

TESC MPA
Fiscal Policy
Winter 2004
Mondays 6:00 – 10:00 p.m.
Lab 1 2003 (except Jan. 12)

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Office hours: Mondays
4 –6 p.m.& by appointment

**MONDAY, JAN. 12 CLASS MEETS OFF-CAMPUS: JOHN L. O'BRIEN
BUILDING HOUSE HEARING ROOM A, 6:00 P.M.**

**THERE WILL BE UPDATES TO THE SYLLABUS AS THE QUARTER
PROGRESSES.**

Syllabus

Reading

Tax Policy Handbook for State Legislators, National Conference of State Legislatures,
ISBN 1-58024-278-2 (Item #5363).

The Politics of Public Budgeting, Irene Rubin, Chatham House, ISBN 1-889119-42-3

If Americans Really Understood the Income Tax, John O. Fox, Westview Press, ISBN 0-
8133-9795-2

Your choice of readings related to your project.
Plus various budget and tax legislative documents...
Plus many internet sites including:

www.dor.wa.gov

www.ofm.wa.gov

www.leg.wa.gov

PROJECT: Choose a fiscal issue—budget or tax—that is under consideration during the current session of the Washington State Legislature. Follow that issue closely. Attend at least two hours of a public hearing on your issue. Interview a person involved in your issue. Write a 6 – 8 page paper analyzing your issue. Detailed instructions are at the end of this syllabus.

Expectations:

You are expected to attend and participate fully in every class. You are expected to complete assignments on time. Your writing will be of the highest quality—clear, grammatically sound and without spelling errors. If you have difficulty meeting any of these expectations, talk with Nita immediately. There is no option for partial credit or an incomplete.

Monday, January 5 CANCELLED

1. What is the current economic context for Washington State fiscal policy?

Guest: Dr. Chang Mook Sohn, Chief Economist, Washington State

2. A look at the Governor's proposed 2004 Supplemental Budget.
3. Discussion of fiscal policy syllabus and plans for the quarter.

Monday, January 12 **AGENDA FROM JAN. 5 WILL BE INCLUDED IN THIS CLASS**

Class will meet at the capital, John L. O'Brien Building, House Hearing Room A.

ASSIGNMENT: *Turn in 2 copies of a one-page statement of the issue you have chosen to follow. Include the reason/s for your choice, what you find most interesting about your issue, and why you believe it is important. (If you cannot choose an issue by this class, schedule a time to talk with me. I know that missing the first class has slowed us down. I will accept your one-page statement by email if you get it to me by Monday, January 19 5:00 p.m.)*

Bring your copy of the Governor's budget and highlights with you to class.

1. Announce your chosen issue to the class.
2. How do legislators put budgets together? What information do they have?

Guests: Victor Moore, Staff Coordinator, House Appropriations Committee; Randy Hodgins, former Staff Director, Senate Ways and Means Committee

Monday, January 19 Holiday (Attending a public hearing and conducting an interview will make up for the Jan 19 and Feb. 16 holidays.)

Monday, January 26

ASSIGNMENT: *Read all of the Tax Policy Handbook for State Legislators. Read Rubin, Chapter 9, 34 – 72, "Revenue Politics." Explore the overview of Washington State Taxes at the Senate Ways and Means website.*

1. What is a fair tax? What are some differing perspectives on taxation?
What is the relationship between taxation and budgeting?

Guests: Representative Helen Sommers, Chair, House Appropriations Committee, Will Rice, Acting Director, Washington State Department of Revenue, Don Brunell, Executive Director, Association of Washington Businesses

Monday, February 2

ASSIGNMENT: *Read Rubin, vii – 33, 73 – 178 Turn in two copies of a 2- 3 page summary of EITHER your interview OR the public hearing you attended.*

Monday, February 9

ASSIGNMENT: *Read Rubin, 179 – 284 Turn in two copies of a 2- 3 page summary of EITHER your interview OR the public hearing you attended.*

Monday, February 16 Holiday

Monday, February 23

ASSIGNMENT: Read Fox, vii – 153, Glossary 316 – 320 Hand in 2 copies of your project..

