

Using a Computer Simulation to Teach Students about Navigating the Ethics & Politics of the Budgeting Process

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TPAC 2017



Old Assignment

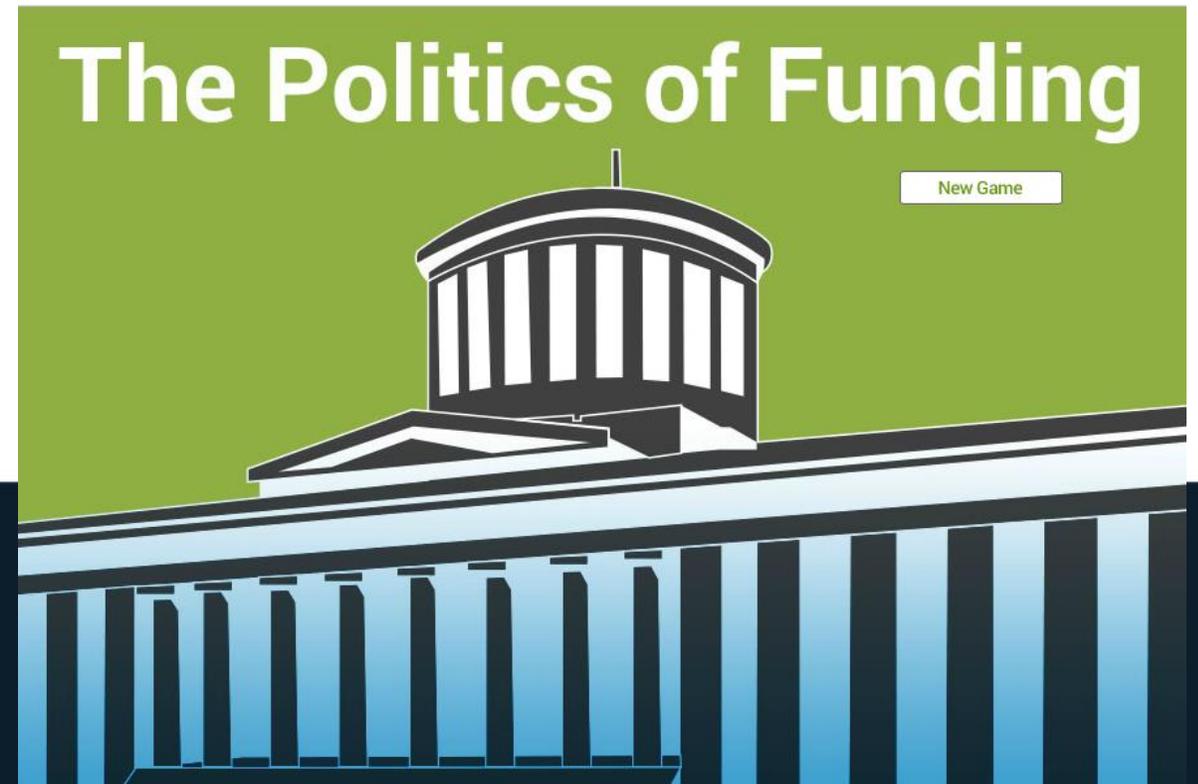
*Persuasive presentation
before “City Council”*

- Focus on technical
- Students didn’t get “it”

New Assignment

Computer simulation

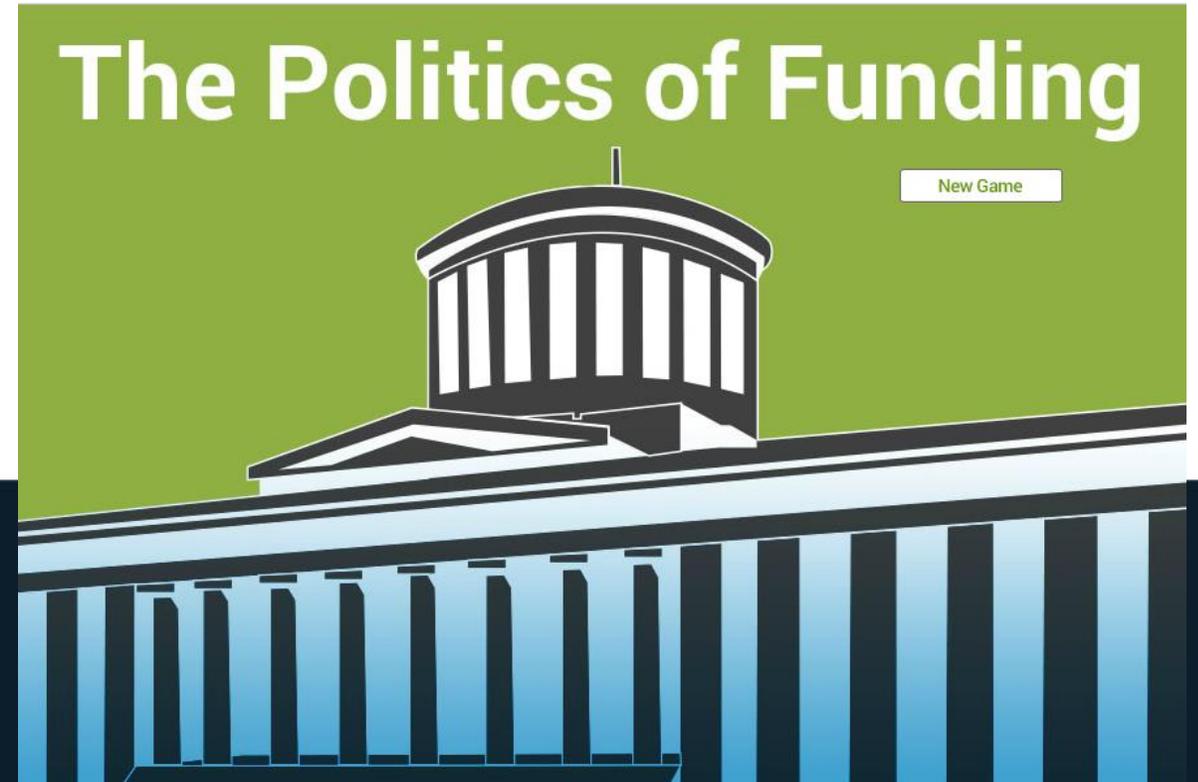
- Reflection paper questions



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Politics of Funding Assignment

