

POS 544: Government Budgeting

Dr. Yixin Liu

Fall, 2024

BASIC INFORMATION

E-mail: yixin.liu@nau.edu

Classroom: Online Asynchronous

Office: Raul H. Castro Social and Behavioral Sciences (65), Room 321

Office Hours: 2:00 - 5:00pm, Tuesday, or by appointment via Zoom

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to public budgeting and finance and is a core requirement for the Master of Public Administration Program. The budgetary process is, perhaps, the most important and fundamental component of the public policy process and democratic governance. Funding for public programs is inseparable from their operation (and existence). Furthermore, the sources of revenue for public programs can play an important role in the design of government spending. Since the budgetary process is inherently political, we can understand budgets as both political documents and management tools. Simply put, budgets are an expression of societal values. It is necessary, therefore, for public managers to possess the knowledge and skills required to understand the key principles of public budgeting and finance.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this course is to develop your fundamental knowledge and skills in the management of public financial resources. By the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Identify the roles of budgeting and financial management in the public sector.
2. Prepare budget analysis for a public sector organization.
3. Review capital budgets, conduct financial analysis, and select appropriate financial management approaches.
4. Analyzing, synthesizing, thinking critically, solving problems and making decisions.

5. Critically evaluate and advance our understanding of inclusive excellence with an exploration of equity, inclusion, power, representation, empathy, prejudices in the public sector through self-reflection, readings, discussions, and assignments.

COURSE MATERIALS

1. Rubin, I. S. (2019). *The Politics of Public Budgeting: Getting and Spending, Borrowing and Balancing*. CQ Press. (Cited below as Rubin).
2. Menifield, C. E. (2020). *The basics of public budgeting and financial management: A handbook for academics and practitioners*. 4th edition. Hamilton Books. (Cited below as Menifield).
3. Kioko, S., & Marlowe, J. (2016). *Financial strategy for public managers. 4th edition. Rebus Community*. (Cited below as Kioko; free download available from the NAU library)
 - This book is available for free from the NAU library. To access it, please click [HERE](#) and log in with your student account on BC Open Textbook Collection.
4. You are also required to access on-line reading materials posted on the Canvas site (see course schedule).

Collective Learning Agreement: This semester we acknowledge that Northern Arizona University sits at the base of the San Francisco Peaks, on homelands sacred to Native Americans throughout the region. We honor their past, present, and future generations, who have lived here for millennia and will forever call this place home. With this statement in mind, we will not check boxes in this course, but meaningfully think about materials through discussion, assignments, and reflection – building skills for our current and future professions.

Using Canvas: This is an online course; each student is required to check our course site once per day.

Course Time Commitment: Pursuant to Arizona Board of Regents guidance (ABOR Policy 2-224, Academic Credit), each unit of credit requires a minimum of 45 hours of work by students, including but not limited to, class time, preparation, homework, and studying. For example, for a 3-credit course a student should expect to work at least 8.5 hours each week in a 16-week session and a minimum of 33 hours per week for a 3-credit course in a 4-week session.

Weekly Updates & Lectures: Each week, students are provided a voice-automated weekly update from the professor. Voice updates are intended to be short, provide feedback, and an overview of any assignments due for the week. The updates will also provide an overview of the materials for each week, but are not exhaustive. If not already posted, weekly updates and lectures will be published no later than Monday evening of each week – this is to provide timely information for the class.

Help with Technology & Email: Please make sure your Internet browser settings meet the requirements to be Canvas compatible. Call NAU IT if technological problems arise for 24 x 7 student support. Students should use their NAU student email address for all communication and check it daily.

ASSIGNMENTS

Term Project: Budgeting Process and Financial Analysis

During this course, you are expected to choose a municipal government and complete a term project analyzing its budgeting process and financial management. This term project will be broken down into five smaller assignments throughout the semester. For each assignment, you are expected to submit **double-spaced memos with one-inch margins**. All assignments **MUST** be submitted through the Canvas link; submissions via email will **NOT** be accepted. When submitting assignments on Canvas, students should attach **Microsoft Word doc or docx files**; other forms of documents are **NOT accepted**. Below are brief requirements for each assignment, and I will post detailed instructions as the deadlines approach. For Assignments 2 and 3, I will provide video tutorials a week in advance to help you develop the necessary budgetary analytical skills.

Assignment 1 (20%): Exploring a Local Government Budget (2-pages)

1. Choose a city with a population over 50,000 *other than* Flagstaff. Describe the socio-economic, demographic, and geographic characteristics of the city.
2. Provide an overview of the city's budgeting process, including key stages and stakeholders, and budget priorities of the current elected officials.
3. Discuss the impact of federalism and equity considerations on the city's budget.

Assignment 2 (20%): Budget Analysis (3-pages)

1. What are the predominant revenue sources for the city?
2. Does this government have a diversified tax base?
3. Explain major expenditure categories.
4. Identify the key capital projects and their funding mechanisms.

Assignment 3 (20%): Financial Analysis (3-pages)

1. Discuss the city's debt portfolio, including debt instruments used, debt levels, and debt management strategies.
2. Identify key elements of its financial condition. At a minimum, this should include ratio analysis (Fiscal stress analysis) that we learned in classes.
3. Describe city budget trends of the last five or six years.
4. Discuss the city's financial health in this year and compare it to the last year.

Assignment 4 (20%): Final Presentation

1. Make a short video with slides (less than 5 minutes) and upload it to Canvas.
2. Provide comments to videos from 3 other students.

Assignment 5 (20%): Final Project Integration (10-pages)

1. Combine insights from Assignments 1-4 into a cohesive, approximately 10-page double-spaced memo.
2. Make recommendations for improving the city's budgeting process and financial condition.

GRADING**Total Points for the Course**

Assignment	Points
Exploring a Local Government Budget	20
Budget Analysis	20
Financial Analysis	20
Final Presentation	20
Final Project Integration	20
Total points	100

Late assignment: Students are expected to submit all work on the date specified in the course calendar. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the instructor 72 hours before the date in question. Students must complete all assignments to receive a grade for the course.

Final scores will be rounded to the nearest integer. Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

- A: 90-100
- B: 80-89
- C: 70-79
- D: 60-69
- F: 0-59

DETAILED COURSE SCHEDULE**Week 1 August 26 - September 1: Welcome**

Topics: Welcome section and course overview in zoom on August 30 (Friday) from 5:30pm to 6:30pm.

Readings: Syllabus; Order textbooks

Part 1: The Politics of Public Budgets

Week 2 September 2 - 8: Introduction to Budgeting

Topics: (1) Basic budgeting concepts; (2) Politics of budgeting
Readings: Rubin Chapter 1

Week 3 September 9 - 15: Federalism and Equity in Budgeting

Topics: (1) Fiscal federalism; (2) Equity in budgeting
Readings: Rubin Chapter 3; Rubin & Bartle 2023

Week 4 September 16 - 22: Budgeting as Policy Making

Topics: (1) Politics of budgeting process; (2) Factors of budgeting process
Readings: Rubin Chapter 4

September 21: Assignment 1 Due by 11:59pm

Part 2: The Nuts and Bolts of Public Budgeting

Week 5 September 23 - 29: Preparation of the Budget

Topics: Preparation of the budget proposal
Readings: Menifield Chapter 2; NASBO 2024; Flagstaff Budget Report 2024

Week 6 September 30 - October 6: Revenue

Topics: (1) Taxes; (2) Charges; (3) Other source of revenues
Readings: Menifield Chapter 5

Week 7 October 7 - 13: Cost

Topics: (1) Personnel services; (2) Operating budgets; (3) Cost analysis
Readings: Menifield Chapter 3; Kioko Chapter 5

Week 8 October 14 - 20: Capital Budgeting

Topics: (1) Capital budget; (2) Cost-benefit analysis
Readings: Menifield Chapter 4
Prof Liu will record a video tutorial on budget analysis: Using Flagstaff as an example.

Week 9 October 21 - 27: Complete the Budget Analysis (Catch up week)

Topics: Zoom office hour for Q & A about the assignment 2
October 26: Assignment 2 Due by 11:59pm

Part 3: Understand Financial Management

Week 10 October 28 - November 3: Budgeting Techniques and Analytical Models

Topics: (1) Budgeting techniques and analytical models; (2) Financial forecasting
Readings: Menifield Chapter 6

Week 11 November 4 - 10: Financial Management

Topics: (1) Politics of adaption; (2) Budget implementation and control
Readings: Rubin Chapter 8; Menifield Chapter 7

Week 12 November 11 - 17: Financial Statement Analysis

Topics: (1) Balance sheets; (2) Analyzing statements; (3) Ratio analysis
Readings: Kioko Chapter 2 & 3
Prof Liu will record a video tutorial on financial analysis: Using Flagstaff as an example.

Week 13 November 18 - 24: Complete the Financial Analysis (Catch up week)

November 23: Assignment 3 Due by 11:59pm

Week 14 November 25 - December 1: No Class

Thanksgiving break

Part 4: Term Project Integration

Week 15 December 2 - 8: Presentation and Final Catch Up

Topics: (1) Final project draft review and comments; (2) Make an appointment for an individual meeting with Prof. Liu for feedback on the final project if needed
December 7: Assignment 4 Due by 11:59pm

Week 16 December 9 - 12: Final Week

December 12: Assignment 5 Due by 11:59pm

COURSE POLICIES

- **Extra Credit:** See the section of assignments.
- **Classroom Etiquette:** A driving component of our MPA program is professionalism and your ability to work well with others. Thus, the expectation is that you will maintain a high level of professionalism in your classroom conduct with me, and with your fellow students. This means being respectful during class discussions and in all communications with the professor and others. Failure to do so will result in removal from class discussions. Instructors have the authority and responsibility to address disruptive behavior that interferes with student learning, which can include the involuntary withdrawal of a student from

a course with a grade of "W". For additional information, see NAU's Disruptive Behavior in an Instructional Setting policy at <https://nau.edu/university-policy-library/disruptive-behavior>.

- **E-mail Etiquette:** E-mail is a wonderful tool for you to contact me with questions, but it does not replace office hours. If you have involved questions about course material, you should set up a time to come see me.
- **Incompletes or Withdrawals "W" for the Course:** If for some reason the course is not working out for you, please adhere to the University's policies for the last day to drop a class. Incompletes should request should be sent at least 4 weeks prior to the end of the semester.
- **Late Assignments:** Students are expected to submit all work on the date specified in the course calendar. Any exceptions to this must be approved by the instructor 72 hours before the date in question. Students must complete all assignments to receive a grade for the course.
- **University Attendance Policy:** (please make sure to follow the participation course policies listed above too) Students who are registered for a course but do not attend the first two class meetings may be required by the instructor to drop the course. This rule allows for early identification of class vacancies and to permit other students to add classes. **Students not allowed to remain must complete a drop form or drop the course on the Louie to avoid receiving a failing grade.** Students who know they will be absent should contact the instructor in advance.
- **Wikipedia:** This online source is not reliable and should not be cited in any course assignment. The goal is to become accustomed to using scholarly sources for all work in any of your courses at the University.
- **Academic Integrity:** NAU expects every student to firmly adhere to a strong ethical code of academic integrity in all their scholarly pursuits. The primary attributes of academic integrity are honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and responsibility. As a student, you are expected to submit original work while giving proper credit to other people's ideas or contributions. Acting with academic integrity means completing your assignments independently while truthfully acknowledging all sources of information, or collaboration with others when appropriate. When you submit your work, you are implicitly declaring that the work is your own. Academic integrity is expected not only during formal coursework, but in all your relationships or interactions that are connected to the educational enterprise. All forms of academic deceit such as plagiarism, cheating, collusion, falsification or fabrication of results or records, permitting your work to be submitted by another, or inappropriately recycling your own work from one class to another, constitute academic misconduct that may result in serious disciplinary consequences. All students and faculty members are responsible for reporting suspected instances of academic misconduct. All students are encouraged to complete NAU's online academic integrity workshop available in the E-Learning Center and should review the full Academic Integrity policy available at <https://www9.nau.edu/policies/Client/Details/1443>. As such, all work submitted

must be your own; no duplicate work (work completed for another class) will not be accepted. Acts of cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of zero (0) for the assignment. To avoid acts of plagiarism, cite each reference or source you use and give proper credit for the ideas, opinions, and findings of others. When you are using the exact words of others, you must use quotation marks and include the page number where you found the quote in your citation.

- **AI Policy: Limited use of generative AI is permitted in specific contexts.** This course (or assignment) allows for the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technologies as part of the research and preparation phase of the work; for example, using these technologies to assist with research, generating ideas, creating summaries of topics, and developing drafts of text that are then used as an input to the work students do to generate a final assignment. In this use, students should be aware of the potential limitations of using generative AI as a tool for learning and research, since information is not always reliable or accurate, and should critically evaluate the sources, methods, and outputs of generative AI systems. Any final work submitted by students that contributes toward the course grade is expected to be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups as directed by class assignment instructions. **Submitting final work created by generative AI constitutes an academic integrity violation.** If you have any questions about this policy or if you are unsure whether a particular use of generative AI is acceptable, please ask for clarification before using such technologies.
- **Canvas:** This class is supported by Canvas. Please refer to this site regularly for additional readings, announcements, grades, submitting assignments, or updates to the schedule. When submitting assignments on Canvas, students should attach **Microsoft Word doc or docx files.**
- **Sensitive Course Materials:** University education aims to expand student understanding and awareness. Thus, it necessarily involves engagement with a wide range of information, ideas, and creative representations. In their college studies, students can expect to encounter and to critically appraise materials that may differ from and perhaps challenge familiar understandings, ideas, and beliefs. Students are encouraged to discuss these matters with faculty.
- **Non-discrimination and anti-harassment:** NAU prohibits discrimination and harassment based on sex, gender, gender identity, race, color, age, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or veteran status. Due to potentially unethical consequences, certain consensual amorous or sexual relationships between faculty and students are also prohibited as set forth in the Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationships policy. The Equity and Access Office (EAO) responds to complaints regarding discrimination and harassment that fall under NAU's Nondiscrimination and Anti-Harassment policy. EAO also assists with religious accommodations. For additional information about nondiscrimination or anti-harassment or to file a complaint, contact EAO located in Old Main (building 10), Room 113, PO Box 4083, Flagstaff, AZ 86011, or by phone at 928-523-3312 (TTY: 928-523-1006), fax at 928-523-9977, email at equityandaccess@nau.edu, or visit the EAO website at <https://nau.edu/equity-and-access>

- **Title IX:** Title IX is the primary federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex or gender in educational programs or activities. Sex discrimination for this purpose includes sexual harassment, sexual assault or relationship violence, and stalking (including cyber-stalking). Title IX requires that universities appoint a “Title IX Coordinator” to monitor the institution’s compliance with this important civil rights law. NAU’s Title IX Coordinator is Elyce C. Morris. The Title IX Coordinator is available to meet with any student to discuss any Title IX issue or concern. You may contact the Title IX Coordinator by phone at 928-523-3515, by fax at 928-523-0640, or by email at elyce.morris@nau.edu. In furtherance of its Title IX obligations, NAU will promptly investigate and equitably resolve all reports of sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct and will eliminate any hostile environment as defined by law. Additional important information about Title IX and related student resources, including how to request immediate help or confidential support following an act of sexual violence, is available at <https://in.nau.edu/title-ix>.