



## PADP 6930: Public Financial Administration

Department of Public Administration & Policy  
School of Public & International Affairs  
The University of Georgia

### **COURSE INFORMATION**

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Course Number: PADP 6930  
Call Number: 36733  
Semester: Spring 2020  
Credit Hours: 3.00  
Class Location: Baldwin Hall 102  
Class Time: Wednesday 6:50 PM – 9:50 PM  
Class Session: January 8<sup>th</sup> to April 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Class Format: Face to Face

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

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Instructor: Dr. Michelle L. Lofton  
Email: [mlofton@uga.edu](mailto:mlofton@uga.edu)  
Office Location: 280A Baldwin Hall  
Athens, GA 30602-1615  
Office Phone: 706-542-1746  
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:00 PM – 3:00 PM  
or by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

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This course is a graduate level survey course designed to introduce you to government fiscal affairs at the federal, state, and local levels of government. Public finance is a broad term that describes what government institutions do with taxpayers' money and with economic resources of any given community. It is impossible to comprehensively evaluate the financial affairs of any government without having a multidisciplinary "toolbox" of knowledge and skills. This course will build your "toolbox" by exposing you to public budgeting, the politics of the budgetary process, taxation and revenue policy, and financial management tools.

Your learning is my primary concern in this course, so I may modify this course syllabus if, for instance, we discover we need to spend time on a certain topic and less on another. The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviation announced to the class may be necessary. Please stay tuned into eLC and in-class announcements to make sure you have the latest information in hand.

### **Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for this course.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

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This course is designed for you to demonstrate your knowledge and skills to appreciate and navigate the complexities of government finances. You will display the two competencies in demonstrating your ability (1) to participate in and contribute to the public policy process, and (2) to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions. Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to achieve the following:

1. Identify and apply concepts used in public finance using budgetary, economic and financial tools of analyses.
2. Describe the public budgeting process and assess the challenges of managing budgets in a public sector environment.
3. Construct a simple, professional, and flexible public budget given provided situational constraints.
4. Analyze fiscal problems and fiscal policy questions, as well as propose different approaches to solving problems with a distinct public service perspective.

You will have the opportunity to demonstrate your ability to achieve these learning objectives through the assessment of class discussions, written assignments, and examinations. The formal assessment of your progress in achieving these learning objectives is from your assignments.

## **ACTIVE LEARNING STATEMENT**

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Active learning is any activity that requires you to think about what you are learning, as you are learning it. A myriad of research studies on the effectiveness of activity learning in college classrooms points to improvements in engagement, long term retention of course content, improved competencies, and higher course grades. In this course, you will engage in the learning process through the construction of knowledge and understanding with interactive instructional activities that promote higher order thinking. During your successful completion of this course, you will engage in active learning opportunities designed to focus your attention on improving targeted skills that support the achievement of the learning objectives.

## **COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS**

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### *Expectations of Peers and Group Interactions*

You expect that your peers will be respectful, patient, understanding, encouraging and supportive. You will come to class prepared, engage in teamwork and collaborative activities, and assist each other in the learning experience.

### *Expectations of Yourself*

You expect to be productive, patient, and open-minded. You want to have good time management, increase your critical thinking skills, become a better problem solver, and utilize what you learn in your career.

### *Expectations of Me*

You want Dr. Lofton to communicate in a timely manner, provide clear guidelines and instructions, show fairness and understanding, and be patient when discussing new topics.

*Expectations of Topical Learning*

You want to know how to work an Excel document, basics of finance and budgeting, how to create a budget, how to analyze a budget, how to be flexible with financial decisions, procedure of forming financial policy, and how taxes work.

**COURSE STRUCTURE & GRADING**

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*Course Structure*

This is a critical thinking and writing intensive course where you'll be expected to engage in high quality class participation. Each class sessions will focus on conceptual and analytical material contained in the assigned readings and lecture. During each class, you will make progress towards improving your skills to achieve the learning objectives through an active learning instructional framework. You will be expected to have read the assigned material and to have made a good faith effort to complete all written assignments. However, I am available to aid in supporting your learning both during and outside of class hours. This course develops multiple skills with the following required tasks.

