Course Description:

Adoption of the State budget is the focal point of New York’s annual legislative session. This course will examine the political and institutional forces that influence the development, negotiation, passage and oversight of the budget. Students will be introduced to budget negotiation strategies and will be shown how to identify the budget’s political and fiscal implications. By the end of the course, students will also have been given an opportunity to become familiar with basic budget analysis tools.

The enacted budget reflects who has the power to get what they want from State government. Since this assertion is contrary to much of the received wisdom in the discipline of political science, I will attempt to place my claim in the context of the applicable literature and then present the evidence from New York. You will be expected to evaluate this claim in light of your own examination of the budget process.

Objectives:

Upon completion of the course, you should expect to:

- Understand the budget process and budget cycle in New York.
- Know how to read budget documents and to be able to identify funding sources and spending categories.
- Be able to analyze the political and institutional components of the budget process.
- Be able to identify and evaluate the arguments presented by budget participants.
- Understand the political and programmatic impacts of changes in the budget.
- In general, be an informed observer of the politics of budget making in New York.

Required Texts:


Recommended:


Census Bureau, 2008 reports on income, earnings, poverty, and health insurance to be released on August 26, at: http://www.census.gov


Class Discussion

Students should expect to take part in class and be prepared to add their thoughts and observations to the discussion.

Paper

This course is designated a “writing intensive” course. You will be required to prepare a term paper of at least 20 pages (12 pt, double spaced) on a significant budget-related topic. You must prepare three separate submissions related to this paper: 1) a prospectus of the paper topic, 2) a draft paper, and 3) a final paper. You are encouraged to consult with me regarding your topic and your progress on the paper throughout the semester. You will also be given an opportunity to discuss your work in class. This discussion will not apply directly to your grade for the paper; it is an opportunity to receive peer input.

Extensions for papers will not be permitted except in extraordinary circumstances. Anyone who fails to turn in the draft or final paper without an approved excuse should expect to lose 1/3 of a grade per calendar day, for example, dropping your grade from A to A- if you are one day late.

Course Requirements and Grading

- Paper prospectus Required to proceed to next step
- Draft paper 20%
- Final paper 40%
- Final exam 30%
- Class participation 10%

Grading is A-E.
Attendance

Attendance is not required but participation does count toward your grade. Also, since the literature on New York State budget politics is spread among so many different sources, you will need to attend class to be able to put the issues and ideas into a coherent whole.

Academic Integrity

University regulations state that students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the standards defining violation of academic integrity. By way of a reminder, please take care not to commit any of the following offenses:

- Plagiarism – The use of another person’s work without proper attribution, i.e. claiming or making it appear that the work is your own. Borrowing the arrangement of material or sequence of ideas without due credit to the author is also plagiarism.
- Lying - Principally, telling me something you know to be untrue when you believe it will materially improve your grade. Another form of lying is falsifying any university document in a way intended to deceive students, faculty or administrators.
- Cheating – Taking an examination with willful and improper access to the answers, whether you are acting alone or in collusion with others, as through copying answers, engaging in written, verbal, or electronic communication with others, or by any other unfair or unauthorized means.

Violation of these standards will result in an automatic failing grade.

Students with disabilities

A student with a documented disability who anticipates needing accommodations for this course should make these arrangements by speaking with me as soon as possible. You should have the Disabilities Resource Center provide me with information verifying your need.

Course Outline

Week 1 (August 25, 27, 29): Introduction to Budget Politics

Reading from texts:
- Forsythe  Memos 1, 2 and Glossary
- Majone  Chapter 1 “Policy Analysis and Public Deliberation”

Additional reading:
- Budget Politics in New York State - Introduction – e-reserve

Week 2 (September 3, 5, 8): What is a Budget?

- Rubin  Chapter 1 “The Politics of Public Budgets”
- Majone  Chapter 2 “Analysis as Argument”
Additional reading:
New York State Constitution, Article VII
People v. Tremaine ("Tremaine I") (1929)
People v. Tremaine ("Tremaine II") (1939)
Saxton v. Carey (1978)
Bankers v. Wetzler (1993)
e-reserve

Week 3 (September 10, 12): Economic Resources and State Revenues

- Majone  Chapter 3 “Analysis as Craft”
- Rubin  Chapter 2 “Revenue Politics”

Additional reading:
- Tax Issues – e-reserve

Week 4 (September 15, 17, 19): Executive Budget Making

- Forsythe  Memos 3 and 4
- Rubin  Chapter 3 “The Politics of the Process”

Additional reading:
- Executive Budget and Enacted Budget documents, at: http://www.budget.state.ny.us

Week 5 (September 22, 24, 26): Legislative Budget Process - Deconstructing Bills and Analyzing budgets

- Rubin  Chapter 4 “The Dynamics of Changing Budget Processes”

Additional reading:
- Bill Analysis – e-reserve

Paper Prospectus due September 24

Week 6 (October 3, 6, 8): Budget Choices and Controversies

- Majone  Chapter 4 “Feasibility Arguments”
- Rubin  Chapter 5 “Expenditures – The Politics of Choice”

Additional reading:
- Congestion Pricing – e-reserve
Week 7 (October 17): Case Study: Social Insurance and Health Care
(No class October 13 and 15.)

Readings:

Week 8 (October 20, 22, 24): Budget Negotiation: Strategy and Tactics

- Forsythe Memos 5 – 8
- Majone Chapter 5 “Changing Institutional Constraints”
- Rubin Chapter 6 “The Politics of Balancing the Budget”

Additional reading:
- Financial Plan and Financing – e-reserve

Week 9 (October 27, 29, 31): Interest Groups and Lobbying

- Lobbying and Pork – e-reserve

Draft Paper due October 29

Week 10 (November 3, 5, 7): Changing Economic Conditions

- Lawrence R. Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, “American Democracy in an Era of Rising Inequality,” at: http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/taskforcereport.pdf
- Income Inequality in New York – e-reserve

Week 11 (November 10, 12, 14): Budget Limits, Imbalances, Deficits and Controls

- Rubin Chapter 7 “Budget Execution”
  Chapter 8 “Budget Implementation and Control"
Additional reading:

**Week 12 (November 17, 19, 21): Federal Aid; Budget Reform**

- Rubin Chapter 9 “Budgetary Decision Making and Politics”

Additional reading:
- New York and Federal Aid – e-reserve

**Weeks 13 - 14 (November 24, December 1, 3, 5, 8) – Paper Discussions**

- Majone Chapter 7 “Policy Development”
  Chapter 8 “Evaluation and Accountability”

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**Final Paper due December 8, the last day of class.**

**Final Exam: Thursday, December 11, 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.**