



PADP8840: Metropolitan Fiscal Problems
University of Georgia
Department of Public Administration and Policy
Fall 2025

Class Meeting Day/Time: Tuesday, 7:00PM-9:50PM
Instructor: Tyler Reinagel, Ph.D.
Email: tpreinag@uga.edu
Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description and Details

Public economy of metropolitan areas and selected special metropolitan fiscal problems in the areas of public expenditures, revenues, and fiscal administration.

This graduate seminar examines the public economy of metropolitan areas and selected special metropolitan fiscal problems in the areas of public finance and governance. Students will analyze the complex fiscal challenges facing regions, including fragmented governance, fiscal disparities, intergovernmental relationships, and innovative financing mechanisms.

Course Outcomes

This course is designed for students interested in studying the issues and methodology used in state and local fiscal analysis. The goals of this course include providing a general knowledge of the range of important issues in state and local government finance. Special emphasis will be given to fiscal problems in metropolitan areas. Secondly, the instructor strives to provide an overview of the kinds of analytic approaches used in fiscal analysis, particularly the techniques drawn from microeconomics. Third, the instructor wishes to develop some feel for the availability and employment of government financial economic data, particularly as it applies to local problems. The research paper assigned to the class requires the use of the tools of microeconomics to analyze fiscal problems facing state and local governments.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze the theoretical foundations of metropolitan public finance and fiscal federalism
2. Evaluate the fiscal impacts of metropolitan governance structures and fragmentation
3. Assess revenue generation strategies and their distributional effects across metropolitan areas
4. Examine expenditure patterns and service delivery models in urban regions
5. Critically analyze contemporary metropolitan fiscal challenges and policy solutions
6. Apply economic/public administration theory to real-world metropolitan fiscal problems

Course Topics/Schedule/Readings

Week	Topic/Readings	Readings
Week 1 August 19	Introduction to Metropolitan Fiscal Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defining Metropolitan Areas/Fiscal Systems Role of Local Governments in Federal Systems Overview of Metropolitan Governance Structures 	Recommended: Dickinson 1934 Recommended: Adams, VanDrasek, and Philips 1999
Week 2 August 26	Theoretical Foundations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public goods theory and local public finance Tiebout model and residential sorting Fiscal federalism principles 	Feiock, Chapter 1 Brazer 1958 Brenner 2002 Michell-Weaver, Miller, and Deal 2000 Recommended: Andersson 2014
Week 3 September 2	Metropolitan Governance and Fragmentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragmented governance structures Special districts and authorities Regional coordination mechanisms 	Feiock, Chapter 2 Feiock, Chapter 3 Carruthers 2003 Goodman 2020
Week 4 September 9	Fiscal Disparities and Equity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measuring fiscal capacity and need Horizontal and vertical equity concepts Spillover effects and externalities 	Feiock, Chapter 4 Chernick and Reschovsky 2006 Kim and Jurey 2013
Week 5 September 16	Property Tax Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property tax administration and assessment Tax increment financing Property tax limitations and reforms 	Brien, Swindell, and Stockwell 2017 Skidmore, Reese, and Kang 2012 Margolis 1956
Week 6 September 23 *Virtual Class*	Income and Sales Taxes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Municipal income tax structures Local option sales taxes Tax competition and coordination 	Nelson and Foster 1999 Afonso 2016 Sjoquist 2024 Zhou and Hou 2008
Week 7 September 30	User Fees and Special Assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit taxation principles Development impact fees Special assessment districts 	Reynolds 2004 (p377-383, p 430-445) McCubbins and Seljan 2020
Week 8 October 7	Intergovernmental Revenue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal and state aid programs Revenue sharing mechanisms Categorical vs. block grants 	Netzer 2013 Kubler and Roachat 2019 Davis and Gough 2019 Reinagel 2013
Week 9 October 14 *Virtual Class*	Service Delivery Models <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Direct provision vs. contracting Intermunicipal cooperation 	Haughwout 1999 Haughwout 2010 Miller 2000 Nunn and Rosentraub 1996
Week 10 October 21	Infrastructure Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capital financing mechanisms Municipal bonds and debt management Infrastructure investment priorities Public-Private Partnerships 	Hansen, Mullin, and Riggs 2020 Pagdadis et al 2008 Gifford 2019 Scott, Moldogaziev, and Greer 2018

