<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Information</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>90894 Policy Topics I: Federal Budget Policy</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Units</td>
<td>Lec/Sec</td>
<td>Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mini A4</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CONTACT INFORMATION:
- Ph: 202-364-0108
- Cell: 202-641-2977
- E-mail: georgekr@andrew.cmu.edu
  or
  legemar@starpower.net

LOCATION: HBH237 - by teleconference (March 16 and May 4 in person)

OFFICE HOURS: Available by phone or e-mail as listed above
  Available in Pittsburgh prior to class March 16 and May 4

Prerequisites
- No prerequisites. For those in a Heinz College degree program, a basic course in macroeconomics and/or public finance is useful, but not required.

Description
- Why do we have such large budget deficits? Why does Congress have such a hard time getting to agree on budget policy? Why is there such pork barrel spending and government waste in Washington?

  The answers to these questions, and others like them, require a detailed knowledge of the law and politics that lie behind the budget process, and the difficult policy choices that make up that process each year.

Track I
- This course proceeds simultaneously along two tracks. Track I will cover the law and procedures you need to understand how the federal budget is formulated and acted upon. This sounds dull, but it isn’t! For good reason, people call Congress the world’s greatest soap opera; and the budget process, while complex, is full of political warfare, the clashing of egos, and the constant pressure of voter demands. Those who know the law and procedures can gain an advantage over others in the struggle for dollars and the way they get spent.

Track II
- Track II will introduce you in some of the important budget issues that have made life so difficult for Republicans and Democrats alike: working out an effective budget process, balancing the budget, funding budget priorities with limited resources, and deciding how much (and how) to tax workers and investors.

“Two-pagers”
- When we are working on Track II, you will develop “two-pagers,” the kinds of memoranda and statements written by congressional staff and political advisers.

Selected issue student briefings
- For a better grasp of budget policy than an eight-week course would normally allow, this seminar will also assign two-person teams to investigate selected budget issues (e.g., highway funding, defense procurement), and report back to the seminar with their findings and, where appropriate, recommendations. Each team will produce a written report, based on a detailed assignment provided by me, with a draft summary of the issues due to the rest of the seminar.
at noon on the day of the oral report: Team members will deliver their 5-10 minute report, and field questions from the rest of the seminar in a hearing-like setting. A sample student briefing assignment is attached to this syllabus.

Course Materials (if applicable)
The basic material for this course is my pre-publication text, “Working the Federal Budget: A guide to the details Washington never tells you.” Students will be assigned additional reading materials from public sources and current news articles. Materials will be provided to students, or links and articles will be posted on Blackboard.

Evaluation Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Two-pagers”</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selected issue student briefings</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation*</td>
<td>40%</td>
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There is no final exam in this course. You are, however, expected to complete the reading and written assignments, even with excused absences.

* “Class participation” includes the preparation of answers to assigned questions from the pre-publication text, the federal budget scavenger hunt and the preparation of questions you will ask team members when they give their issue briefings.

Learning/Course Objectives
The overall objective of the course is to introduce you to the concepts and procedures that the players in the federal budget and appropriations process need to know. Because virtually all other policy areas (e.g., health care, environment, defense) have a budget component, and because State budgets depend so heavily on developments in Washington, you will be encouraged to bring your experience from other seminars and job postings into this course.

More detailed learning objectives follow:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
<th>How Assessed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and explain concepts and players that are central to the federal budget process and budget policy.</td>
<td>“Two-pagers,” class participation, discussion of team projects and pre-publication text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify and explain the legal and regulatory underpinnings of the budget process.</td>
<td>“Two-pagers,” class participation, discussion of team projects and pre-publication text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify and explain the constitutional basis for the “power of the purse” and other budget-related powers granted to Congress and the president.</td>
<td>“Two-pagers,” class participation, discussion of team projects and pre-publication text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify and explain major budget-related issues in their political, economic and legal context.</td>
<td>“Two-pagers,” class participation, discussion of team projects and pre-publication text.</td>
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<td>Familiarize oneself with the basic documents that make up the federal budget, and how to find information within those documents.</td>
<td>“Two-pagers,” class participation, written responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Articulate in oral and written form the arguments used by political leaders regarding select budget issues.</td>
<td>“Two-pagers,” class participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilize one’s knowledge of budget policy to develop advisory material for a Member of Congress, political appointee, lobbyist, etc.</td>
<td>“Two-pagers,” class participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grading Scale</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>99.0-100%</td>
<td>88.0-90.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>94.0-98.9%</td>
<td>84.0-87.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>91.0-93.9%</td>
<td>81.0-83.9%</td>
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**Grading Rubric/explanation of grades**