1. Interest group politics
2. Ethics
3. Timing
4. Events and elections



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Reflection Questions

Political Strategy: Explain the primary or best strategy you used to obtain political support of and funding for the legislation. Briefly, summarize how successful you were in the game using this strategy. What were the strengths and weaknesses of your approach? What would you do differently next time?

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Political Strategy

1. Multiple strategies
2. Political favors
3. Understood ideology
4. Funding is a challenge
5. Legislation selection
6. Timing important

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Reflection Questions

Ethical Issues: What ethical issues or dilemmas arose during the game? What risks and opportunities did these situations pose? Explain a key ethical decision you made during the game: what was the decision, why did you make the choice you did, what values or factors did you take into account when making the decision, and what were the potential implications and actual impacts of that decision?

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Reflection Questions

Politics and Leadership: Do you think the game was helpful for learning about the politics and ethics of the budgeting process in the real world? Why or why not? Is it important for government and nonprofit managers and leaders to understand how to navigate the politics of the budgeting process? Explain why or why not.

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Politics and Leadership

“In the end this exercise was a fun way of giving a bit of insight to the workings of political funding. It is hard to say what someone will do in the real situation with the pressures of meeting one’s goals in mind. Although we all believe that we can uphold our ethical duties it becomes much harder when you need to put a goal ahead of that which may be of greater value to the whole of society. Having done my best, I am glad to not be in this kind of situation and this being only a game.”

“Sometimes it felt like just taking the easy route for immediate benefits and not thinking about future repercussions would be the right choice. Although that might work sometimes my own experience showed me that in this case the ethical choice worked out in the end. Leadership in politics is all about making sure that you get the job done while compromising your ethical duties as little as possible.”

“No, I do not think the game was relevant to the learning process. The game does not have the capability to include emotions, ethics or relevant information that politicians use to make decisions, especially if there is a bad deal going wrong. Political leaders do need to get back to basics of caring for the community and making decisions that do not (lining their pockets with money). If politicians really lived on the salaries of the “common people,”

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Politics and Leadership

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“It is very important for government and nonprofit managers and leaders to understand how to navigate the politics of the budgeting process. Managers need to know how to persuade others to fund and support a proposed project. They also need to know how to utilize funding and supporting other agency’s projects to their advantage. Politics are a give and take environment, however, you should never give without gaining something for your own agency. Understanding this process and how it works determines how successful the manager will be at navigating the politics of the budgeting process.”

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Politics and Leadership

“I have learned through this course as well as through navigating the game, the importance of managers and leaders understanding the political aspects of budgeting. In order for a manager or leader to be most effective to their organization they must understand who or what influences the funding they receive. Also, they have to be able to take actions to gain political capital because it ultimately influences the politicians .”

“The game showed how real life politics can work. Especially for those people who have never dealt with politics. The game brings out the players who make decisions and how influence can be used to sway people’s opinions. It shows how a group can really effect, both good and bad, the political process. It also shows how new politicians can change the landscape. It goes from everything is grand one minute and you’re all by yourself the next minute. The game really shows how politicians can be influenced in the real world.”

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Politics and Leadership

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“I think the game showed a good representation of politics and ethics of the budgeting process in the real world. However, I feel it lacked the real world lobbying of projects. I say this because I think that if a presentation of the key benefits of a project were given to an interest group whose ideology may be far from that of the project requesting funding that support for the project can be gained. In short, the game lacks the ability of swaying leader’s opinions. While the game allows for a limited amount of ways to gain political gain, it certainly does not represent every possible way of gaining it.”

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Politics and Leadership

“I found the simulation exercise to be very interesting, and honestly quite frustrating. Although I am familiar with the influence of Interest Groups, they seem to play a larger part than I had realized, if the simulation is true to real world. ”

“I made some preemptive assumptions when first tasked with this assignment. I thought that it would be relatively easy to obtain political support and funding, by selecting a moderate legislation and playing to my need to be ethically honest, however, what I found is that it was no easy task to find funding while maintaining the support that was necessary for the agenda.”

“The game was intriguing and a great way to show everything that was taught in this course. Seeing how interest groups and politicians work together to influence the political process gives you a better understand what must be done to get your voice heard. This game was a fun and interesting way to teach you and allow you to gain an understanding of how the political process can work.”

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Politics and Leadership

“The Politics of Funding Game was helpful, frustrating but useful. I now see why governments can take so long to work out what seems to be a simple problem. Maintaining support and funding can quickly become a slippery slope of doing favors and speaking at events just to get into another contacts back pocket, Trying to gain more money for a particular cause. Overall this assignment was a confusing one for me, I do not like the idea of having to push other interest groups agenda to gain support for the safety of the public as a whole. The assignment, however, did open my eyes to just how corrupt someone in office could possibly be if that is the route that they chose to get their agenda passed and funded, with little to no oversight.”

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Future Plans

- **Real-time journal**
- **Online discussion**
- **Pre and post survey**

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