Week 11 October 28	Economic Development Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tax increment financing districts • Economic development incentives • Public investment and growth 	Feiock, Chapter 5 Feiock, Chapter 6 McGahey 2016 Chen, Feiock, and Hsieh 2016
Week 12 November 4	Social Services and Redistribution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local welfare systems • Housing and community development • Regional approaches to social equity 	Feiock, Chapter 7 Basolo and Hastings 2003 Ghimire and Skinner 2022
Week 13 November 11	Education Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School district financing • State aid formulas • Property tax reliance and reform 	Feiock, Chapter 9 Orfield 2007 Diamond, Posey-Maddox, and Velazquez 2021 Ayscue and Orfield 2015
Week 14 November 18	Transportation Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional transportation authorities • Gas taxes and user fees • Transit-oriented development • Environmental impact fees • Climate adaptation funding 	Crabbe, Hiatt, Poliwaka, and Wachs 2005 Sciara 2017 Vega and Penne 2008 Owens and Hall 2014
Week 15 November 25	Concepts and Future of Regionalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green infrastructure financing • Environmental impact fees • Climate adaptation funding 	Feiock, Chapter 10 Feiock, Chapter 11 Margolis 1961 Brazer 1958 (Review) Dickinson 1934 (Review)
Week 16 December 2	Final Presentations	

Required Readings

Feiock, Richard C. *Metropolitan Governance: Conflict, Competition, and Cooperation*. Georgetown University Press, 2004. (ISBN 1-58901-020-5)

Weekly readings from academic research identified above will be posted to eLC and are cited at the end of the syllabus.

Current event readings will be posted to eLC and sent by email periodically throughout the semester.

Assessment and Grading

Assignment/Requirement	Due Date	Percent of Final Grade
Structured Leadership Discussion	Throughout Semester	5%
Defining Concepts Reflection	Week 3 (September 2)	10%
Policy Memos (3)	Weeks 5-14	45% (15% Each)
Data Analysis Exercise	Week 11 (October 28)	15%
Capstone Metropolitan Study and Presentation/Q+A	Week 16 (December 2)	25%

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date assigned

Facilitated Analysis and Discussion of Readings (5%) – Varying Weeks

Beginning with Week 3 (September 2), students will be assigned to serve as facilitators of discussion surrounding the week's topic, readings, and podcast (as applicable). Facilitators will be assigned during the first week of class, based on progress toward degree completion. This facilitated discussion should include a very short summary of the week's reading(s) and conversation among the class about questions, challenges, differing perspectives, and additional considerations that should be taken when discussing the week's topic.

I encourage facilitators to include current events, "real world" examples, and professional experiences (to the extent appropriate/comfortable) to further the conversation. Facilitation will be reserved for the first 30 minutes of each in-person class.

Defining Concepts Reflection (10%) – Due September 2

One of the underlying challenges of discussion of metropolitan and regional governance and public service challenges is a functional understanding of what constitutes a metropolitan area or service delivery region.

Following the first two weeks of class, which introduce and establish theoretical foundations for the course, students will submit a reflection paper using academic studies, reputable current events resources (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, New York Times, etc.), and resources from state/regional/local government agencies in the United States to a) outline varying understandings/differences in definitions of regionalism and metropolitan governance, b) provide informed assessment of the strengths/weaknesses of the variety of definitions, and c) establish a framework from which the student will interpret "metropolitan" and "regional" governance for the duration of the semester.

While optional readings, I encourage review of the Dickinson (1934) and Adams, VanDrasek, and Philips (1999) readings to help inform this reflection.

As a part of this reflection, students should compare regions/metropolitan areas and how they are defined in three different states. This element of the reflection should include maps of the regions (appropriately cited) and discuss disparities in boundaries.

Policy Memos (3 @ 15% Each) – Due Weeks 5-14 at Student Discretion

Students will write professional style memos making policy recommendations to local and regional leaders in a region of the student's choosing. Memos should focus on a specific policy aspect of metropolitan governance from the previous week's class (i.e. a memo on property taxation which is discussed in Week 5 would be submitted at the beginning of class on Week 6).

