

# PUAD 6578: Public Finance and Budgeting

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Class Hours: See Calendar Below

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## Course Description<sup>1</sup>

Budgeting at all levels of government is a complex process that requires a tremendous amount of time, energy, and political capital. This course will help you understand the difference between public and private budgeting. The class examines the budget process at all levels. To enhance student learning, this course utilizes case studies that will allow students to (a) learn about the budget process first hand by studying their local government and (b) apply course concepts to areas around the country.

This course is also designed to help students with an interest in public budgeting to work through a research design that may be used later in the program as the foundation to their capstone project or thesis. This project will allow the student to develop a research question by completing a thorough review of the literature.

## Readings

**Required** Mikesell, John. 2018. *Fiscal Administration* 10th Edition. (Note: the hardback copy of this book is quite expensive. However, the publisher offers an [ebook rental](#) - \$31.99 for a 4 month period).

**Required** Some course modules will have academic articles pertaining to that week's subject area.

**Recommended** I strongly encourage students to subscribe to [Governing magazine](#). The subscription is free and is offered in print or digital format.

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<sup>1</sup>I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Students will be notified when changes are made.

## Course Objectives

Students enrolled in Georgia College’s MPA program are expected to show competency in several areas by the time they graduate. Therefore, a set of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) that relate to (and in some cases enhance) NASPAA Universal Competencies were established for students in the program. The SLOs and NASPAA Universal Competencies are listed below. Those highlighted represent the outcomes and competencies students will be assessed on and are required to meet in order to succeed in this course.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of challenges and constraints relevant to governance and external factors.
2. Demonstrate an ability to participate in the policy process, communicate policy alternatives, and work effectively with government, nonprofit institutions, corporations, and community stakeholders.
3. *Demonstrate an ability to define, frame, think critically about and analyze important problems.*
4. *Demonstrates an ability to utilize analytical tools to analyze, present, and interpret data, including appropriate design, statistical, and evaluative techniques for both organization decision making and policy decisions.*
5. Demonstrates an ability to identify public service values and to then systematically apply these values to identify appropriate course of action.
6. Demonstrates an ability to communicate effectively and professionally to diverse audience.

### NASPAA Universal Competencies

1. To lead and manage in public governance (demonstrate an understanding of challenges and constraints relevant to governance and external factors).
2. To participate in and contribute to the policy process (demonstrate an ability to participate in the policy process, communicate policy alternatives, and work effectively with government, non-profit institutions, corporations, and community stakeholders).
3. *To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions (a. demonstrate an ability to define, frame, think critically about, and analyze important problems; b. demonstrate an ability to utilize analytical tools to analyze, present, and interpret data, including appropriate design, statistical, and evaluative techniques for both organization decision making and policy decision).*
4. To articulate and apply public values perspective (demonstrates an ability to identify public service values and to then systematically apply these values to identify appropriate course of action).
5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry (demonstrates an ability to communicate effectively and professionally to diverse audiences).

## Course Assignments

**Course Modules (Due Weekly):** Each week, with the exception of Week 8 and Week 17, you will have the opportunity to complete a module in GaView. The modules will consist of case studies, exercises, and/or discussion posts. There will be 15 modules and the most you will have to complete is 13. This is to allow some flexibility for students that have travel plans outside of the regular schedule.

**Case Study (Due March 3):** You will select a local municipality and write a report on how they have managed their budget over the last 10 years, with a special emphasis on how they handled the years immediately after the 2008 economic recession. The goal of this project is to have you meet with a local budget executive and learn first hand about the budgetary process at the local level. You should also identify, preferably during your interview, one budgetary problem (or puzzle) the municipality is attempting to solve. Be sure to identify at least one problem the municipality is facing as you will use it in the policy analysis assignment.

**Midterm Exam (March 9):** You will have a midterm exam during the eighth week of class. The exam will consist of multiple choice questions with the possibility of short answer and/or essay questions mixed in. This depends on student performance in course modules.

**Paper (Due April 21):** You must draft an original, complete paper on a topic of public finance and budgeting. There will be three steps involved in this paper. We will have a WebEx session with time set aside to discuss each of these requirements.

1. You must submit a proposal outlining your research topic to me for approval by February 10 at 9pm. I recommend looking at chapter headings in the textbook to find an area of interest and then skim the chapter to develop your proposed topic.
2. You must complete an annotated bibliography composed of at least 15 sources. This will be due by April 7 at 9pm.
3. You will submit a final copy of your paper by April 21 at 9pm.

You can use this project in the future for an independent research paper or for a capstone level project. *Original* means it cannot be something you have used or are currently using in another course. *Complete* means it has the following components:

1. Introduction
2. Literature Review
3. Research Question
4. Hypothesis

**Policy Memo (Due May 5):** You will write a brief memo to the person you interviewed outlining potential solutions to the budget issue you outlined in the case study. Instructions for the memo will be posted in GaView. Please note the memo will **not** be sent to the interviewee.

