NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
ROBERT F. WAGNER GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE

PADM-GP 2143: Government Budgeting
Fall 2017
Tuesdays 6:45–8:45 pm, MEYR 261

Professor Michael Dardia
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Office Hours: By appointment only

Course Description

This is a course in state and local government budgeting in the United States with a particular focus on New York City and State. The course emphasizes budgetary policy and management, analytical techniques, and communication skills. The course builds upon the concepts and techniques students learned in their core courses in financial management, microeconomics, and statistics, and it will introduce analytical tools including: bond analysis, fund accounting, budget preparation, pension and OPEB analysis, revenue estimation and fiscal sustainability. Students will produce case studies that will prepare them to work in agency environments.

Course Objectives

By the conclusion of the semester, students will learn:

1. The functions, processes, and institutions of state and local government budgeting in the U.S.
2. The interconnection of fund accounting, operating budgets, and capital budgets in U.S. state and local governments.
3. The core policies and management practices that govern revenue collection and administration, personal services (PS), other than personal services (OTPS), capital budgeting, debt management, pensions, other post-employment benefits (OPEB), and economic development in U.S. state and local governments.
4. A set of new analytical tools, including: bond analysis, fund accounting, budget analysis, pension analysis, and revenue estimation.
5. Skill development in budget preparation and policy memos/presentations.

Prerequisites

1. CORE-GP 1011: Statistical Methods for Public, Nonprofit, and Health Management
2. CORE-GP 1018: Microeconomics for Public Management, Planning, and Policy Analysis
3. CORE-GP 1021: Financial Management for Public, Nonprofit, and Health Organizations
Required Textbook


In addition to chapters in the textbook, which is on reserve at the Bobst library, I will post readings to NYU Classes. Lectures and assignments assume that you complete all assigned readings prior to their corresponding class meetings.

Microsoft Excel

This course does not require formal instruction in Microsoft Excel. Students seeking instruction in Excel, however, may enroll in Excel Computer Module II (NONCR-GP.933). It is offered most fall and spring semesters.

Writing and Presenting

Quality written and verbal communications are essential to career advancement in any field of public service—including budgeting. Once analyses have been completed, results must be communicated clearly and cogently to decision-makers via emails, memos, issue briefs, and presentations. I will grade assignments not only on technical accuracy but also on the quality of your writing and presentation *per se*. I will provide feedback on both, but students seeking assistance with writing or presenting may enroll in Professional Writing (NONCR-GP.907) or Presentation Skills (NONCR-GP.103). Both are offered most fall and spring semesters, or pre-term. In addition, NYU Wagner makes a [writing tutor](#) available to you, free of charge.

Assignments

*Discussion Articles*
In addition to textbook chapters and other readings, some weeks you will be assigned an article that discusses some aspect of the week’s topic. As I will dedicate a portion of class to discussing each article and students will be expected to participate, it is important that you come to class having closely read the discussion article.

*Writing Assignments*
You will be assigned two case studies, which will require a 1-2 page memo plus citations, figures, and tables. I will discuss the timing and details for these assignments in class.
**Budget Request**
You will construct a budget request for a fictional agency. I will provide you parameters, a template, and data, and you will use this information to prepare the agency’s budget request for the coming fiscal year. In addition to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, you will submit a one-page memo to the fictional department head. Citations, figures, and tables will not count toward or against the one-page limit. I will provide details via NYU Classes.

**Issue Briefs**
You will complete one issue brief. You will investigate a budget topic of your choice, subject to my approval (I will provide some ideas as well). For instance, you might study a pension fund problem in a state or a structural deficit in a city. The assignment requires data collection from news reports, CAFRs, government databases (Census, BEA, BLS, etc.), and other official sources, and it will culminate with a five-page issue brief. The brief will also require a 10-minute presentation to the class; you will then edit your issue brief in response to class feedback. I will post a detailed assignment sheet to NYU Classes.

**Assignment Deadlines**
You will submit all assignments via email to me or NYU Classes, and late assignments will be graded accordingly. You must plan ahead to submit assignments in advance of their deadlines to ensure a timely submission. If you cannot submit a completed assignment by the deadline, you should submit whatever work you have partially completed.

**Academic Integrity**
You are responsible for knowing and following NYU Wagner’s policies on academic integrity. I will summarily report all suspected violations of academic integrity, including cases of unauthorized collaboration on an assignment, to Wagner’s Vice Dean for Academic Affairs.

**Students with Disabilities**
New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. Any student who needs a reasonable accommodation based on a qualified disability is required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) for assistance.

**Grading**
Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

10%: Class Discussion
10%: Budget Request
40%: Issue Brief
40%: Writing Assignments (2 x 20% each)
Class Dates and Topics

September 5  Class 1: Overview of Course
  Goals and objectives of government budgeting
  Budgetary context and timing

September 12  - CLASS CANCELLED

September 19 Class 2: Federalism, Budget Process and Timing
  Reading
  - BHM chapter 2; also pp.42-45; 50-53; 81-89
  - see files and links on course site

September 26  Class 3: Budgetary Accounting
  Reading
  - BHM chapter 5
  - see files and links on course site

October 3  Class 4: Personal Services (PS), OTPS, and Programmatic Budgets
  Payroll costs and fringe benefits
  OTPS items
  Reading
  - BHM chapter 6
  - see files and links on course site

October 10 Class 5: Preparing a Budget Request
  Due: Departmental budget request

October 17 Class 6: Taxes, Charges, and Fees
  Types of Taxes; Use by Levels of Government
  Revenue forecasting
  Reading
  - BHM chapters 8, 9, 10
  - see files and links on course site
October 24  Class 7: Tax Revenue Issues

Tax Burden
Revenue Volatility and Rainy Day Funds

Reading
- see files and links on course site

Due: Case Study 1

October 31  Class 8: Capital Budgeting and Debt Management

Capital planning and budgeting techniques
Bond analysis

Reading
- BHM chapters 11 and 12
- see files and links on course site

November 7 Class 9: Investments, Pensions and OPEB

Investment types and analysis
Budgeting for pension benefits and OPEB

Reading
- BHM Chapter 13
- see files and links on course site

November 14 Class 10: Economic Development Planning & Budgeting

Reading
- see files and links on course site

Due: Case Study 2

November 21 Class 11: Government Fiscal Sustainability

- Structural Deficits & Imbalances
- Options to Improve Fiscal Balance

Reading
- see files and links on course site
November 28 Class 12: Fiscal Sustainability Example; Course Summary

Reading
- see file and links on course site

December 5  Class 13: Presentation Day 1

Due: Issue Brief (group 1)

Reading
Discussion articles as assigned by presenters.

December 12  Class 14: Presentation Day 2

Due: Issue Brief (group 2)

Reading
Discussion articles as assigned by presenters.