*Course Grading*

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ASSIGNMENTS	RELEVANT LEARNING OBJECTIVES	PERCENT OF YOUR GRADE	DUE DATE
1. Examination One	Outcome 4	20%	February 12 <sup>th</sup>
2. Examination Two	Outcome 4	20%	April 1 <sup>st</sup>
3. Group Research Project	Outcome 2	25%	See description and schedule
4. In-Class Exercises	Outcome 1	15%	See description
5. Individual Budget	Outcome 3	15%	March 4 <sup>th</sup>
6. Excel Certification	Outcome 3	5%	January 22 <sup>nd</sup>

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***Examinations (40%)***

You will complete two essay examinations worth 40% of your final grade. The purpose of these exams are to (1) assess your ability to think critically, analyze data, and apply concepts learned in the course to a real-world scenario, (2) assess your written communication skills, and (3) assess your ability to work under various fixed timelines. These skills assessed are necessary to be successful in public sector employment opportunities. The exams will require you to apply and incorporate concepts and course materials to a hypothetical case. Each examination requires your essay to respond to questions provided about the case and submit to the eLC course page.

The examinations are completed individually but are open-book and open-note. The same grading rubric will be used to assess both examinations. A final exam will be provided as an option to replace the grade of exam one or two if you make a higher scoring grade. This exam will be comprehensive but you will receive one week to complete the exam. Please email a week before the final exam is provided to indicate that you will take the optional final exam. If there are any extenuating circumstances regarding the exam dates and times, please email me at your earliest convenience.

*Examination Schedule*

EXAM	AVAILABILITY DATE	DUE DATE	GRADE
1. One	6:50 PM on February 12 <sup>th</sup>	11:30 PM on February 12 <sup>th</sup>	20%
2. Two	6:50 PM on April 1 <sup>st</sup>	11:30 PM on April 2 <sup>nd</sup>	20%
3. <i>Three (optional)</i>	9:50 PM on April 22 <sup>nd</sup>	11:30 PM on April 30 <sup>th</sup>	<i>(replace)</i>

***Group Research Project (25%)***

The purpose of this project is to (1) improve upon your practical knowledge about budget practice, technique, reform, and results; (2) synthesize information you have learned over the course; and (3) allow for you to participate in a working group of your peers to critically think and develop solutions to problems.

The class will be divided into teams to produce a research project about an agency in a state government. You will select your group shortly after the semester starts based on the enrollment and work as a group throughout the course. We will vote as a class on the type of state agency to cover and each group will select that voted upon agency in a different state. I have assigned specific days in the course to work with your group as well as indicated deadlines for each deliverable. Each group will submit one assignment and each group member will receive the same grade. However, peer evaluations will be required at the end of the project and I may adjust an individual group members grade based on their peer feedback. Detailed information about the group project is available on the group project assignment sheet.

***In-Class Exercises (15%):***

You will participate in active learning exercises during class. The purpose of in-class exercises is to evaluate your engagement with the course materials and provide more timely feedback of your learning. Each class session you will work individually and in groups to address concepts covered in class. The exercises can be in relation to a class lecture, assigned readings, a case study, or your group research project. At the end of the class session, you will turn in a provided handout that articulates your engagement in the session. The next class you will be provided back your exercise with feedback from me.

You will receive a grade of  $\sqrt{+}$ ,  $\sqrt{}$ , or  $\sqrt{-}$  on the exercises. These grades are for informational purposes only. **As long as you make a good faith effort you will receive points for the exercise.** “ $\sqrt{+}$ ” indicates work that is accurate and well-presented, “ $\sqrt{}$ ” indicates work that is generally good but may have small errors, and “ $\sqrt{-}$ ” indicates that the assignment was largely incorrect and you are encouraged to see me for review of the exercise during my office hours or by appointment so we can work together on your learning of the content. In cases where the exercise is not submitted in class or shows a lack of real effort, you will receive no credit for the exercise. I will randomly select exercises turned in over the course of the semester to evaluate your overall in-class exercise grade. If you have actively participated and put forth a good faith effort to contribute to selected activities, you will receive full credit for 15% of your final grade. You will be given the opportunity to make-up an in-class exercise with an alternative assignment if you have an absence from class due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., sickness, hospitalization, birth of a child, and death of a loved one).