**Final Exam (May 12):** You will have a final exam during the last week of class. The exam will consist of multiple choice questions with the possibility of short answer and/or essay questions mixed in. This depends on student performance in course modules.

## Specification Grading

All of your assignments will be graded as Sat/Unsat and you will know exactly what is required for a passing grade. The purpose for this is to (hopefully) avoid the subjectivity of grading and to save you the urge to email asking why your paper was a 93 instead of a 97 or an 84 instead of a 90. Numerical grading, even with a strong rubric, is challenging and often inconsistent. Therefore, we will use specification grading and you get to determine your final grade in the class by completing one of the following bundles. The bundles must be completed as prescribed, i.e., you do not get to swap assignments. You **MUST** complete the bundle as specified. Note, I will give students the opportunity to revise and resubmit assignments that are borderline (which I realize is subjective, but I am doing my best). Students that receive an “R & R” will be given detailed feedback on how to make their assignment satisfactory and will be given one week to resubmit after the feedback is delivered.

Bundle	Satisfactory Grade on:
A	13 Modules, Midterm Exam, Final Exam, Paper, Case Study, Policy Memo
B	10 Modules, Midterm Exam, Final Exam, Paper, Case Study
C	7 Modules, Midterm Exam, Final Exam, Case Study
D	4 Modules, Midterm Exam, Final Exam
F	None of the above

## Course Policies:

- **Office Hours and Contact:** Office hours are stated on the front page of the syllabus. I will be in my office to assist students during the times listed UNLESS an emergency arises in which case I will notify students. This is an online class and many of you are not in the area so I am also able to meet by appointment via phone or WebEx. Students can contact me via email ([keith.lee@gcsu.edu](mailto:keith.lee@gcsu.edu)). Please do not contact me through GaView.
- **Late Policy:** No assignments will be accepted after the due date. Every assignment will be posted with ample time to complete them, thus a medical/family emergency on the due date is not an acceptable excuse. Get your work done early and you should not have any issues.
- **Attendance and Absences:** There is not an attendance policy for this course, however it is the student's responsibility to watch all WebEx recordings they miss.
- **Academic dishonesty:** Cheating, either on the exam or in the form of plagiarism, will not be tolerated and will result in an “F” in the course and a recommendation to the MPA coordinator that you be dismissed from the program. This class will use plagiarism detection via GeorgiaView.
- Please read these additional [common syllabus statements](#) provided by Georgia College.

## **Class Schedule**

### **Week 01, 01/14 - 01/20: Fundamental Principles of Public Finance**

- Module 1
- WebEx meeting 01/17 at 7:00pm to discuss syllabus and paper proposal.

### **Week 02, 01/21 - 01/27: The Logic of the Budget Process**

- Module 2

### **Week 03, 01/28 - 02/03: Budget Methods & Practices**

- Module 3

### **Week 04, 02/04 - 02/10: Federal Budget Structures & Institutions**

- Module 4
- WebEx meeting 02/07 at 7:00pm to discuss the federal budget process, government shut-downs, and the annotated bibliography.
- Paper proposal due by 9pm Sunday.

### **Week 05, 02/11 - 02/17: State & Local Budgets**

- Module 5

### **Week 06, 02/18 - 02/24: Budget System Reforms**

- Module 6

### **Week 07, 02/25 - 03/03: Capital Budgeting, Time Value of Money, and Cost-Benefit Analysis: Process, Structure, and Basic Tools**

- Module 7
- WebEx meeting 02/28 at 7:00pm to discuss midterm exam.
- Case Study due 9pm Sunday

### **Week 08, 03/04 - 03/10: Exam Week**

- Midterm Exam

### **Week 09, 03/11 - 03/17: Taxation: Criteria for Evaluating Revenue Options**

- Module 8

**Week 10, 03/18 - 03/24: Major Tax Structures: Income Taxes**

- Module 9

**Week 11, 03/25 - 03/31: Major Tax Structures: Taxes on Goods & Services**

- Module 10

**Week 12, 04/01 - 04/07: Major Tax Structures: Property Taxes**

- Module 11
- WebEx meeting 04/04 to discuss paper.
- Annotated bibliography due 9pm Sunday.

**Week 13, 04/08 - 04/14: Revenue from User Fees, User Charges, and Sales by Public Monopolies**

- Module 12

**Week 14, 04/15 - 04/21: Revenue Forecasts, Revenue Estimates, and Tax Expenditure Budgets**

- Module 13
- Paper due 9pm Sunday

**Week 15, 04/22 - 04/28: Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations: Diversity & Coordination**

- Module 14

**Week 16, 04/29 - 05/05: Debt Administration**

- Module 15
- WebEx meeting 05/02 at 7:00pm to discuss final exam.

**Week 17, 05/06 - 05/12: Exam Week**

- Final Exam