All three memos should be targeted for the same metropolitan area and directed to the same audience. These memos should succinctly outline the specific problem facing the region in this policy area, identify 2-3 viable alternatives to current practices in the region (including strengths and weaknesses to these alternatives), and make a specific and substantiated recommendation on actions/next steps.

The final recommendation should include specific implementation timelines and resource requirements, identification of key stakeholders and their respective interests, and potential coalition-building opportunities with other government agencies (local, regional, state, and federal), non-profit organizations, and potential private sector entities.

Data Analysis Exercise (15%) – Due October 28

Students will be provided a dataset and practical challenge facing a metropolitan region in the United States on Week 4 (September 9). The practical challenge and scenario will be presented in class, and students will make a data-driven determination based on available information.

Capstone Metropolitan Study and Presentation/Q+A (25%) – Due December 2

Students will conduct a comprehensive fiscal analysis of a selected metropolitan area in the United States. This analysis should include an in-depth assessment of fiscal disparities between local jurisdictions within the region, the empowerment and resources of a regional governing body (i.e. regional commission), attempted regional coordination efforts in recent decades (along with analysis of the reasons for their successes and/or failures), and fiscal policy practices that have been introduced or enacted to address broader, multi-jurisdictional, metropolitan challenges.

Late submissions will only be considered in extreme circumstances, and must be requested and approved via email prior to beginning of class when assignment is due

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

Grades will round up if $>$ or $= .5$ or above, for example, an 89.6 is an A, but 79.2 is a C.

Course Policies

Papers and Assignments

Papers and assignments should reflect the following requirements: 1) Times New Roman, size 12 font; 2) 1" margins on all four sides; 3) page numbers; 4) APA format citations; 5) *no* cover page (name, date, etc at top of page 1), and 6) double-spaced.

Assignments should be submitted directly via email (not through eLC) to tpreinag@uga.edu and the instructor will send confirmation emails upon receipt.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all scheduled course sessions. Since our class only meets once per week, it is vital that students attend every class session.

Professional obligations, personal responsibilities, and unavoidable conflicts arise, but students should notify the instructor as soon as possible regarding absences. Absence from class does not affect due dates for assignments, however consideration for delayed submissions will be given so long as the student maintains active and constant communication with the instructor.

UGA Honor Code

"I will be academically honest in all of my academic work and will not tolerate academic dishonesty of others." A Culture of Honesty, the University's policy and procedures for handling cases of suspected dishonesty, can be found at honesty.uga.edu.

Citations and Plagiarism

Honesty in academic work is a serious concern. Students should familiarize themselves with this section of the UGA Graduate College academic policies (<https://grad.uga.edu/graduate-policies/>) and know that they will be held responsible for cheating, plagiarizing, or any other act that violates the university's academic integrity policy. If I believe a student to be violating this policy, a charge will go through the designated channels and the student will be held accountable to the greatest extent possible. If you have questions about what may constitute a violation of the policy, I encourage you to see me.

In the same spirit, I encourage students to use wiki sources such as Wikipedia in responsible and informed ways. While Wikipedia is not a valid source for citations in assignments, valid and reputable information from Wikipedia will be appropriately sourced. I encourage you to use Wikipedia as a "gateway" to information, but verify and cite the authoritative source for any submissions.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

In this class, you are welcome to use AI for any purpose. However, you should note that all AI generative tools still tend to make up incorrect facts and fake citations, code generation models tend to produce inaccurate outputs, and image/art generation tools can produce copied work or offensive products. You will be responsible for any inaccurate, biased, offensive, or otherwise unethical content you submit regardless of whether it originally comes from you or an AI tool. If you use an AI tool, its contribution must be credited in your submission. The use of an AI tool without acknowledgement is cheating and constitutes a violation of the KSU Code of Academic Integrity.

A critical component of management and leadership in any organization – particularly those as visible as local governments tend to be – is communication. While you will not be penalized for the use of AI (appropriately attributed) in your written assignments, you will be expected to present and effectively discuss and respond to course content.

While AI can be a valuable tool and starting point, it should not be your end product or final result in any circumstance.

UGA Wellbeing Resources

UGA Well-being Resources promote student success by cultivating a culture that supports a more active, healthy, and engaged student community.