**Individual Budget (15%):**

You will individually create a flexible budget for a museum. The purpose of this assignment is to create a simple, professional, and flexible public budget given provided situational constraints. Furthermore, you will be able to highlight your skills to present your findings visually and in writing. You may discuss the assignment and ideas for constructing the budget with your current classmates but the final products (electronic and hard copy) must be your own work. The assignment sheet regarding the detailed instructions is accessible via eLC, closer to the due date.

**Microsoft Excel Certification (5%):**

You will individually complete a Microsoft Excel certification – Excel Essential Training (Office 365) by Dennis Taylor in LinkedIn Learning. The purpose of this assessment is to build your Microsoft Excel skills since this program is frequently used by public and nonprofit officials in their careers. Microsoft Excel, an essential tool in budget compilation and analysis, has become an almost universally required skill for budget analysts. **You are required to complete the Excel certification by the third week of the course.** Log in to LinkedIn Learning (formerly Lynda.com) at UGA: [https://eits.uga.edu/learning\\_and\\_training/lynda/](https://eits.uga.edu/learning_and_training/lynda/) to access the Excel training with your email address. You can consider watching more Excel videos (e.g., Excel 2016 Essential Training which is more in depth) or those that focus on private or nonprofit budget, fiscal and performance information management (e.g., financial risk management solutions, financial management and accounting (related to nonprofits), measuring team performance, and program budgeting and management), if it suits your interest.

**Assigning A Course Grade**

Your weighted average on assignments will be used to determine your letter grade. In determining grades, I will use the following grading scale.

Weighted Average	Letter Grade	Assessment
100% - 93.00%	A	Superior performance
92.99% - 90.00%	A-	
89.99% - 88.00%	B+	
87.99% - 83.00%	B	Good performance
82.99% - 80.00%	B-	
79.99% - 78.00%	C+	Minimal performance
77.99% - 73.00%	C	
72.99% - 70.00%	C-	
69.99% - 60.00%	D	
0.00% - 59.99%	F<	Failed course

**Late Assignment Policy and Incompletes**

You will be given the opportunity to make-up exams in this course and turn in late assignments only for extenuating circumstances and/or conflicts with institutionally approved absences. Incomplete or “I” grades are permitted in rare circumstances after discussing with me in a schedule meeting during my office hours or by appointment. Please let me know as soon as you see a problem developing. You can become familiar with the University’s course withdrawal procedures at UGA [UGA Withdrawal Policies](#).

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOK & MATERIALS**

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Mikesell, John. L. (2017). *Fiscal Administration: Analysis and Applications for the Public Sector*, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition. Cengage Learning. ISBN-13: 978130595368-0

You will need to bring a basic scientific calculator to class. You can purchase one at most retail or online stores (e.g., Amazon, Target, Office Max, Staples, and Wal-Mart) for under \$30. Be sure to purchase a 2-line calculator or a graphic calculator.<sup>1</sup> While you may use a cell phone or tablet in class, you will be more professional in future employment using a calculator.

## **ACADEMIC RESOURCES**

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My goal is to create a learning environment in which you can be successful at achieving the learning outcomes. I will work hard to create and improve the learning environment throughout the semester based on my own observations of the course and your feedback on what would ease your learning process. In return, I ask and encourage you to make the most of this learning opportunity. Please take advantage of the academic support services available to you at the University. Even if you have had excellent study skills in the past, it is easy to slip into suboptimal habits and these services can help you excel in your studies. I am also available during my office hours and by appointment to aid in your learning process during the semester.

### **Library**

The UGA librarians offer one-on-one consultations with students who are writing or re-writing research papers or projects. You can obtain assistance about appropriate research sources, avoiding plagiarism and properly citing work. Please send request to Nadine Cohen: [ncohen@uga.edu](mailto:ncohen@uga.edu) or call at (706) 542-6708, and she will forward your request to the appropriate librarian subject specialist.

