

Syllabus for PL SC 425, Section 101
Government and Politics of the American States
Summer I 2015
M-F 11:10 AM-12:25 PM, 268 Willard Building

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Office Hours: M(1:30-4:30) and by appointment (via e-mail)

Course Description: While our attention is most often drawn to the political events in Washington, D.C., a great deal of the policymaking that impacts our daily lives occurs in state-houses across the 50 states. Indeed, state governments legislate on issues including welfare, health-care, social policies, education, criminal law, infrastructure, and many others. Understanding how state institutions and behavior shape policy outcomes is substantively interesting, but the states also provide political scientists with leverage over larger questions, including power, representation, and responsiveness. They do so by providing a comparative context for testing how variation in institutions and political behavior relate to these broader concepts. This course will address both how the states themselves are substantively interesting, as well as how they are used to understand broader issues in political science.

Prerequisites: PL SC 001 - Introduction to American Government

Learning Goals and Objectives:

- Goal 1: Students will learn how to use the states to comparatively study broader topics in political science.
 - Objective 1.A: Students will be able to read and interpret scholarly articles that use the states for comparative analysis
 - Objective 1.B: Students will be able to analyze, synthesize, and report differences in state policy and their causes and effects
 - Objective 1.C: Students will be able to identify basic differences in state institutions
- Goal 2: Students will learn how state politics affect the daily lives of citizens
 - Objective 2.A: Students will be able to find, read, and evaluate news articles about state politics
 - Objective 2.B: Students will be able to compare and contrast how state governments and the federal government interact with citizens

Methods for Learning and Teaching: This course will contain a mix of lecture, class discussion, and in-class exercises. It is vital for your own comprehension of the course material that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings and to participate in class exercises.

Expectations

Attendance: Your attendance in class is always expected. Attending class will allow you to keep up with the rapid pace of a summer session course and will provide for meaningful discussion as a class. I will take attendance as a way to get to know you. Please contact me via e-mail if you are unable to attend class. We follow the University's attendance policy regarding excused absences. See <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/42-00.html#42-27>.

Preparation and Participation: I expect you to read the assigned material before class and be able to discuss what you read in class. Contributing to class discussion will make the course more interesting and will enhance your understanding of the material. Some of the articles I ask you to read are dense and statistically complex. In such cases, I will provide specific directions to help maximize comprehension.

Be Flexible: While the syllabus represents an agreement between us, I reserve the right to revise and modify it throughout the course if it is necessary to achieve our goals. Situations beyond either of our control can also emerge that require changes to the course. I will notify you of any changes made throughout the course.

Cell Phones and Laptops: Please be respectful of your fellow students and me by silencing your cell phone during class and limiting laptop use to only class-related activity.

Current Events: We will spend a few minutes each day discussing current political events both at the national and state levels and applying them to material we are learning in class.

E-mail Policy: I will work to respond to e-mails within 24 hours.

Readings

The following book is required for the course:

Donovan, Todd, Daniel A. Smith, Tracy Osborn, and Christopher Z. Mooney. 2015 *State & Local Politics: Institutions and Reform*. Fourth Edition, Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning. ISBN:978-1-285-44140-5.

There are also required readings listed for most class meetings. Readings are drawn from academic journals and news sources. News sources are linked within the syllabus. Book chapters will be posted on ANGEL. The remaining articles are available via the library's website.

Assignments

I give you a number of assignments in order to allow you multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning. I will try to grade and return each assignment within 48 hours.

Current Events Essays (20% of final grade) These assignments require you to take any article from a valid news source and connect it to the literature and research we have covered in the course. In these assignments you will have an opportunity to apply concepts we are learning in class to the real-life political arena. We will have 2 of these over the term (no more than 2 single-spaced pages - Rubric on ANGEL).

Midterm Exam (20% of final grade) The midterm exam material will be drawn from class discussions and the readings. The exam is intended to assess your knowledge of class content and your ability to apply relevant concepts. The exam will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Final Exam (20% of final grade) The final exam material will be drawn from class discussions and the readings from the second half of class (not cumulative). The exam is intended to assess your knowledge of class content and your ability to apply relevant concepts. The exam will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Professional Portfolio (30% of final grade) Details on this project are included on ANGEL. I place a value on creating a course that includes a professional component. You will be asked to submit a resume and a job and/or graduate school application that is relevant to state politics. There will be a number of checkpoints during the semester and you will meet with me individually to tailor your project.

Attendance (10% of final grade) I will take attendance every day. I always appreciate an email notification if you cannot attend.

