions on the course web page approximately one week before the due date. Answers to these questions should be postmarked no later than **March 26th**. We will discuss the midterm in more detail during the first weekend.

IV. **Research Papers** are to be selected from one of the following two topics:

A. Select a local government entity, state agency, or non-profit (with a budget of at least \$500,000). Analyze its budget from the perspectives presented in class. Then, analyze the budget process or format, specifying what improvements or reforms are desirable and what results would be expected. If you select this question, you should plan on doing some field research.

- B. Read at least ten recent (within the last four years) academic articles (peer reviewed, preferably) on budget process or reform. Compare and contrast the perspectives presented in these articles focusing, perhaps, on a constant theme.

The research project should cover the topic as thoroughly as possible. This means you should choose a subject as early as possible and begin your research. One of the goals of these papers is to further your professional development. If you do not find one of the above topics interesting, please talk with me and we can discuss a topic more in tune with your interests.

Research papers range generally between 15 and 25 double-spaced pages. Use this range only as a general guideline for length. Attach any supporting documents in an appendix. All reports must be in double-spaced format with standard margins and the use of a generally accepted citation style (e.g., APA or MLA). Please include a title page that includes your name, date, and course title. Finally, preface your research report with an "Executive Summary." The summary should provide a brief overview of the report, touching on essential points. The summary should not exceed two pages (most likely one page). The papers are to be turned on during the final intensive weekend, April 18/19.

Lateness:

Assignments will be marked down one half grade for each 24 hour period they are late. That is, from B+ to a B, B to B-, etc. **You cannot miss an intensive weekend.**

Plagiarism:

The penalty for plagiarism in this class is a grade of "F" for the entire course. In addition, a letter will be placed in your University "citizenship" file. Especially in this course, I view plagiarism as antithetical to the public service ethos. The University Regulation that outlines academic dishonesty can be found here: <http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/legal/Uniregs/ur802.htm>. In addition, the department's statement on academic dishonesty can be found here: www.uwyo.edu/Pols/Academic_Dishonesty.doc. You should read both of these statements before class begins. If you have questions about academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Assignment Schedule:

Assignments must be completed by the date on which they are listed. Unless otherwise specified, compressed video sessions will be held from 4:00-7:00 on Wednesdays and intensive weekends will be held on Friday from 4:00-8:00 and Saturday from 8:30-5:30. We may make adjustments to this schedule as are necessary and/or appropriate. You should bring all required reading materials to the intensive weekend (compressed video sessions also). In addition, to make life easier, each of you should bring a calculator to the intensive weekends (just in case).

Session 1: January 30 - Compressed Video

Reading Assignment:

None

Agenda:

Introduction, Review of Syllabus, Course Requirements, Approach of the Course.

Session 2: February 15/16 - Intensive Weekend

Reading Assignment:

Wildavsky, ch. 1

Mikesell, chs. Chapters 1, 2 & 3

Agenda:

Friday

4:00-5:00 -- Introductions, Get Acquainted, Questions, Comments

5:00-6:00 -- "Budgeting: Many Things To Many People"

6:00-8:00 -- Review and Discuss Readings (individual presentations)

Saturday

8:30-10:00 -- Guest Speaker (TBA)

10:00-12:00 -- Finish Reading Assignments

12:00-1:30 -- Lunch

1:30-4:00 -- In-Class Case Studies (working in groups)

4:00-???? -- Wrap Up

Session 3: February 20 – Compressed Video

Reading Assignment:

Wildavsky, chs. 2, 3, 4 & 5

Issue Paper #1 Due

Agenda:

Discuss Readings (individual presentations)

Session 4: March 5 - Compressed Video

Reading Assignment:

Wildavsky, chs. 6 & 7

Mikesell, chs. 4 & 5

Issue Paper #2 Due

Agenda:

Discuss Readings (individual presentations)

**** Midterm Essay Due March 26**

Session 5: April 2 - Compressed Video

Reading Assignment:

Wildavsky, chs. 8, 9
Mikesell, ch. 6
Issue Paper #3 Due
Agenda:
Discuss Readings (individual presentations)

Session 6: April 9 - Compressed Video
Reading Assignment:
Mikesell, chs. 7, 8, & 9
Issue Paper #4 Due
Mid-Term Essay Due
Agenda:
Discuss Readings (individual presentations)

Session 7: April 18/19 - Intensive Weekend
Reading Assignment:
Wildavsky, ch. 10
Mikesell, chs. 10, 11, & 12

Agenda:

Friday

4:00-5:30 -- Questions/Comments/Devise Plan for Weekend
-- Discuss Reading Assignments
5:30-8:00 -- Review and Discuss Readings (individual presentations)

Saturday

8:30-10:00 -- Guest Speaker
10:00-12:00 -- Discussion
12:00-1:30 -- Lunch
1:30-4:00 -- In-class Group Case Analysis
-- Discussion of Federal Debt
4:00-???? -- Final Thoughts/Evaluation/Wrap Up

**** Research Papers due at the beginning of this weekend.**

Required Texts:



Aaron Wildavsky and Naomi Caiden, *The New Politics of the Budgetary Process*, 5th ed. Longman Publishers, 2004.



John L. Mikesell, *Fiscal Administration*, 7th ed. Wadsworth Publishing Co., 2007

Admonitions:

Although at times you may not think so, I recognize that each of you have personal lives that reach beyond academics. I will make every effort to be sensitive to your personal time pressures, etc. Please be forthright and let me know ahead of time. The end of the semester is certainly too late to inform me of a great-uncle who has made it impossible for you to turn your assignments in....



Note: Although the syllabus has a bit of a “formal” or “structured” quality, there is plenty of room for spontaneity and negotiation. I approach my classes similar to that of a tour guide (except that I try to attract people into the discourse of the discipline). Like a tour guide, I often relish cross-country excursions, exploring where interests lead. Student and guides, in my view, travel together. As such, please let me know both when (in the classroom) you wish to take an unplanned excursion and when you feel we need to get back to the proposed itinerary....