

Basic Information & Resources

Instructor

Meg Lynch

Contact Information

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The best way to contact me is via e-mail. I will try to respond within 24 hours. I am available to meet with you by appointment.

All views expressed in this course are mine alone and do not represent those of my employer(s).

Course Details

Course Description and Overview

This course provides a broad overview of the federal budget and the process by which Congress and the Executive Branch make federal budget policy. Students will gain an in-depth and practical understanding of the budget and appropriations process including: budget development by the Administration, the President's budget submission; the congressional budget process; the congressional authorization process; and the congressional appropriations process.

Weekly class sessions will be held at the Hall of States at 400 North Capitol St NW, Washington, DC 20001

Course Learning Objectives

As result of completing this course, students will:

1. Gain a detailed and practical understanding of the federal budget and appropriations processes.
2. Learn to decode budget terms and language.
3. Develop ability to anticipate budgetary actions by reviewing recent history and evaluating incentives of budgetary actors.
4. Enhance research, writing, and oral communication skills.

Legislative Affairs Program Learning Objectives

Upon completion of the Master's degree in Legislative Affairs, students will:

1. Gain both theoretical and practical knowledge related to the U.S. Congress, general issues in the legislative arena, and how to effectively advance legislation;
2. Hone their oral and written communication skills in both theoretical and technical aspects of legislative affairs;

3. Be able to conduct cutting-edge research and engage in effective problem solving by learning critical thinking skills;
4. Learn how to work effectively with others, the value of collaborative work, and will understand ethical issues involved in the legislative arena.

Required Text and Learning Materials

Schick, Allen. *The Federal Budget: Politics, Policy and Process*. 3rd Edition. Brookings Institution Press. 2007.

Note, the readings for each class will often include articles which are listed in the course schedule and posted on Blackboard.

Evaluation and Grading

Students will be evaluated through the following assessments:

Attendance. Students are expected to attend all classes. A reduction of one half letter grade will be taken for students missing more than one class, and an additional one half letter grade reduction will be imposed for missing each class thereafter. Exceptions will apply for emergencies or extenuating circumstances. To the extent practicable, exceptions should be requested in advance.

Participation and Current Events (20%). Any discussion is enlivened by the thoughtful contributions of everyone in the class. Students are expected to be prepared and participate. Our discussions will be shaped by the readings. Students should read prior to class. Classes will include discussion of current events and issues related to the course subject matter. Students are expected to stay abreast of current events as they pertain to topics of this course.

Class Goal Paper (5%). To assist me in understanding your particular perspective, please share with me your goals for this course, as well as other information you think might be helpful, such as: your current position and/or previous positions; your career goals for the near and long term; how your career goals relate to the course content (if at all); your level of knowledge and comfort with the budget and the budget process; areas of special interest; and any budget or budget related questions you hope to have answered in this class. (No more than two pages double spaced.)

Addressing the Deficit Position Paper (25%) Using CBO's most recent edition of *Options for Reducing the Deficit*, identify a method for reducing the deficit by \$100 billion over the ten-year period (through one or more changes to spending, revenue, or both.) Explain why adopting these deficit reduction measures is worthwhile. Describe the incentives and disincentives lawmakers would face in voting for such a proposal, and which stakeholders would oppose the proposal. (No more than three pages double spaced, per option.)

Budget Tracking (25%) Select a program or policy issue to research through the budget and appropriations process for FY2021. Summarize the program or policy, providing information on the agency responsible for administering the program, as well brief information on the program's history and/or purpose. Provide information on what was included in the President's Budget request related to the program and outline any action taken by Congress. Provide information on stakeholders, note committees of jurisdiction, and describe existing or potential proponents and opponents of the program or policy. (No more than five pages double spaced.)

Budget Process Reform Paper & Presentation (25%) You work for a Member of Congress who has been assigned to a select committee on budget process reform. The Member wants you to identify an existing budget process proposal or develop a new budget process proposal that could be suggested in

committee. Explain the proposal, note which problems the proposal seeks to solve, and explain how it would solve such problems. Provide information on potential proponents and opponents of the proposals, as well as potential unintended consequences of adopting the proposal. Describe how similar proposals have fared in the past. (No more than five pages double spaced.)

Papers will be accepted after the due date. However, unless you are ill or suffering a specific hardship of which you have made me aware, the paper will receive a 5% reduction for each day it is late.

Assessments will contribute toward the student's grade based on the following chart:

Assignment Category	Due Date	Weight
Participation/ Current Events	--	20%
Class Goal Paper	9/9	5%
Addressing the Deficit Position Paper	10/14	25%
Budget Tracking	11/12	25%
Budget Process Reform Paper & Presentation	12/2	25%
<i>Total</i>		<i>100%</i>

Tentative Course Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar. Final dates and details will be found on the Blackboard course site.

