The morning seminar classes for the Tax Policy Colloquium will generally focus on the paper for discussion that week, or on background to help students understand the issues that the paper raises. Thus, from Week 3 (January 25) through the end of the semester, the only assigned reading will be the papers themselves. (Students are, however, encouraged to consult other convenient sources, in particular other course materials for the semester.)

For the first two weeks, the morning seminar classes will have a different focus. Rather than examining the papers for those two weeks, they will be spent providing a basic background in tax policy and related public economics that should facilitate our discussions throughout the semester.

Professor Shaviro will be co-teaching the Colloquium throughout the semester. He will be joined by Professor Altshuler for the weeks of January 18 through February 8, April 12, and April 19, and by Professor Auerbach for the weeks of February 15 through April 5.

Some further details for this year’s course are as follows. First, there is no final exam. Course grades are based on six comment papers of about 8 to 10 pages each, critiquing the reading assignment for a given week. In addition, attendance at both the morning and afternoon sessions is required. The use of laptops is not permitted at the afternoon sessions. If you cannot make a particular session, you should have a good reason and should let Professor Shaviro know about it before class.

On the six occasions when you submit a comment paper, it is due at the beginning of the Thursday morning class. They can either be (a) e-mailed to shavirod@juris.law.nyu.edu, (b) submitted through Blackboard, or (c) handed in at class. (Options (a) and (b) are preferred.) These comment papers need not be more than 3 to 5 pages in length, and should offer a critique or response of some kind. You have considerable flexibility in deciding how to respond to a given paper. Please do not include general summaries or overviews of the papers to which you respond. You will get e-mailed responses to your comments, including a grade, before the next week’s class.

Second, starting in Week 3, we will ask each student to make one short (ungraded) presentation in the morning seminar to get the discussion going. In light of the class size, the weekly presentations will generally involve two or three students, who should try to coordinate their efforts.

Third, the colloquium has a webpage, at which the weekly papers are posted, and a Blackboard site. The URL for downloading the papers is http://www.law.nyu.edu/colloquia/taxpolicy/schedule.html. The Blackboard site has a Discussion Group in which we hope students will participate, and at which you are
encouraged to post your weekly papers after they have been handed in. We also encourage questions and discussion about a given week’s reading before the weekly papers are handed in.

Fourth, we hope that those who are interested will occasionally join our dinners with the speakers after the weekly colloquia. Sign-up details will be available in class.

The assigned readings for the first two weeks are available both through Blackboard and from Patricia O’Brien (obriemp@juris.law.nyu.edu, 212-998-6183, VH-416), who is Daniel Shaviro’s secretary. Please read all of the Gruber excerpts (consisting of pages 23-35, 41-52, 519-529, and 547-561) by the time of the first class, meeting on January 11, and the other document for the second class.

Professor Shaviro is in Room 314-B. His office number is 8-6187, and his e-mail address is shavirod@juris.law.nyu.edu. Professor Auerbach’s e-mail address is auerbach@econ.Berkeley.edu, while that for Professor Altshuler is altshule@rci.rutgers.edu.