Anyone needing assistance is encouraged to contact Student Care & Outreach (SCO) in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-8479 or visit sco.uga.edu. Student Care & Outreach helps students navigate difficult circumstances by connecting them with the most appropriate resources or services. They also administer the [Embark@UGA](#) program which supports students experiencing, or who have experienced, homelessness, foster care, or housing insecurity.

UGA provides both clinical and non-clinical options to support student well-being and mental health, any time, any place. Whether on campus, or studying from home or abroad, UGA Well-being Resources are here to help.

Well-being Resources: well-being.uga.edu

Student Care and Outreach: sco.uga.edu

University Health Center: healthcenter.uga.edu

Counseling and Psychiatric Services: caps.uga.edu or CAPS 24/7 crisis support at 706-542-2273

Health Promotion/ Fontaine Center: healthpromotion.uga.edu

Accessibility & Testing: <https://accessibility.uga.edu/>

Additional information, including free digital well-being resources, can be accessed through the UGA app or by visiting <https://well-being.uga.edu>.

Disclaimer

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Assigned Course Readings (Journal Articles, Research Studies)

Adams, J. S., VanDrasek, B. J., & Phillips, E. G. (1999). Metropolitan area definition in the United States. *Urban Geography*, 20(8), 695-726.

Afonso, W. (2016). The equity of local sales tax distributions in urban, suburban, rural, and tourism rich counties in North Carolina. *Public Finance Review*, 44(6), 691-721.

Andersson, M. (2014). Metropolitan governance and finance. *Municipal Finances: A handbook for Local Governments*, 41-92.

Ayscue, J. B., & Orfield, G. (2015). School district lines stratify educational opportunity by race and poverty. *Race and Social Problems*, 7(1), 5-20.

Basolo, V., & Hastings, D. (2003). Obstacles to regional housing solutions: A comparison of four metropolitan areas. *Journal of urban affairs*, 25(4), 449-472.

Brazer, H. E. (1958). The role of major metropolitan centers in state and local finance. *The American Economic Review*, 48(2), 305-316.

Brenner, N. (2002). Decoding the newest "metropolitan regionalism" in the USA: A critical overview. *Cities*, 19(1), 3-21.

Brien, S. T., Swindell, D., & Stockwell, B. (2017). Benchmarking property taxes in a metropolitan area. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 41(1), 67-90.

Carruthers, J. I. (2003). Growth at the fringe: The influence of political fragmentation in United States metropolitan areas. *Papers in regional science*, 82(4), 475-499.

Chen, S. H., Feiock, R. C., & Hsieh, J. Y. (2016). Regional partnerships and metropolitan economic development. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 38(2), 196-213.

Chernick, H., & Reschovsky, A. (2006). Fiscal disparities in selected metropolitan areas. In *Proceedings. Annual Conference on Taxation and Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the National Tax Association* (Vol. 99, pp. 76-84). National Tax Association.

Crabbe, A. E., Hiatt, R., Poliwka, S. D., & Wachs, M. (2005). Local transportation sales taxes: California's experiment in transportation finance. *Public Budgeting & Finance*, 25(3), 91-121.

Davis, S. D., & Gough, M. Z. (2019). Deepening interlocal partnerships: The case of revenue-sharing infrastructure agreements. *State and Local Government Review*, 51(4), 292-300.

Diamond, J. B., Posey-Maddox, L., & Velázquez, M. D. (2021). Reframing suburbs: Race, place, and opportunity in suburban educational spaces. *Educational Researcher*, 50(4), 249-255.

Dickinson, R. E. (1934). The metropolitan regions of the United States. *Geographical Review*, 24(2), 278-291.

