



90894 Policy Topic I: Federal Budget Policy

Meeting Days, Times, Location: 8/26, 9/9, 9/16, 9/23, 9/30, 10/7
6:00 pm to 8:40 pm Mondays.

Semester: Fall, **Year:** 2025

Units: 6, **Section(s):** [#]

Instructor information

Name	Karl J. Maschino
Contact Info	kmaschin@andrew.cmu.edu 202-409-7169
Office location	444 North Capitol Street , NW, Suite 399, Washington DC 20001
Office hours	By appointment -I am available to meet most evenings or at noon. I will be very flexible.

TA name	Robin Cole
TA Contact Info	
Office location	
Office hours	

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to provide second year Heinz DC public policy students with a fundamental understanding of how the federal budget process works. How do agencies formulate a budget? How do agencies work to gain support for their budget through OMB and Congress? How do you build a budget for a policy proposal?

Understanding how the federal government develops and executes its budget is fascinating, empowering, and simply very important to know in order to realize your potential if you work with federal dollars in any capacity in the public or private sector. Whether you become a budget professional, a program or grant manager or a policy analyst, you will benefit by understanding the budget process, furthermore as you progress in your career you may be responsible for managing budgetary resources, or developing programs that will require funding. Knowing how the federal budget process works will help you better formulate and advocate for resources.

- **Learning Objectives**

- Describe and explain the budget development process from idea to implementation.
- Understand key budgetary terminology
- Understand the legal and constitutional basis for the current budget development process.
- Understand and critically analyze budget proposals
- Explain and demonstrate understanding of an Executive Branch budget
- Explain and demonstrate understanding of the Legislative Branch process.
- Explain the concepts and apply the ideas behind GPRA.
- Understand and demonstrate how to develop a strong budget proposal.
- Explain and put into context important current national budget issues

Learning Resources

Here are links to several good budget resources you can check out and/or use for research:

AGA: <http://www.agacgfm.org>

Association for Budgeting and Financial Management: <http://www.abfm.org>

American Association for Budget and Program Analysis: <https://www.aabpa.org>

Government Finance Officer's Association: <https://www.gfoa.org>

Government Accountability Office: <https://www.gao.gov>

Center for Budget and Policy Priorities: <https://www.cbpp.org/>

The Concord Coalition: <https://www.concordcoalition.org/>

The Congressional Budget Office: <https://www.cbo.gov/>

Here are some additional links to useful resources:

Introduction to the Federal Budget Process, Congressional Research Service:
<https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46240>

Congressional Research Service: Overview of Authorization – Appropriations Process: Canvas

Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget: <https://www.crfb.org/debtfixer>

GAO Budget Glossary: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-05-734sp.pdf>

The Red Book, GAO Principles of Appropriation Law: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-04-261sp.pdf>

GAO Fiscal Outlook: <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105376-highlights.pdf>

Washington Post, How to write an Op-Ed: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/op-ed-writing-guide-washington-post-examples/>

Assessments

The final course grade will be calculated using the following categories:

Assessment	Percentage of Final Grade
Budget Terminology Test	15
Op-Ed Article	20
Critical Budget Analyses	20
Budget Proposal	35
Class Participation	10

Students will be assigned the following final letter grades, based on calculations coming from the course assessment section.

Grade Percentage Interval

Grade Percentage Interval

A+ 98.0-100%

A 92.0-97.9%

A- 90.0-91.9%

B+ 88.0-89.9%

B 82.0-87.9%

B- 80.0-81.9%

C+ 78.0-79.9%

C 72.0-77.9%

C- 70.0-71.9%

D 50.0-69.9%

F 00.0-49.9%

Grading Policies

- Late-work policy: Late work will be accepted on a case-by-case basis. There are always circumstances beyond your control that may contribute to a late assignment. These will be considered. Simply not completing an assignment in unacceptable and disrespectful to your classmates and instructor. Treat this course as you would your professional position. Multiple late submissions may result in a lower grade, just as similar performance would result in a lower rating in your professional positions.
- Make-up work policy: Late assignments will be required to be completed. With proper excuse and context there will be no penalty. Missing assignments must be completed.
- Re-grade policy: If a student would like to request reconsideration of a grade, please make an appointment to discuss.
- Attendance and/or participation policy: Class attendance and participation is mandatory. Participation is worth 15 percent of your grade. Absence due to circumstances beyond your control will be considered.

Course Policies

Attendance & Participation class. It is expected that you will participate in every class. Participation takes various forms. Participation can be verbal and ranges from offering ideas, comments, questions, and elaboration. Participation for some people can be providing additional readings (newspaper or other periodical articles) or videos along with a short summary and explanation and context of why it adds value. If you would like to summarize your comments in an email or posting for the class as opposed to verbally, that is also participation. My goal is to create a space for all to feel comfortable participating. I will actively call on you to participate in our classes, and do not expect there will be a lack of opportunity to participate.

Academic Integrity & Collaboration: This class is focused on understanding, organizing and presenting information. Collaboration of ideas and rough drafts are encouraged. Preparing and submitting your own work is required. Honesty and transparency are important features of good scholarship. On the flip side, plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses with serious consequences. If you are discovered engaging in either behavior in this course, you will earn a failing grade on the assignment in question, and further disciplinary action may be taken.

For a clear description of what counts as plagiarism, cheating, and/or the use of unauthorized sources, please see the University's Policy on Academic Integrity (revised in April 2013):

http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/Academic_Integrity.htm.

I encourage you to work together on homework assignments and to make use of campus resources like Academic Development, the Global Communication Center, and the Intercultural Communication Center to assist you in your pursuit of academic excellence. However, please note that in accord with the university's policy you must acknowledge any collaboration or assistance that you receive on work that is to be graded: so when you turn in a homework assignments, please include a sentence at the end that says either:

- (1) "I worked alone on this assignment.", or
- (2) "I worked with _____ <list names> _____ on this assignment." and/or
- (3) "I received assistance from _____ <list campus resource(s)> _____ on this assignment."

Note that providing this information will only serve to help me understand you better: I strongly endorse the use of campus resources like Academic Development and the Global Communication Center, as well as

collaborative learning, when it increases your ability to succeed in this class and when it enhances your education and learning.

If you have questions about my integration of the university's policy into this course, please do not hesitate to ask: my aim is to foster an environment where you can learn and grow, while ensuring that the work we all do is honest and fair.

For more information about Carnegie Mellon's standards with respect to academic integrity, you can also check out the following link: <http://www.cmu.edu/academic-integrity/>

You are welcome to use generative AI programs (ChatGPT, DALL-E, etc.) in this course. These programs can be powerful tools for learning and other productive pursuits, including completing some assignments in less time, helping you generate new ideas, or serving as a personalized learning tool.

However, your ethical responsibilities as a student remain the same. You must follow CMU's academic integrity policy. Note that this policy applies to all uncited or improperly cited use of content, whether that work is created by human beings alone or in collaboration with a generative AI. If you use a generative AI tool to develop content for an assignment, you are required to cite the tool's contribution to your work. In practice, cutting and pasting content from any source without citation is plagiarism. Likewise, paraphrasing content from a generative AI without citation is plagiarism. Similarly, using any generative AI tool without appropriate acknowledgement will be treated as plagiarism.

Here are some specific expectations for your use of AI generation tools in this course:

- You can include AI generated content verbatim into a writing assignment with quotations and a citation.
- You can paraphrase AI generated content with a citation.
- You can include non-text AI generated content (images, video, code, etc.) with an appropriate citation, when expressly permitted in the assignment prompt.
- You will conduct your own research and generate bibliographies yourself for topics that you have researched.
- You will not use or present generative AI content that you pass off as your own work.

Finally, it is important that you recognize that generative AI tools frequently provide users with incorrect information, create professional-looking citations that are not real, generate contradictory statements, incorporate copyrighted material without appropriate attribution, and sometimes integrate biased or offensive concepts. Code generation models may produce inaccurate outputs. Image generation models may create misleading or offensive content.

While you may use these tools in the work you create for this class, it is important to note that you understand **you are ultimately responsible for the content that you submit**. Work that is inaccurate, biased, unethical, offensive, plagiarized, or incorrect will be treated as such during the evaluation of your work.

Adapted from CMU colleagues in the Heinz College of Information Systems and Public Policy

We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. Each of these diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We, at CMU, will work to promote diversity, equity and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation, but because we want to pursue justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while we also fully commit to the work, inside and outside of our classrooms, of building and sustaining a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values.

Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional. They contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment on the basis of identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

- **Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion:** csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150
- **Ethics Reporting Hotline.** Students, faculty, and staff can anonymously file a report by calling **844-587-0793** or visiting **cmu.ethicspoint.com**.

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate to be more equitable and just.

Accommodations for students with disabilities: If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact Catherine Getchell, Director of Disability Resources, 412-268-6121, getchell@cmu.edu. If you have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with you to ensure that accommodations are provided as appropriate.

Statement on student wellness: There is nothing more important than your health. Working, attending graduate school, and maintaining your personal relationships is difficult under the best of circumstances. Your priority should be to care for your physical and mental health. You may experience a range of challenges that can interfere with learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, substance use, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may diminish your academic performance and/or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. CMU services are available, and treatment does work. You can learn more about confidential mental health services available on campus at: <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Support is always available (24/7) from Counseling and Psychological Services: 412-268-2922.

Mobile Devices and Use of Computers in Classroom: I recognize the benefit of using a device to record notes or to augment your learning. Devices may be used for this purpose in class. Please refrain from using your device to be otherwise distracted, or to distract others in the learning environment. This policy will be revisited if necessary.

8/26, 9/9, 9/16, 9/23, 9/30, 10/7

Course Schedule

Date	Theme/Topic	Learning Outcomes Addressed	Assignments Due
Aug 26	Budget Overview, and Terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand key budgetary terminology • Describe and explain the budget development process from idea to implementation 	
Sept 9	History and Foundation, Analyzing a Budget and Executive Branch Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the legal and constitutional basis for the current budget development process. • Understand and critically analyze budget proposals 	<p>Budget Terminology Test (Terms are on Canvas)</p> <p>Read CRS Intro to Budget: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process, Congressional Research Service.</p> <p>Read: The Red Book, GAO Principles of Appropriation Law: Pages 1-35.</p> <p>Read Authorization vs. Appropriation</p>
Sept 16	Developing a Budget, Executive and Legislative Branch Processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and critically analyze budget proposals • Understanding the Executive Branch Budget Development Process. • Understand the Legislative Branch Process 	<p>2 Page analysis of selected Agency budget submission</p> <p>Guest Speaker</p> <p>Washington Post, How to write an Op-Ed: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/op-ed-writing-guide-washington-post-examples/</p> <p>Read: Office of Management and Budget: An Overview (on Canvas)</p>

Sept 23	Performance Budgeting and Budget Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and demonstrate how to develop a strong budget proposal • Explain the concepts and apply the ideas behind GPRA 	Op-Ed due Budget Terminology Test – Part Two
September 30	Fiscal Sustainability and Politics of the Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain and put in context important national budget issues 	Questions/clarifications regarding budget proposal
Oct. 7	Final Project/Presentation		