Tufts University  
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning  

Syllabus  
UEP 294BC: Local Government Finance  
Mondays and Wednesdays: 6:00-9:30 pm  
Summer 2011  
Instructor: Jeff Levine, AICP  
jlevine@brooklinema.gov  
617-730-2128  

Course Description:  
Governments have struggled throughout history with several competing demands, including the provision of “essential” governmental services, limitations on the ability to raise revenue, and the desire to keep taxes low for political and economic reasons. This struggle is particularly complicated on the local level, with state (and federally) imposed mandates and the small scale of operations. 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. Some background in (or willingness to learn) basic economics will be extremely helpful. Some knowledge (or willingness to learn) spreadsheet software is necessary. 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 (20%) and these assignments:

- Three short assignments due 7/11, 7/18 and 8/3 (5% @, 15% total)
- One written paper due halfway through the course on an assigned topic (25%)
- One written examination (15%)
- One final paper & presentation on finance and planning topic selected by students with instructor approval (25%)

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

- Economics of State and Local Government (Henry Raimondo, Praeger Publishers, 1992)
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 *State and Local Public Finance* (Ronald C. Fisher, Irwin, 1992, out of print) Much of the course packed is also available online at the Lincoln Institute for Land Policy’s web site on fiscal impacts of planning:

http://www.lincolninst.edu/subcenters/teaching-fiscal-dimensions-of-planning/

**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**

1. **Wednesday, July 6th**: Introduction: Why Planners Should Care About Public Finance

   **Readings:** Fisher ch. 1,3-5; Raimondo ch. 1-6; *The Intersection between Planning and the Municipal Budget* (Jack Huddleston, 2005); *An Introduction to Local Government Budgets: A Guide for Planners*, Jack Huddleston, 2005; *Public Finance Concepts for Planners* (Randall Crane, 2006)

2. **Monday, July 11th**: Property Taxes and Sales Taxes

   **Readings**: Fisher ch. 13-15; Raimondo ch. 7-8; *The Property Tax and Planning* (Jack R. Huddleston); Nordlinger v. Hahn, 505 U.S. 1 (1992)

   **Assignment:** Short assignment on citizen mobility and service provision due.

3. **Wednesday, July 13th**: Fees, Excise Taxes, Bonding

   **Readings**: Fisher ch. 10; Raimondo ch. 9-10; *Bonds and Borrowing* (Vicki Elmer); Ragsdale v. City of Memphis, 70 S.W.3d 56 (2001); City of Pittsburgh v. Alco Parking Corporation, 417 U.S. 369 (1974)

4. **Monday, July 18th**: Special Assessments, TIF’s, Capital Planning.


   **Assignment:** Short assignment on a local financial plan due.

5. **Tuesday, July 19th**(estimated)

   **DAYTIME FIELD TRIP**

6. **Wednesday, July 20th**:

   **Assignment:** Midterm Exam
7. Monday, July 25th: Looking at Fiscal Impacts of Development

**Readings**: Fiscal Impact Analysis: Methods, Cases, and Intellectual Debate (Zenia Kotval and John Mullin); Fiscal Impacts of Planning and Development: Case Study of Maynard, MA (Zenia Kotval and John Mullin); Development Exactions: Process and Planning Issues, Jennifer Evans-Cowley; Fiscal Impact Studies in Reading Packet

8. Wednesday, July 27th: Paper presentations; Class Exercise on Revenue; Public-Private Partnerships.

**Assignment**: Paper due

9. Monday, August 1st: Guest Speaker and discussion on paper topics.

10. Wednesday, August 3rd: Intergovernmental Transfers; Redistributive Policies

**Readings**: Fisher ch. 6; Raimondo ch. 12-13; State and Local Revenues Beyond the Property Tax (Mary Edwards); City of Cambridge One Year Action Plan FY 2012

**Assignment**: Short assignment on fiscal impacts due.

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

12. Wednesday, August 10th: Final Presentations.

**Assignment**: Final paper due.