What is the relationship between policy and budget?

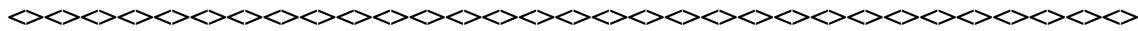
Guest: Nancy Stevenson, Chief Financial Officer, Washington State Department of Ecology

Monday, March 1

ASSIGNMENT: Read Fox, 154 – 288 If necessary, hand in revision of your paper.

Monday, March 8

ASSIGNMENT: Present a 5 minute summary of your project to class and guests.



FISCAL POLICY PROJECT

Choose a fiscal issue—budget or tax—that is under consideration during the current session of the Washington State Legislature. Examples include, but are not limited to:

1. Extension of hi tech tax breaks
2. Restoration of 2003 budget cuts, especially human services
3. Higher education funding tied to economic development
4. Funding the home health care worker contract.

Follow your issue closely. Attend at least two hours of a public hearing on your issue. Interview a person involved in your issue.

Pay attention to any media coverage of your issue. Write a 6 – 8 page paper analyzing your issue. Prepare a 5 minute oral presentation of your issue.

ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY, JANUARY 12

Turn in two copies of a one-page statement of the issue you have chosen to follow. Include the reason/s for your choice, what you find most interesting about your issue, and why you believe it is important. I'll return one copy to you with comments and I'll keep one copy. This is not a rough draft. Ideally, this should serve as the first page of your project. (If you cannot complete this assignment by the 12th because of lack of information due to the cancellation of the opening class—that's ok. I'll accept your one-page statement by email if you get it to me by 5:00 p.m. Monday, January 19.)

ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY, JANUARY 26

Turn in two copies of a 2-3 page analysis of the persons interested in your issue. Who supports your issue and why? Who opposes your issue and why? What is your assessment of the various arguments for and against?

ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Turn in two copies of a 2- 3 page summary of EITHER your interview OR the public hearing you attended.

ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9

Turn in two copies of a 2-3 page summary of EITHER your interview OR the public hearing you attended.

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Attend in person so that you get a sense of the entire proceedings. TVW gives you only the camera's perspective and you cannot get a complete sense of what's happening. If your issue does not command the full two hours of the hearing, you can still get perspective on your issue by how much time is allotted to it. And you will learn something from observing a complete hearing.
2. Pay attention to who wields power over your issue.
3. How is testimony on your issue handled? Does everyone get to speak? What is the response of legislators to the testimony?
4. What testimony strikes you as persuasive? Why?
5. Based on the hearing, what do you anticipate to be the outcome of your issue?

INTERVIEW

1. Schedule your interview well in advance so you aren't caught short near the end of your project. If you are scheduling by phone, begin by identifying yourself by name and asking to speak with the person who does scheduling for the person you want to interview. Be clear about your objective.
2. Choose a person to interview (at least one, but feel free to choose more than one) who is knowledgeable on your issue or who has a serious interest in your issue (or both).
3. Because people involved in the legislative process are incredibly busy during session, your interview will likely be only about 15 minutes.
4. Think about what you want to learn from the person you interview. What is most puzzling to you about your issue. How do they think it will turn out? To whom or what do they think you should pay most attention to?
5. Generally, open-ended questions are best for eliciting information, but if your person starts to ramble have some prepared questions handy to get back on track.
6. See if they are willing to predict the outcome of your issue. Who or what do they see as determining the final outcome?

ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY, FEBRUARY 23

Hand in two copies of your final project. Use your previous assignments as the basis for your final project. Include a reflection about what you have learned from the project.

ASSIGNMENT DUE MONDAY, MARCH 8

Present a 5 minute summary of your project to the class and guests. Be prepared to answer questions about your project. Remember that an oral presentation is very different from a written presentation. Think about sharing the most interesting parts of your project and what you learned.