Grading

Below I list each assignment, the due date (also marked on course calendar), and the weight it receives in the final calculation of your grade:

Assignment	Due Date	% of Grade
Professionalization: Turn in Resume	May 26	5%
Current Events Essay 1	May 29	10%
Professionalization: Meeting	June 1	5%
Professionalization: Preliminary Write-up	June 3	5%
Midterm Exam	June 11	20%
Current Events Essay 2	June 16	10%
Professionalism: Final Portfolio	June 22	15%
Final Exam	June 29	20%
Attendance	Daily	10%

We will use the following grade scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	76 to 79
C	70 to 75
D	60 to 69
F	59 and below

Make-Up Grades: You are allowed to make up academic work only in the case of excused absences. These absences may include missing class for a University-sanctioned activity (with proper documentation), illness, religious observance, or family emergency. If you know in advance that you are going to miss class, please contact me before the absence to make arrangements for completing the work. If you are absent for an unexpected reason, please check in with me as soon as possible. You will have one week from the day of your return to class to make up a missed assignment.

Late Work Policy: Assignments turned in late will be penalized 10% per day.

Course Schedule

We will attempt to follow this schedule as closely as possible, but we may take more time on some concepts and less time on others. All changes to the schedule will be announced in class or via e-mail. Required course readings are listed below. Note that all class readings are posted on ANGEL. If you have trouble accessing an article, please do not hesitate to e-mail me. The abbreviation DSOM refers to the Donovan, Smith, Osborn, and Mooney textbook.

NOTE: Readings are expected to be completed on the date they are posted. On days with multiple readings, readings are listed in the order that we will cover them. I expect you to read all of the required readings. I have included suggested readings for students interested in learning more about specific topics and posted them on ANGEL. I will typically reference the suggested readings in lectures.

Week 1

May 18 (M): Syllabus Day. Why care about state politics?

Suggested Readings:

- Fuller, Jaime. 2014. “[John Oliver Spent 20 Minutes Talking About State Legislatures Sunday Night.](#)” *The Washington Post*, November 3, 2014.

May 19 (T): “Everybody has to be somewhere.” The Three-Dimensional Location of the United States

- Elazar, Daniel J. 1994. *The American Mosaic: The Impact of Space, Time, and Culture on American Politics*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Chapter 1.

Suggested Readings:

- Gray, Virginia. 1999. “The Socioeconomic and Political Context of States.” Chapter 1 in *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 7th ed., Virginia Gray, Russell L. Hanson, and Herbert Jacob (eds.). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

May 20 (W): The Generational Rhythm of American Politics

- DSOM Chapter 1 (pp. 3-22)

May 21 (Th): State Politics and the Comparative Approach
Regular Drop Deadline

- DSOM Chapter 1 (pp. 23-36)
- Mooney, Christopher Z. 2001. “*State Politics & Policy Quarterly* and the Study of State Politics: The Editor’s Introduction.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 1(1):1-4.

Suggested Readings:

- Jewell, Malcolm E. 1982. “The Neglected World of State Politics.” *Journal of Politics* 44(3): 638-657.

May 22 (F): State Politics and the Statistical Approach

- Allison, Paul D. 1999. *Multiple Regression: A Primer*. Chapters 1 and 2. Pine Forge Press.

Week 2

May 25 (M): Memorial Day (no class)

May 26 (T): Federalism and Emergency Responsiveness

- DSOM Chapter 2 (pp. 38-57)
- Birkland, Thomas and Sarah Waterman. 2008. “Is Federalism the Reason for Policy Failure in Hurricane Katrina?” *Publius* 38(4): 692-714.

Suggested Reading:

- Weissert, Carol S., Carl W. Stenberg, and Richard L. Cole. 2009. “Continuity and Change: A Ranking of Key Issues Affecting U.S. Intergovernmental Relations (1995-2005).” *Publius* 39(4): 677-695.

Assignment: **Turn in resume**

May 27 (W): Umpiring Federalism: Federalism and Marijuana Policy

- DSOM Chapter 2 (pp. 57-72)
- Garvey, Todd. 2012. "Medical Marijuana: The Supremacy Clause, Federalism, and the Interplay Between State and Federal Laws." *Congressional Research Service*, Policy Report no. 7-5700: 1-17.

May 28 (Th): State Political Culture - Political Participation

- Skim DSOM Chapter 3
- "Not running, but fleeing." *The Economist*, May 16, 2015.
- Putnam, Josh. 2015. "Everything You Need to Know About How the Presidential Primary Works." *The Washington Post*, May 12, 2015.

May 29 (F): State Political Culture - Public Opinion

- DSOM Chapter 5
- Erikson, Robert S., Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver. 1993. *Statehouse Democracy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2.

Assignment: **Current Events Essay #1 due at 5:00 PM (Dropbox).**

Week 3

June 1 (M): No Class - Set up meeting for professionalization project.

June 2 (T): Institutional Differences in the States: Direct Democracy

- DSOM Chapter 4 (pp.108-123)
- "Special Report: Democracy in California." *The Economist*, April 20, 2011.

Suggested Reading:

- Bowler, Shaun and Todd Donovan. 2004. "Measuring the Effect of Direct Democracy on State Policy: Not All Initiatives are Created Equal." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 4(3): 345-363.