### **Division of Academic Enhancement**

The Division of Academic Enhancement has experienced writing instructors to work individually with students to assist with matters such as paraphrasing, grammar, building a convincing argument, incorporating citations, and understanding how and when to cite. Students can bring current pieces of writing to up to two appointments per week. To schedule an appointment, call 707-542-7575 or visit <https://dae.uga.edu/services/tutoring/writing/>

## **UNIVERSITY & COURSE POLICIES**

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### **Accessibility Statement**

UGA is committed to the success of all learners, and we strive to create an inclusive and accessible environment. If you anticipate issues related to the format or requirements of this course, please meet with me. I would like us to discuss ways to ensure your full participation in the course. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an “invisible disability” such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through the Disability Resource Center.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Texas Instruments calculator BA-II Plus, TI-30XIIS or TI-30XS. Other brands such as Casio FX-300MS that are also scientific calculators are also acceptable. I regularly use a Texas Instruments BA-II Plus.

The Disability Resource Center (<https://drc.uga.edu>), works with students who have documented disabilities to access reasonable accommodations and academic supports. For more information or to speak with a coordinator, please call the Disability Resource Center at (706) 542-8719. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process. If you determine that formal, disability-related accommodations are necessary, it is important that you be registered with the Disability Resource Center and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations in order to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations.

### **Diversity and Inclusion Statement**

Diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. The term "diversity" covers differences of culture, background and experience among individuals and groups. Such differences include, but are not limited to, differences of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and abilities, as well as political and religious affiliation and socioeconomic status.

The University of Georgia prioritizes diversity in education and recognizes that diversity is an integral component of educational excellence. Diversity and inclusion are also central to excellence in the public and nonprofit sectors. In the classroom, you are encouraged to honor the uniqueness of peers and to appreciate the opportunities to learn from one another. All persons have the right to be addressed and referred to in accordance with their personal identity. In this class, you will have a chance to indicate the name that you prefer to be called, and if you choose, to identify pronouns with which you would like to be addressed. I will do my best to address and refer to you accordingly and encourage you to support classmates in doing so as well.

During the semester, we will cultivate a practice of open and courteous dialogue. You are encouraged to share diverse experiences, ask questions, and explore different perspectives. Please demonstrate respect for each other's opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind. **In addition, please remember to keep confidential all issues of a personal or professional nature that are discussed in class.**

### **Academic Honesty**

As a University of Georgia student, you have agreed to abide by the University's academic honesty policy, "A Culture of Honesty," and the Student Honor Code. All academic work must meet the standards described in "A Culture of Honesty" found at: <https://honesty.uga.edu/Academic-Honesty-Policy/>. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Questions related to course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to me.

Academic dishonesty violations will result in a minimum penalty of a '0' on the assignment or exam, can escalate to an academic dishonesty charge brought by me, and can result in dismissal from the program of study and the University.

### **Religious Accommodations**

UGA's religious accommodations policy, found at <https://eoo.uga.edu/definitions/religious-accommodations>, recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the Religious Holidays Attendance Policy, I can allow for students to make up work because of a religious observance provided that you notify me. Please look over the course schedule and contact me by the end of the second week of class if there are any classes you will miss due to a religious observance.

### **Participation Policy**

Your active participation is highly encouraged in this course. However, there might be instances in which you cannot attend in-class sessions. Excused absence from class can include properly documented sickness or hospitalization, birth of a child, active duty service requirements, documented family medical emergencies, or university business. In the event that the university cancels classes, such as for severe weather, you are expected to continue with readings as originally scheduled. Any assignments scheduled during those missed classes, such as a group project deliverable or the individual budget assignment, are due at the next class meeting unless other instructions are posted at the course eLC page or communicated via email.

### **Land and Labor Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge that the land I live and work on by naming the Muscogee-Creek, Cherokee, and Chickasaw Peoples upon whose territory the University of Georgia stands. I further acknowledge the enslaved peoples, primarily of African descent, whose labor built much of the University of Georgia.