**A+**
Given an issue, identify multiple arguments that are on point, logically consistent, clearly presented and show a professional understanding of the workings of budget policy. Footnotes reflect original sources, when available. This grade is reserved for work that would excel in a professional setting.*

**A**
Given an issue, identify multiple arguments that are logically consistent, clearly presented and show a professional understanding of the workings of budget policy. Footnotes reflect original sources, when available. This grade is reserved for work that would be considered quite adequate in a professional setting but might require minor editing to be considered outstanding.*

**A-**
Given an issue, identify some arguments that are on point, logically consistent, clearly presented and show a professional understanding of the workings of budget policy. Footnotes reflect original sources, when available. This grade is for work that would be considered adequate in a professional setting but falls short for missing key arguments and/or details.*

**B+**
Given an issue, identify some arguments that are logically consistent, clearly presented and show a professional understanding of the workings of budget policy. This grade is for work that would be considered barely adequate in a professional setting because it misses key arguments, is poorly referenced and/or displays a misunderstanding of one or two budget issues that we have covered in class.*

**B**
Given an issue, identify some arguments that show some understanding of the workings of budget policy. This grade is for work that would be considered barely adequate in a professional setting because it reflects hurried and shallow preparation, misses key arguments, is poorly referenced, has gaps in reasoning and/or displays a misunderstanding of multiple (more than two) budget issues that we have covered in class.*

**B-**
Given an issue, identify some arguments that show some understanding of the workings of budget policy. This grade is for work that would be not considered adequate in a professional setting because it reflects hurried and shallow preparation, misses key arguments, is poorly referenced, has gaps in reasoning, and/or displays a misunderstanding of multiple (more than two) budget issues that we have covered in class. The difference between this and a "B" grade is one of degree; the B- and below are reserved for work that would not be considered adequate in a professional setting.*

**C+**
Given an issue, posit arguments that, throughout, show a flawed understanding of the workings of budget policy. This grade is for work that would be not considered adequate in a professional setting because it reflects hurried and shallow preparation, misses key arguments, has gaps in reasoning, and/or displays a marked misunderstanding of multiple (more than two) budget issues that we have covered in class.*
Note: One point will be taken off for lateness of any deadlined written materials. Thus, an A would become and A-, an A- would become a B+, etc. In rare cases, if a student asks in advance for more time, and has a reasonable case, points will not be taken off for limited lateness. See also “Course Policies & Expectations,” below, for more information on absences.

Note also: Students with excused absences will not be marked down for lack of classroom participation.

It is understood that students will have questions about the material. Questions are encouraged at any time in class! An informed curiosity about the subject, as evidenced by intelligent questions and the ability to apply the answers in ensuing discussions, will be noted when compiling students' final grades. Please use the microphone when speaking up during the teleconference sessions.

### Course/Topical Outline: Note assignments listed here subject to change.

**Note also:** "Read" means: get to know the content as if you are going to be tested on it. "Skim" means: be aware of what's in the article and bring it to class in order to discuss its contents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 1  – (March 16)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic</strong></td>
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</table>
| **Required Readings** | • Read Draft text, chapter I  
|                      | • Read Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), *Policy Basics: Introduction to the Federal Budget Process*. The CBPP ([http://www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org)) is a left-leaning organization, but it staff includes many former high-level budget specialists from the government, and its explanatory materials are generally non-partisan.  
|                      | • Read Washington Post article, "The Great Society at 50" (e-mail instructor if you have problems accessing this article). This article encapsulates themes that have driven federal budget policy since the nation's founding and that dominate debate on the role of government today. You are asked to read it for a view of big-picture political pressures affecting the budget — and to read it again for week #7 when we take up federalism and the federal budget. |
| **Deliverables**      | • Prepare written answers to “questions” at the end of chapter I. E-mail them to instructor by noon, March 15 (Tuesday).  
|                      | • Be prepared to discuss the “discussion items” at the end of chapters I. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 2  – (March 23)</th>
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| **Topic**             | The constitutional power of the purse  
|                      | How the budget process has developed over two-plus centuries |
| **Required Readings** | • Read Draft Text, chapters II and III  
|                      | • Read *Principles of Appropriations Law* p. 1-3 through p. 1-21 (top) |
| **Deliverables**      | • Prepare written answers to “questions” at the end of chapters II and III. E-mail them to instructor by noon, March 22 (Tuesday) |
- Be prepared to discuss the “discussion items” at the end of chapters II and III.

