



**PAUS 8161: Public Budgeting and Finance**  
**CRN 13670**

Spring Semester, 2009  
Monday 4:30-7:00 p.m.  
Sparks Hall 426  
Office hours: Wednesday 11am-2pm  
or by appointment

Dr. Katherine Willoughby  
335 Andrew Young School  
404.413.0117  
[kwilloughby@gsu.edu](mailto:kwilloughby@gsu.edu) or through  
course at uLearn

***Overview***

If you pay taxes to the federal government, you help pay the interest on trillions of dollars in U.S. debt. Find out why we pay the taxes we do, how this money is spent, who is slicing the national budget pie and why some slices are bigger than others. In this course, students will learn about the technical and political nature of public budgeting. In addition, students will complete exercises of both a theoretical and applied nature. These include examination of current budget issues, assessment of recent academic research in the field of public budgeting and finance, and analysis of budgeting trends in a governmental or non-profit agency or program of the student's choice. This work requires student exposure to word processing, spreadsheets, and presentation software. When you complete this course, you should be able to speak knowledgeably about public budgeting in the United States.

***Expectations***

Students are expected to have three competencies when they enroll in this course. First, students should be well versed in the general workings of U.S. government, the policy process, and the tension between bureaucracy and democracy. Second, students should be comfortable reading original social science research. Students should understand the general structure as well as content of an academically oriented research article. Third, students should be able to consume and interpret qualitative and quantitative research. That is, students should be able to understand most of the statistical analyses, techniques and research conclusions that they read about in this course.

Students are expected to contribute to each class by communicating about the readings for the day, regarding any ***Questions for the Day***, about homework assignments and about any outside, additional research conducted. Students are expected to ask questions in class when methodological

and/or theoretical issues are not clear. It is important that students not enroll in this course if they will have significant professional, personal, or travel-related conflicts. This is a graduate-level course that requires substantial reading and preparation, and missing multiple class sessions will make it impossible for students to remain up-to-date on the material.

### ***Learning Objectives***

At the conclusion of this course:

- ✓ Students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the political, legal, economic, social and cultural factors influencing budgets and budget making in America.
- ✓ Students should be able to describe and explain the technical nature of public budgeting in the United States, including the timetables and rules typically used at the three levels of government.
- ✓ Students should be able to explain and compare the political aspects of budgeting with rational methods of resource allocation in the United States.
- ✓ Students should be able to assess the financial status of public organizations.
- ✓ Students should be able to effectively use Microsoft Excel to develop complex spreadsheets, meaningful analyses, and sophisticated graphics.

### ***Course Texts***

Lee, Robert D., Jr., Ronald W. Johnson and Philip G. Joyce, Public Budgeting Systems, 7th edition. Jones and Bartlett Publishers, Sudbury, MA. 2004. ISBN: 0-7637-3129-3.

Rubin, Irene S., Tax, Class and Power: Municipal Budgeting in the United States. CQ Press, 1998. ISBN-13 978-1-56643-062-3.

Students must register with *Facing up to the Nation's Finances*, a nonpartisan project on the long-term challenges of the federal budget in the United States. Go to: <http://www.facingup.org/> and register. All materials at this website are free! Students will be required to view videos and read materials from this website periodically throughout the semester.

Other readings may be required and assigned throughout the semester; these will be made available online at the course on uLearn.

### ***Course Policies and Procedures***

#### **Academic Honesty**

GSU guidelines on academic honesty will be enforced in this course, and you should be familiar with the GSU Student Code of Conduct and Policies ([http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwdos/codeofconduct\\_conpol.html](http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwdos/codeofconduct_conpol.html), or in the Graduate Catalog, pgs. 53-56). It is your responsibility to ask questions if you are unclear about what is appropriate and acceptable in this course. Academic dishonesty violations will result in a minimum penalty of a '0' on the assignment.

### Accommodation

If you require any special accommodation, particularly for physical limitations or learning disabilities, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can explore all available options.