Week 1: Sep. 2

Topic: Context for Budgetary Decision-Making

Learning Objective: To gain a basic understanding of the main components of the federal budget; the constitutional and legislative authorities that shape the budget process; the players in the budget process; and the legislative tools available for affecting the budget.

Reading Due Today:

- Schick, Chapter 1-2
- *Budget of the U.S. Government*. usa.gov. <https://www.usa.gov/budget>
- Lynch, "Budgetary Decision Making in Congress." Congressional Research Service, 2018. <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/IF11032.pdf>

Week 2: Sep. 9

Topic: The Budget Outlook

Learning Objective: To gain a basic understanding of recent budget trends and budget projections, as well as the statutory debt limit. To introduce the tools used by the federal government to set a budget plan, including the President's budget submission and the budget resolution.

Reading Due Today:

- Schick, Chapter 3-4
- *Congressional Budget Office Infographics:*
 - *The Federal Budget:* <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57170>
 - *Mandatory Spending in 2021:* <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57171>
 - *Discretionary Spending in 2021:* <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57172>
 - *Revenues in 2021:* <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57173>

Assignment(s) Due Today: Class Goal Paper

Week 3: Sep. 16

Topic: The President's Budget Request

Learning Objective: To gain an understating of the purpose, content, and impact of the President's Budget Request.

Reading Due Today:

- Schick, Chapter 5
- Skim the most recent President's Budget Submission: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/>

Week 4: Sep. 23

Topic: Budget Resolutions and Budget Reconciliation Legislation, Part I

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To gain an understanding of the purpose, content, and impact of budget resolutions and budget reconciliation legislation, and to consider the congressional incentives and disincentives involved in their use.

Reading Due Today:

- Schick, Chapter 6
- Skim only-Lynch, "Deeming Resolutions: Budget Enforcement in the Absence of a Budget Resolution." Congressional Research Service. 2019. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44296>
- Lynch/ Saturno. "The Budget Reconciliation Process: Stages of Consideration." Congressional Research Service. 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44058>

Week 5: September 30

Topic: Budget Resolutions and Budget Reconciliation Legislation, Part II

- Peterson Foundation, *WHAT IS THE BYRD RULE?* <https://www.pgpf.org/budget-basics/understanding-complex-budget-terms-and-processes-and-why-they-matter/what-is-the-byrd-rule>
- Skim only- Lynch. “Budget Reconciliation Measures Enacted into Law: 1980-2021.” Congressional Research Service. 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R40480>

Week 6: Oct. 7

Topic: A Fixed Budget? Mandatory Spending, Tax Policy, Deficits and Debt

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To gain an understanding of: the incentives and disincentives for lawmakers to address deficits through policy and process changes; instances in which lawmakers have addressed rising deficits; and existing budget enforcement mechanisms meant to address deficits.

Reading Due Today:

- Skim Schick, Chapter 7
- Fix the Debt. Everything You Need to Know About the Federal Debt. <https://fixthedebt.org/all-about-national-debt>
- Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget. Debt Fixer. <http://www.crfb.org/debtfixer/>
- Skim CBO’s Options for Reducing the Deficit. <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/56783>
- Peterson Foundation. What is PAYGO? <https://www.pgpf.org/budget-basics/understanding-complex-budget-terms-and-processes-and-why-they-matter/what-is-paygo>

Week 7: Oct 14

Topic: Authorizations and Appropriations

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To gain an understanding of: the distinction between authorizations and appropriations; the purpose of the two-step process; the issue of unauthorized appropriations; and basics of appropriations.

Reading Due Today:

- Schick, Chapters 8-9
- Skim only- Tollestrup. “Changes in the Purposes and Frequency of Authorizations of Appropriations.” Congressional Research Service, 2015. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R43862>
- Skim CBO’s Expired and Expiring Authorizations of Appropriations: Fiscal Year 2021. <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/57023>

Assignment(s) Due Today: Addressing the Deficit Position Paper

Week 8: Oct. 21

Topic: Appropriations Continued

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To gain an understanding of the appropriations process, including: setting limits on overall appropriations; the role of the appropriations committees; omnibus

appropriations; and discretionary spending limits. To understand the current FY21 appropriations process and to anticipate appropriations action in the fall and winter.