### Class 3 – (March 30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Budget concepts</th>
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| Required Readings | - Read Draft Text, Chapters IV through VI.  
- Read "CRS - The Spending Pipeline"  
- Read “Senate Appropriations Committee - Authorizations vs. Appropriations”  
- Read “Budget Function 920”  
- Read OMB Circular A-11, sections 10 (Overview of the Budget) and 15 (Basic Budget Laws) |

Find these sources at Blackboard, "Course Content."

| Deliverables | Team 1: submit materials to class and instructor by noon, March 29 (Tuesday); brief class during seminar the following day.  
All others prepare questions to ask Team 1 members.  
Prepare written answers to “questions” at the end of chapters IV, V and VI.  
E-mail them to instructor by noon, March 29 (TEAM 1 MEMBERS MAY PUT THIS ASSIGNMENT OFF TWO DAYS).  
Be prepared to discuss the “discussion items” at the end of chapters IV, V and VI. |

### Class 4 – (April 6)

| Topic | The budget  
Congressional consideration of the budget |
|-------|-----------------|
| Required Readings | - Read “Draft Text,” Chapter VII.  
- Read "How your appropriations amendment might fail if you fail to read this blog"  
- Read CRS - “Introduction to the Federal Budget Process”  
- Read CRS - “Baselines and Scorekeeping in the Congressional Budget Process”  
- Skim CRS - “Deeming Resolutions: Budget Enforcement in the Absence of a Budget Resolution” |

| Deliverables | Team 2: submit materials to class and instructor by noon, April 5 (Tuesday); brief class during seminar the following day.  
All others prepare questions to ask Team 2 members.  
Prepare written answers to “questions” at the end of chapters IV, V and VI.  
E-mail them to instructor by noon, April 4 (TEAM 2 MEMBERS MAY PUT THIS ASSIGNMENT OFF TWO DAYS).  
Come to class prepared to discuss “questions” and the “discussion item” at the end of chapter VII. |

### Class 5 – (April 13)

| Topic | The content of appropriations bills  
Tax policy |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
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</table>
| • Read "Draft Text," Chapters VIII and IX. | • Team 3: submit materials to class and instructor by noon, April 12 (Tuesday); brief class during seminar the following day.  
• All others prepare questions to ask Team 3 members.  
• Complete "Ninth Biennial Federal Budget Scavenger Hunt." Do not hand it in. Bring your written answers to class.  
• "Two-pager" to be assigned** |

### Class 6 – (April 20)

**Topic** Credit and insurance programs: Alternatives to spending programs  
The budget and the economy

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
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| • Read Draft Text, Chapters X and XI  
• Read the White House summary, [Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010 (PAYGO)](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/paygo_description/)  
• Read CRS brief, "Tax Expenditures and the Federal Budget"  
• Read "What's the Deal with the Public Debt Limit?" | • Team 4: submit materials to class and instructor by noon, April 19 (Tuesday); brief class during seminar the following day.  
• All others prepare questions to ask Team 4 members.  
• Come to class prepared to discuss "questions" and "discussion items" at the end of chapters X and XI.  
• "Two-pager" to be assigned** |

### Class 7 – (April 27)

**Topic** Reducing waste, fraud and abuse: The budget and government performance  
Federalism and the budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Readings</th>
<th>Deliverable</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| • Read Draft Text, Chapters XII and XIII  
• Re-read Washington Post article, [The Great Society at 50](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/paygo_description/) | • Team 5: submit materials to class and instructor by noon, April 26 (Tuesday); brief class during seminar the following day.  
• All others prepare questions to ask Team 5 members.  
• Be prepared to discuss "questions" at the end of chapter XIII  
• "Two-pager" to be assigned** |

### Class 8 – (May 4)

**Topic** The budget and economic outlook  
Crafting budget policy in a partisan environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Read Draft Text, Chapter XIV</td>
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</table>
- Read Congressional Budget Office, *The 2015 Long-Term Budget Outlook*
- Skim CBO, January 2016 Budget and Economic Outlook

**Deliverable**
- Prepare floor statement supporting or opposing the president’s budget, together with fiscal policy recommendations for FY 2017 and beyond. This class will feature a debate format. You will divide into Republican and Democratic teams. Debate details to be posted later.

Note: Assignments are subject to change; therefore, any printouts in the Assignments section of Blackboard take precedence over this syllabus. In addition, it is likely that current news stories will be assigned during the eight weeks of the seminar. Those eight weeks cover a key set of events in the budget calendar, including the budget resolution. In addition, the presidential campaign will inevitably focus on budget issues, in a sharply political context.

Note, also: There will be a delay in posting some of these source materials.

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**Plagiarism and Cheating Notice**

Students are subject to Carnegie Mellon University’s policies on academic integrity. Plagiarism is a serious offense that can result in a failing grade. Note that all academic integrity violations will be reported to the Associate Dean. Additional penalties may be imposed.