### Make-Up Tests and Incompletes

Make-up exams and “T” grades are permitted in only rare circumstances. Students must attend class on evenings when in-class exams are administered. If a student is unable to do so, he or she may petition to take a make-up test, but this is rarely granted. I reserve the right to require documentation before giving a makeup test, and I may also choose to impose a grade penalty. Let me know as soon as you see a problem developing so that we can consider the best means of addressing it. I am unlikely to allow a make-up test if you do not get in touch with me prior to the date of the test. **Please familiarize yourself with the University’s course withdrawal procedures:** <http://www.gsu.edu/es/20399.html>

### uLearn and Student E-mail

I use uLearn and e-mail to communicate with students. Typically, homework, group and other assignments as well as *Questions for the Day* will be posted to the course by the Wednesday prior to the next class session, in order for students to have adequate time to prepare. Go to uLearn to view your grades, course announcements and readings other than the texts for class. I use uLearn e-mail to make announcements and communicate with individual students. I will use your official GSU student e-mail address that is available at uLearn. Please check this regularly or arrange for it to be automatically forwarded to a personal e-mail account that you check daily.

### *Evaluation*

I will assign a grade at the end of the semester that is based on each student’s performance regarding class participation, homework assignments, one midterm and one final examination, and one project. I will use the following scale:

93 - 100	A	78 - 79.99	C+
90 - 92.99	A-	73 - 77.99	C
88 - 89.99	B+	70 - 72.99	C-
83 - 87.99	B	60 - 69.99	D
80 - 82.99	B-	0 - 59.99	F

<i>Course Requirement</i>	<i>Proportion of Final Course Grade</i>
Class Participation	5%
Homework Assignments	20%
Online Midterm Exam	25%
Budget Trend Project	25%
Take-Home Final Exam	25%

The **class participation** grade will be a composite evaluation of your attendance to class sessions as well as your expressed interest in and contributions to the class, as evidenced by your participation in class discussions through asking questions, verbally presenting information, serving as a contributing member of any groups, and generally supporting a positive learning environment during each class period. Just attending every class will earn you a score of 80 or a B- for the class participation grade.

To improve on this grade, you will need to come to class ready to communicate what you have learned – through your readings, homework assignments and any outside research you may have engaged in.

Most in-class sessions will involve some group work and presentations by group that address *Questions for the Day*. This group work and the presentations will follow a brief lecture and class discussion of the day's topic. *Questions for the Day* and your group assignment will be posted to the *Questions for the Day* bulletin board at the course on uLearn by the Wednesday prior to the class session of interest.

All **homework assignments** will be made available at least one week prior to the due date using the assignment feature of uLearn. All **homework assignments** must be submitted to the professor using this feature – that is, no hard copy of assignments will be accepted.

The **online midterm exam** is an open book exam that will be available to students for a set period of time (4:00 – 8:00 p.m. on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009). Students can complete the exam in the place of their choice – at home, in a computer lab at the University or elsewhere. The exam will be available electronically to students beginning at 4:00 p.m. on March 9<sup>th</sup> and must be returned electronically to the professor by 8:00 p.m. on March 9<sup>th</sup>. No hard copy of the exam will be accepted. I will try to provide students with an Email reply within one hour of receipt of completed exams.

Directions for the **budget trend project** will be provided through the assignment feature of uLearn within the first two weeks of the course. This project may be conducted individually or in pairs; students will be required to post their project title and partner names to the *Budget Trend Project* bulletin board by February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. Students deciding to work in pairs should choose their partners carefully. That is, one final grade will be applied to each project, regardless of the amount of work that may or may not have been conducted by individual students.

The **take-home final exam** is an open book exam that will be available to students online through the assignment feature of uLearn by the end of the last in-class session for this course (April 27<sup>th</sup>). Students can complete the exam in the place of their choice – at home, in a computer lab at the University or elsewhere. The exam must be returned electronically to the professor by 7:00 p.m. on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 through the assignment feature – that is, no hard copy of the exam will be accepted.