Reading Due Today:

- Saturno. “Omnibus Appropriations Acts: Overview of Recent Practices.” Congressional Research Service, 2016. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/RL/RL32473>
- Driessen/ Lynch. “The Budget Control Act: Frequently Asked Questions.” Congressional Research Service, 2019. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R44874>

Week 9: Oct. 28

Topic: Appropriations Wrap-Up and Continuing Resolutions

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To understand the purpose, content and impact of continuing resolutions, and to examine proposals to address challenges created by continuing resolutions.

Reading Due Today:

- Saturno. “Continuing Resolutions: Overview of Components and Practices.” Congressional Research Service, 2020. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46595>
- Krause. “Continuing Resolutions and Other Budget Uncertainties Present Management Challenges.” Government Accountability Office, 2018. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/689914.pdf>
- Bogie. “Shut Down This Shutdown "Solution".” The Heritage Foundation, 2019
- “<https://www.heritage.org/budget-and-spending/commentary/shut-down-shutdown-solution>”
- Lowey. “Don't put discretionary spending on autopilot.” The Hill, 2019. <https://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/politics/471658-dont-put-discretionary-spending-on-autopilot>

Week 10: Nov 4

Topic: Budget Execution

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To understand how the administration executes budget decisions after legislation is enacted, as well as the restrictions and requirements under which the administration must operate.

Reading Due Today:

- Schick, Chapter 10
- Christensen. “The Executive Budget Process: An Overview.” Congressional Research Service, 2012. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R42633>
- Skim- McGarry, “Defense Primer: DOD Transfer and Reprogramming Authorities.” Congressional Research Service, 2021. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF11243>
- Withholding of Ukraine Security Assistance Opinion.” GAO, 2020. <https://www.gao.gov/products/B-331564>

Week 11: Nov 11

Topic: Is Congress Ceding its Power of the Purse to the Executive Branch?

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To explore whether Congress has ceded too much of its power of the purse to the executive branch in recent decades.

Reading Due Today:

- Bydlak, The Hill. "Congress should reassert its 'power of the purse'", 2020. <https://thehill.com/opinion/finance/501865-congress-should-reassert-its-power-of-the-purse>
- Golshan, 2018. "The case for — and against — earmarks." <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/1/12/16873520/case-for-and-against-earmarks>
- Congressional Institute, 2016. "The Case for Earmarks: Were They Really That Bad?" <https://www.congressionalinstitute.org/2016/09/15/the-case-for-earmarks-were-they-really-that-bad/>
- Lynch, "Lifting the Earmark Moratorium, Frequently Asked Questions." Congressional Research Service, 2018. <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R45429>
- Watch or read Written Testimony of House Committee on the Modernization of Congress, hearing "[ARTICLE ONE: RESTORING CAPACITY AND EQUIPPING CONGRESS TO BETTER SERVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.](#)"

Assignment(s) Due Today: Budget Tracking Paper

Week 12: Nov 18

Topic: Budget Process Reform

Learning Objective(s) Addressed: To gain an understanding of the spectrum of budget process reforms, and the problems they seek to solve.

Reading Due Today:

- Schick, Chapter 11
- Kosar. "So... this is Nixon's fault?" Politico, 2015. <https://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2015/10/richard-nixon-congressional-budget-control-act-history-000282/>
- Knudsen. "An Analysis of Selected Budget Process Reforms." The Heritage Foundation, 2014. <https://www.heritage.org/budget-and-spending/report/analysis-selected-budget-process-reforms>
- Domenici/ Rivlin. "Proposal for improving the congressional budget process." Brookings, 2015. <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Economy-proposal-for-improving-the-congressional-budget-process.pdf>
- Watch Senate Budget Committee Hearing, "Fixing the Budget Process: Better Budgets, Better Results." 2016. <https://www.budget.senate.gov/hearings/april-27-hearing-on-fixing-the-budget-process-better-budgets-better-results>

Assignment(s) Due This Week: Send topic for Budget Process Paper and Presentation by November 17.

Week 13: November 25- NO CLASS due to Thanksgiving

Week 14: Dec. 2

Topic: First Set of Presentations

Assignment Due Today: Budget Process Paper and Presentation

Week 15: Dec. 9

Topic: Second Set of Presentations

Expectations and Responsibilities

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site regularly throughout the semester to review weekly course content, view announcements, and submit assignments. Students can access the course site through [GWU Blackboard](#).

Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or the [IT Blackboard web page](#).

Technology Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the required technology to fully participate in this course. The minimum technology requirements for learning online at GW are outlined on the [Technical Requirements and Support](#) web page.

If you have any problems with the technology in this course, you can seek technological support from GW in a variety of ways, outlined on the [IT Support](#) website.

GW is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment that is accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities.

The following links provide more information about the accessibility of technologies that may be used in this course:

- [Blackboard accessibility](#)
- [Microsoft Office accessibility](#)
- [Adobe accessibility](#)
- [Vimeo accessibility](#)
- [YouTube accessibility](#)
- [VoiceThread accessibility](#)
- [Webex accessibility](#)

If you have any issues regarding the accessibility of the technology used in this course, please contact your instructor. You may also explore the [Disability Support Services](#) website.

Technology Expectations

Regarding technology skills, you should be able to:

- Create documents and presentation slides
- Use a webcam and microphone
- Use a digital camera or scanner
- Upload files, including recordings and images
- Be open to learning and registering for new technologies
- Be flexible when technological glitches happen (which is a given)
- Seek technological help when necessary by contacting the Division of Information Technology

If you have any problems with the technology expectations in this course, please contact your instructor.

Getting Started

Everything you need to get started in the course is contained within the Blackboard course site. You can use the menu links on the left side panel to view different components.

Participation Policy

You are expected to attend all classes. All students are expected to learn and contribute by being a positive participant in discussions, activities, presentations, and assignments. If you have an unavoidable conflict or become ill, in a way that will affect your participation in a given week, please notify your instructor immediately.

Grading Scale

Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade	Range	Grade Standard
A	94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.
A-	90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B	83-86	Good work, but needs reworking and more effort.
B-	80-82	You've completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.

Grade	Range	Grade Standard
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

Netiquette

Please observe the following rules of netiquette for communicating online:

- Remain professional, respectful, and courteous at all times.
- Remember that a real human being wrote each post and will read what you write in response. It is easy to misinterpret discussion posts. Let's give the benefit of the doubt.
- If you have a strong opinion on a topic, it is acceptable to express it as long as it is not phrased as an attack. Please be gracious with differing opinions.
- When upset, wait a day or two prior to posting. Messages posted (or emailed) in anger are often regretted later.
- Proofread and use the spell check tool when you type a post. It makes the post easier to read and helps your readers understand what you are saying.

Your instructor reserves the right to delete any post that is deemed inappropriate for the discussion forum, blog, or wiki without prior notification to the student. This includes any post containing language that is offensive, rude, profane, racist, or hateful. Posts that are seriously off-topic or serve no purpose other than to vent frustration will also be removed.

Credit Hour Policy

For this **15-week, 3-credit course** there will be an average of **7.5 hours** of combined direct instruction and independent learning per week. More information about GWU's credit hour policy can be found at [the Office of the Provost's Policies](#) web page (Under: Assignment of Credit Hour Policy).

University Policies & Services

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. For details and complete code, see [GW's Code of Academic Integrity](#).

Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.

The Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. § 10) governs the rights attributed to owners of copyrighted work. Under certain circumstances, educational institutions may provide copies of copyrighted works to students. The copies may not be copied nor used for any other purpose besides private study, scholarship, or research. Users should not provide electronic copies of any materials provided on this course's Blackboard site to unauthorized users. If a user fails to comply with Fair Use restrictions, he/she may be held liable for copyright infringement. No further transmission or electronic distribution is permitted.

University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details see the current religious holiday policy on [the Office of the Provost's Policies](#) web page.

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services. They can be contacted by phone at 202-994-8250 or in person at Rome Hall, 801 22nd Street, NW, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information visit the [Disability Support Services](#) website.

Counseling and Psychological Services

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. For additional information call 202-994-5300 or visit the [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) website.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in Gelman Library at 2130 H St NW in Suite 221 and they can be reached at 202-994-3765 or via email at gwriter@gwu.edu. You can [schedule writing center appointments](#), both in-person or by phone, in advance. Daytime and evening hours are available. Check for this semester's hours at the [writing center contact page](#). The Writing Center does offer Summer hours.

GWU Libraries

Off campus students have full access to all of the research resources, services, and assistance that the Library offers. The GW community has access to 500+ online subscription databases and to millions of items, electronic and print, in the library catalog. Off-campus students even have additional privileges because the Library will FedEx print materials to your home. For more information visit the [GW Libraries](#) homepage.

Call the Ask Us desk at 202-994-6048 or [contact someone at the library](#) to answer any questions. For questions beyond "Do you have this book/article?" and "How do I login?" use the website mentioned to make a research consultation appointment with a librarian. Librarians are there to guide students through any aspect of the research process, from selecting and narrowing a topic, crafting a research strategy to citation management.

Safety and Security

- **In an emergency:** call GWPD at 202-994-6111 or call 911
- **For situation-specific actions:** review the [Emergency Response Handbook](#)
- **In an active violence situation:** [Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out](#)
- **Stay informed:** review [notification tools for staying informed during emergency and safety related situations](#)