Plagiarism includes:
- Presenting another writer’s work as your own;
- Cutting and pasting content verbatim without using quotation marks to indicate a direct quote;
- Inserting a direct quote or paraphrasing content without citing the source in-text using footnotes, endnotes, or parenthetical citations with a corresponding Works Cited, References, or Notes page – in a manner consistent with an APA, MLA, or Chicago style guide;
- Providing incomplete or incorrect information about the source cited;
- Over-relying on templates or other writers’ phrasing.

Also, submitting work written for another course is not acceptable; consequently, a failing grade will be issued for that assignment.

The way to avoid plagiarism is to attribute. Attribution is important for its own reasons, but especially in a political setting. Most Members of Congress and most political appointees want to hear different views, but it’s equally important for them to know where those views are coming from. Are they coming from the party leadership? A major business/labor interest? A nonpartisan source such as the Congressional Research Service? Knowledge of the source will often color the Members/appointees’ reactions and your staff recommendations.

This approach to research may run counter to the kind of work you have done in previous university settings, where the aim is to test hypotheses and arrive at firm conclusions. In a political setting, however, there are often a number of “firm conclusions” out there, depending upon one’s ideology, one’s constituency, and the circumstances of the day. An unadorned statement of “fact” is of less use to a policymaker than the same statement when attributed to a known source. The bottom line: When in doubt, attribute!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Course Policies &amp; Expectations</strong></th>
<th>You are expected to be on time, attend all classes and participate in class discussions.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classes will begin and end precisely on time! There will be a 15-minute break approximately 90 minutes into each class.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students are expected to attend all classes. However, there can be unforeseen circumstances and emergencies that arise. Students may be granted one excused absence for the course which could include an illness or personal emergency (you need to contact me within 1-2 days of missing class if not sooner in order to be excused) or an apprenticeship-related travel/opportunity that is worked out with me in advance of the missed class.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o After the one excused absence, or for any unexcused absences, the student can choose to submit a make-up paper OR receive a “0” for their participation grade for each missed class, which will factor into the student’s final grade for the course. The student should contact me to work out the topic for the paper. Please note that even if a student misses a class (whether excused or unexcused), assignments due for that day must still be completed and handed in. Under certain circumstances, such as illness of the student, the instructor may grant extensions to due dates. I recognize that some absences will be unavoidable but stress that if you miss two classes, you will have missed a quarter of the course.</td>
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<td>• I recognize that some students will be coming directly from work to the evening seminar. You are permitted to bring food to class, as long as it does not interfere with the conduct of the seminar. You are also permitted to use laptops in class, even referencing outside sources in order to add to classroom discussion.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• You are permitted to record class sessions if you speak with me beforehand. This gives me a chance to remind you that the recording must be for your personal use only.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• I encourage different points of view. The clash of different viewpoints is what makes a democracy great and strong. You will be expected to participate in class discussions. Don’t be afraid to have opinions, and to see them challenged in class! You will also, however, be expected to be respectful of others’ points of view.</td>
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</table>
Here is an example of an assignment for the student briefings that will be presented during the seminar – one each week for weeks 3 through 7.

Currently, the class has 10 enrollees, which gives us space for five, two-person teams. I shall publish the briefing topics, giving you the opportunity to e-mail me with the make-up of your team and what your topic preferences are.

Each briefing assignment will consist of a summary of the issue, a statement of the briefing’s purpose, and a list of resources that will help you get started – see below.

Your briefing will have two parts: (1) a 2-5 page written summary of your presentation, to be shared with me and with the rest of the class by noon the day before your presentation, and (2) a 5-10 minute oral presentation during the seminar. The presentation will be given as if at a hearing, with the rest of the class playing the part of committee members who will ask questions.

There are several aims for these briefings:

- Delve more deeply into important budget topics that might not be covered in a cursory, eight-week course;
- Expose students to “real-life” settings, e.g., testifying, briefing a Member about public policy, updating a trade association executive about legislation.
- Help develop skill sets relative to organizing and presenting a written/oral report on a complex public policy issue.]

Student briefing: Where is the Social Security program headed?

Issue: Each year we are warned that the Social Security system is headed toward bankruptcy, with little guarantee that future generations will get to see the full benefit that their parents received. The latest Social Security Trustees report, in fact, states that the Disability Insurance portion of Social Security will run out of money next year. Just the same, there’s little momentum on Capitol Hill for reform of the program.

Your briefing: Summarize the program. Describe its size relative to the rest of the budget. Plot its trends, and describe what will happen under current law if/when funding runs out.

Questions to answer along the way:

- Social Security is actually two programs, not one. Explain.
- What is the solvency situation with the Social Security Trust Funds?
- Why does there appear to be so little progress in making the Social Security program solvent?

Resources to help you get started:

- [2015 Social Security Trustees report](#)
- [Nonpartisan analysis of the report](#), from the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget.