Tufts University
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning

Syllabus
UEP 204A: Local Government Finance
Mondays and Wednesdays: 6:00-9:30 pm
Summer 2011
Instructor: Jeff Levine, AICP
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617-730-2128

Course Description:
Local governments—cities, towns, parishes and villages—have struggled throughout history with several competing demands, including the provision of “essential” governmental services, limitations on the ability to raise revenue and state (and federal) imposed mandates. Local government finance is the study and discussion of the revenue raising techniques available to municipalities within the constitutional limitations imposed by the respective state governments. We will explore these techniques, read theory about public finance, survey the law expanding and limiting these strategies and discuss the direction cities and towns will take as municipal budgets are constrained by the sheer lack of money and continuous pressure to reduce and redirect tax and fee burdens.

This class will seek to link theory and practice. Guest speakers will come into the class to help keep the work grounded. A capstone field trip to a local Town Hall to learn about local public finance and how it is linked with urban planning is expected, during a daytime period TBD.

Course Grading and Assignment:
The course grade is based on attendance (25%) and three assignments:

- One written paper due halfway through the course on a subject of my choice (25%)
- One written examination (15%)
- One final paper & presentation on a finance and planning topic of your choice (35%)

Readings
The readings are a combination of public finance theory texts; financial documents from government and non-profit entities; and relevant case law.

The course packet is at Gnomon Copy on Boston Avenue in Medford. Those who are particularly interested in the topic may want to consider purchasing Economics of State and Local Government (Henry Raimondo, Praeger Publishers, 1992) or State and Local Public Finance (Ronald C. Fisher, Irwin, 1992) We will also be drawing heavily from public domain documents that are readily available on the web.
Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students
You can find Tufts University’s policy on academic integrity for graduate and undergraduate students at: http://studentservices.tufts.edu/dos/. Students’ work will be closely scrutinized for plagiarism and violations of the University policy will not be tolerated.

Class Overview
Wednesday, July 6th: Introduction/Initial Case Study/ Local Governments as Commodities

Monday, July 11th: How Local Government Raises Money- Property Taxes

Wednesday, July 13th: How Local Government Raises Money- Fees, Excise Taxes, Bonding

Monday, July 18th: How Local Government Raises Money – Special Assessments, TIF’s, Impact Fees

Tuesday, July 19th (estimated): DAYTIME FIELD TRIP

Wednesday, July 20th: Paper due; Class Exercise on Revenue; Public-Private Partnerships

Monday, July 25th: How Local Government Raises Money- Intergovernmental Transfers

Wednesday, July 27th: Midterm.

Monday, August 1st: Guest Speaker; What does Local Government Spend Money On? Public Goods

Wednesday, August 3rd: What does Local Government Spend Money On? Planning Implications

Monday, August 8th: NO CLASS (MAKEUP FOR FIELD TRIP)

Wednesday, August 10th: Final Presentations. Final paper due.