### **FERPA Notice**

The Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) grants students certain information privacy rights. See the registrar's explanation at: <https://apps.reg.uga.edu/FERPA/>

### **Additional Course Policies**

- Class begins at 6:50 PM and continues until 9:50 PM. To help with your ability to focus throughout the entire three hours, we will typically take a short break about every 45 minutes. Please arrive promptly since all announcements will be made at the start of each class meeting.
- I encourage you to bring a notebook, tablet, or computer to class, for notetaking and active learning activities. However, please do not spend time in class using social media or doing work not related to this class; the goal is for our time together to be focused and engaged, and I encourage you to adopt strategies that will help both you and your classmates.
- The course is structured with active learning activities to build your skills, group discussion, and short lectures. For this reason, I expect you will actively participate in class by responding to questions posed by myself or your colleagues. There is no formal attendance policy in the class however, active participation and the in-class exercises requires your attendance. To facilitate a collegial learning process, you should come to class having covered all the assigned readings.



- Please aim to communicate with me in-person when possible. I can probably address most of your questions before or after class, or during office hours. The office hours listed on the first page are *not* the only times when I will be available to meet. If the listed times don't suit your schedule, please send me an e-mail ([mlofton@uga.edu](mailto:mlofton@uga.edu)) and propose three alternative times you could meet and I will let you know which option works best. If you are unable to meet, please send me an email that concisely articulates your question(s) or concerns. I will check my e-mail regularly and make every effort to respond to your question(s) in a timely manner, within 24-hours.
- You will be required to submit your assignments to the electronic drop-box at the course eLC website. For the group assignments, please provide one submission per group and list all group members. Let me know as soon as possible if you can't deliver an assignment on time due to emergencies.
- No extra credit is given.

**Class Meeting Schedule<sup>2</sup>**

Session	Date	Class Topic	Assignment(s) Due	Readings*
		<b>Public Budgets and Budgeting</b>		
1	1/8	Overview of Course & Principles of Public Financial Administration		
2	1/15	Fundamentals of Budgets and Budgeting		Mikesell – Ch. 1 & 2
3	1/22	Budget Analysis Tools: Cost Accounting & Cost Analysis	<i>Excel Certification Due</i>	Mikesell – Ch. 3 & 4
4	1/29	Budget Structures & Institutions: Federal, State, & Local	<i>Group Project: 3-Page Synopsis</i>	Mikesell – Ch. 5
5	2/5	Budget Systems and Reform		Mikesell – Ch. 6
6	2/12	<b>EXAMINATION ONE</b>	<i>Due at 11:30 PM</i>	
7	2/19	Capital Budgeting & Accounting: Cost-Benefit Analysis		Mikesell – Ch. 7
8	2/26	<b>GROUP PROJECT WORK – No Class</b>		
		<b>Taxation and Fiscal Administration</b>		
9	3/4	Taxation & Revenue Policy <i>Mid-Semester Formative Evaluation (Ruth Poproski)</i>	<i>Individual Budget Due</i>	Mikesell – Ch. 8
	3/11	<i>Holiday: Spring Break – No Class</i>		
10	3/18	Taxation: Property and Income Tax <i>Guest Speaker: Oconee County, GA Finance Director (Wes Geddings)</i>	<i>Group Project: Fiscal Analysis</i>	Mikesell – Ch. 9 & 11
11	3/25	Taxation: Sales Taxes, User Fees, and Charges		Mikesell – Ch. 10 & 12
12	4/1	<b>EXAMINATION TWO</b>	<i>Due 4/2 at 11:30 PM</i>	
13	4/8	Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations	<i>Group Project: Interview Due</i>	Mikesell – Ch. 14
14	4/15	Cash Management & Debt Administration		Mikesell – Ch. 15
15	4/22	Present Group Projects	<i>Group Project Presentation, Final Document, and Peer Assessment Due</i>	
	4/30	Final Exam Due (Optional)	<i>Due at 11:30 PM</i>	

\*Readings listed are from the main textbook. The added optional readings are listed on eLC.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that the course syllabus is a general plan for the course. The schedule and readings are subject to change at the discretion of me. All deviations will be announced to the class and noted on the course eLC page.