- Ghimire, R., & Skinner, J. (2022). Perceived reasons for paying more for housing in metro Atlanta: Results from the 2018 Metro Atlanta Speaks survey. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 44(9), 1289-1310.
- Gifford, J. L. (2019). Public-Private Partnerships and the Future of US Infrastructure. In *US Infrastructure* (pp. 215-234). Routledge.
- Goodman, C. B. (2021). Political fragmentation and economic growth in US metropolitan areas. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 43(9), 1355-1376.
- Hansen, K., Mullin, M., & Riggs, E. K. (2020). Collaboration risk and the choice to consolidate local government services. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 3(3), 223-238.
- Haughwout, A. F. (1999). Regional fiscal cooperation in metropolitan areas: an exploration. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management: The Journal of the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management*, 18(4), 579-600.
- Haughwout, A. F. (2010). Management of large city regions: Designing efficient metropolitan fiscal policies. *Journal of regional science*, 50(1), 401-421.
- Kim, J. H., & Jurey, N. (2013). Local and regional governance structures: Fiscal, economic, equity, and environmental outcomes. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 28(2), 111-123.
- Kübler, D., & Rochat, P. E. (2019). Fragmented governance and spatial equity in metropolitan areas: The role of intergovernmental cooperation and revenue-sharing. *Urban Affairs Review*, 55(5), 1247-1279.
- Margolis, J. (1956). The variation of property tax rates within a metropolitan region. *National Tax Journal*, 9(4), 326-330.
- Margolis, J. (1961). Metropolitan finance problems: territories, functions, and growth. In *Public Finances: Needs, Sources, and Utilization* (pp. 229-294). Princeton University Press.
- McCubbins, M. D., & Seljan, E. C. (2020). Fiscal secession: An analysis of special assessment financing in California. *Urban Affairs Review*, 56(2), 480-512.
- McGahey, R. M. (2008). Regional economic development in theory and practice. *Retooling for growth: Building a 21st century economy in America's older industrial areas*, 3-32.
- Mitchell-Weaver, C., Miller, D., & Deal Jr, R. (2000). Multilevel governance and metropolitan regionalism in the USA. *Urban Studies*, 37(5-6), 851-876.
- Miller, D. (2000). Fiscal regionalism: Metropolitan reform without boundary changes. *Government Finance Review*, 16(6), 7-7.

- Nelson, A. C., & Foster, K. A. (1999). Metropolitan governance structure and income growth. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 21(3), 309-324.
- Netzer, D. (2013). Federal, state, and local finance in a metropolitan context. In *Issues in Urban Economics* (pp. 435-476). RFF Press.
- Nunn, S., & Rosentraub, M. S. (1996). Metropolitan fiscal equalization: Distilling lessons from four US programs. *State & Local Government Review*, 90-102.
- Orfield, Myron. (2007). The region and taxation: school finance, cities, and the hope for regional reform. *Buffalo Law Review*, 55(1), 91-136.
- Owens, M. L., & Hall, T. (2014, March). Regional voting for transportation and transit investment: The failed case of the Atlanta city-region. In *Urban Affairs Association Conference, San Antonio, TX*.
- Pagdadis, S. A., Sorett, S. M., Rapoport, F. M., Edmonds, C. J., Rafshoon, G. S., & Hale, M. L. (2008). A road map to success for public-private partnerships of public infrastructure initiatives. *The Journal of Private Equity*, 8-18.
- Reinagel, T. P. (2013). Divvying the dollars: Local option sales tax distribution negotiations in Georgia cities and counties. *State and Local Government Review*, 45(1), 25-35.
- Reynolds, Laurie. (2004). Taxes, fees, assessments, dues, and the get what you pay for model of local government. *Florida Law Review*, 56(2), 373-446.
- Sciara, G. C. (2017). Metropolitan transportation planning: Lessons from the past, institutions for the future. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 83(3), 262-276.
- Scott, T. A., Moldogaziev, T., & Greer, R. A. (2018). Drink what you can pay for: Financing infrastructure in a fragmented water system. *Urban Studies*, 55(13), 2821-2837.
- Sjoquist, D. (2024). *The Geographic Distribution of Georgia's Local Sales Tax Revenue* (No. cslf2401). Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, Georgia State University.
- Skidmore, M., Reese, L., & Kang, S. H. (2012). Regional analysis of property taxation, education finance reform, and property value growth. *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, 42(1-2), 351-363.
- Vega, H. L., & Penne, L. (2008). Governance and institutions of transportation investments in US mega-regions. *Transport*, 23(3), 279-286.
- Zhao, Z. J., & Hou, Y. (2008). Local option sales taxes and fiscal disparity: The case of Georgia counties. *Public Budgeting & Finance*, 28(1), 39-57.