June 3 (W): Career Resources and Careers in Political Science

- Guest lecture by Susan Knell, Director of the College of the Liberal Arts Career Enrichment Network
- **Mandatory attendance**

Assignment: **Write-up on Professionalism Project due at 5:00 PM (Drop-box)**

June 4 (Th): Direct Democracy: Citizen Legislators

- DSOM Chapter 4 (pp. 123-140)
- Lupia, Arthur and John G. Matsusaka. 2004. "Direct Democracy: New Approaches to Old Questions." *Annual Review of Political Science* 7: 463-482.

June 5 (F): Cracking and Packing: State Legislatures and Gerrymandering

- DSOM Chapter 7 (pp.212-233)
- Sides, John. 2013. "Gerrymandering is not what's wrong with American Politics." *The Washington Post* February 3, 2013.

Suggested Readings:

- Abramowitz, Alan I., Brad Alexander and Matthew Gunning. 2006. "Incumbency, Redistricting, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Politics* 68(1): 75-88.
- Draper, Robert. 2012. "The League of Dangerous Mapmakers." *The Atlantic* September 19, 2012.

Week 4

June 8 (M): Institutional Differences: State Legislatures

- DSOM Chapter 7 (pp.234-251)
- Maestas, Cherie D., Sarah Fulton, L. Sandy Maisel, and Walter J. Stone. 2006. "When to Risk It? Institutions, Ambitions, and the Decision to Run for the U.S. House." *American Political Science Review* 100(2): 195-208.

Suggested Reading:

- Squire, Peverill. 2007. “Measuring State Legislative Professionalism: The Squire Index Revisited.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 7(2): 211-227.

June 9 (T): Districting in Pennsylvania

- Cohn, Nate. 2014 [Blaming Gerrymandering Has Its Limits, as Pennsylvania Shows.](#) *The New York Times*. September 8, 2014.

June 10 (W): Review

June 11 (Th): Midterm Exam

June 12 (F): State Public Policy: Why do states adopt certain laws?

- Gray, Virginia. 1994. “Competition, Emulation, and Policy Innovation.” In *New Perspectives on American Politics*. Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson eds. Washington, DC: CQ Press. pp. 231-248

Week 5

June 15 (M): The Diffusion of State Policies

- Karch, Andrew. 2007. “Emerging Issues and Future Directions in State Policy Diffusion Research.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 7(1):54-80.
- Cope, Cassie. 2015. [How South Carolina Won Volvo.](#) *The State* May 17, 2015.

Suggested Reading:

- Berry, Francis S. and William D. Berry. 1990. “State Lottery Adoptions as Policy Innovations: An Event History Analysis.” *The American Political Science Review* 84(2):395-415.

June 16 (T): State Public Policy: The Military

- Hunter, Kathleen. 2004. [States Wage Offensive to Keep Military Bases Open.](#) *Stateline* by Pew Charitable Trusts, May 6, 2004.

- Lu, Adrienne. 2014. “[Veterans Win In-State Tuition Benefit.](#)” *Stateline* by Pew Charitable Trusts, August 19, 2014.

Suggested Reading:

- Shipan, Charles R. and Craig T. Volden. 2006. “Bottom-up Federalism: The Diffusion of Antismoking Policies from U.S. Cities to States.” *American Journal of Political Science* 50(4): 825-843.

Assignment: **Current Events Essay #2 due at 5:00 PM (Dropbox)**

June 17 (W): State Courts and the Criminal Justice System
Late Drop Deadline

- DSOM Chapter 9 (pp. 296-341)

Suggested Reading:

- Nicholson-Crotty, Sean. 2004. “The Politics and Administration of Privatization: Contracting Out for Corrections Management in the United States.” *Policy Studies Journal* 32(1): 41-57.

June 18 (Th): Municipal Governance

- DSOM Chapter 11 (pp. 381-411)

June 19 (F): Breakdowns in Municipal Governance and Criminal Policy

Required Reading:

- Hayward, Clarissa. 2014. “[After Ferguson.](#)” *The Washington Post* November 25, 2014.
- Farrell, Henry. 2015. “[Ferguson’s Government Was Run Like a Racket.](#)” *The Washington Post* March 4, 2015.
- Balko, Radley. 2014. “[How Municipalities in St. Louis County, Mo. Profit from Poverty.](#)” *The Washington Post* September 3, 2014.
- Deets, Stephen. 2015. “[Baltimore is Not Ferguson.](#)” *The Washington Post* April 30, 2015.

Week 6

June 22 (M): Governors and the State Bureaucracy

- DSOM Chapter 8 (pp. 254-293)

June 23 (T): Social Welfare and Health Care Policy

- DSOM Chapter 14 (pp. 486-520)

***Late Drop Deadline**

June 24 (W): Education Policy

- DSOM Chapter 15 (pp. 525-542)
- Berkman, Michael B. and Eric Plutzer. 2011. "Local Autonomy versus State Constraints: Balancing Evolution and Creationism in U.S. High Schools." *Publius* 41(4): 610-635.

June 25 (Th): Education Policy

- DSOM Chapter 15 (pp. 543-555)

June 26 (F): Course Wrap-up and Review

Week 7

June 29 (M): Final Exam