## ***Schedule of Classes and Topics<sup>1</sup>***

*Note: All readings other than the required texts below will be available to download via uLearn, or available from the Facing up to the Nation's Finances website. Dates are subject to change, and students are responsible for any such changes announced during class and/or indicated on the course at uLearn. Please check the course at uLearn frequently regarding Questions for the Day and any additional reading requirements that may be assigned.*

### **01/05 The “publicness” of governmental budgeting**

*What is a budget? What is the difference between public budgeting and budgeting in a private firm.*

Check course online at uLearn : *How to Identify and Read a Scholarly Article or Book*

Graham, A. (2004). A guide to reading and analyzing academic articles @  
<http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/~agraham/guides/guidec.shtml#introduction>

### **01/12 The evolution of public budgeting in the United States**

*How did we get where we are today?*

Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapters 1 and 2

Rubin, Chapters 1 through 4

### **01/19 NO CLASS: Martin Luther King Holiday**

### **01/26 The evolution of public budgeting, continued: A tradition of deficit spending**

*What are the consequences of the current federal deficit?*

Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Review Chapter 2 and read Chapter 15

Video: An Introduction to Facing Up to the Nation's Finances on YouTube or through

<http://www.facingup.org/>

### **02/02 Budgeting and revenue sources**

*What are traditional revenue choices of governments in the United States? How are different levels of government affected in their revenue choices, given the current economic climate?*

Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapters 4 and 5

Rubin, Chapters 5 and 6

### **02/09 Budgeting and expenditure categories**

*What should government pay for? Is this possible given the current economic climate?*

Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapter 6

### **HOMEWORK DUE: State of Grace Budget Trend Analysis**

### **02/16 Budget makers, stakeholders and intergovernmental relationships**

*How is budgeting different across the various levels of government in the United States? Can we change budgeting relationships and responsibilities of these different levels of government? Should we?*

Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapters 7, 8 and 9

Rubin, Chapters 7, 8 and 9

### **02/23 Budget makers, stakeholders and intergovernmental relationships, continued**

### **HOMEWORK DUE: State of State Addresses: Gubernatorial Agenda Setting**

---

<sup>1</sup> Schedule and readings subject to change at the discretion of the professor. All changes will be noted at the course on uLearn.

**03/02-06 SPRING BREAK**

**03/09 NO CLASS SESSION: Online Midterm Exam** available at the course on uLearn by 4:00 p.m. and due back to the professor electronically by 8:00 p.m.

**03/16 Budget cycles, management and execution**

*Management matters: How United States governments navigate financially in up and down economies.*  
Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapters 3 and 10

**03/23 Financial management, accounting and auditing**

*FASAB and GASB: How best practices support effective fiscal management.*  
Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapter 11

**HOMEWORK DUE: GFOA Best practices assessment**

**03/30 Capital budgeting**

*What is capital? What makes budgeting for capital different than for operations?*  
Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapter 12

**04/06 State and local debt management**

*What are the traditional methods for managing public debt? What new debt instruments exist? How has the market for municipals been impacted by the down economy?*  
Lee, Johnson and Joyce, Chapter 13

**HOMEWORK DUE: A job training program: Accounting for operations and capital in a fiscal year**

**04/13 Budgeting in the United States: The status of TARP and, more importantly, where do we go from here?**

Rubin, Irene (2007). The Great Unraveling: Federal Budgeting 1998-2006, *Public Administration Review* (July/August) 67, 4: 608-617.

Video: I.O.U.S.A.: Byte-Sized – The 30 Minute Version on YouTube or through <http://www.facingup.org/>

**04/20 Project Presentations**

**04/27 Project Presentations**

**Take-Home Final Exam** available at the course on uLearn following class

**05/04 FINAL EXAM DUE** to the professor by 8:00 p.m. through the assignment feature at the course on uLearn