

POLI 101-1 State and Local Governments in the United States, Fall 2010

Monday and Wednesday, 10:00 – 10:50, Murphy Hall, Room 116

Instructor

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Office: Hamilton Hall 300; Office Hours – Tuesday 2-3:30 and Thursday 2-3:30 or by Appointment.

Course Description

This course examines the politics and policy making of sub-national governments in the U.S., focusing almost exclusively on the 50 states. As a survey course, a wealth of information falls under its scope – so much that we cannot possibly learn all there is to learn about the politics and governments of the states. This is not a North Carolina government course. Rather, we will examine all 50 states, considering their similarities and differences. The objective of this course is NOT simply to learn descriptive facts about the states. Instead, we will focus on theories of politics as applied to the states in order to learn more about politics more generally. You will not be an expert on state politics at the conclusion of this course. However, you will (I hope) have a foundation of basic knowledge, a growing curiosity about state politics, and some improved theoretical and analytic tools that you can use as you learn more about and experience politics at the state or any other level.

This is a political science course. Thus, we will consider different definitions and theories of politics. We will explore theories of how politics works rather than pursue mere description. Theories offer explanations for why things happen the way they do. Theories are necessarily abstract – boiling down explanations to fundamental principles. We will not spend time debating ideological issues regarding what is “right” or “wrong.” Ideological debates tend to generate much heat but very little light. So, we will focus on what states do and why, but we will leave the normative evaluations to the talking heads on TV, the street-corner protesters, the letters-to-the-editor pages, and to political campaigns.

Course Requirements

There are two required texts for the course. They are:

State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform. 2nd Edition (2011) by Todd Donovan, Christopher Z. Mooney, and Daniel A. Smith. Thomson/Wadsworth Publishing.

Annual Editions: State and Local Government, 14th Edition (2009). Edited by Bruce Stinebrickner. McGraw-Hill.

The first is a traditional textbook. Every week there will be readings from this book assigned as part of the main lecture series for the course. The second book is a reader that contains a collection of short articles that deal with various aspects of state and local government. I encourage you to read all of these essays, but a sub-set of them will be assigned to you by your TAs as required supplementary reading for the weekly recitation section. A portion of these essays will form the basis for your paper assignments, discussed in more detail below. There may be additional readings assigned during the course of the semester. If so, you will be informed about them in class and via e-mail. Students are expected to complete all reading assignments **BEFORE** coming to class. If you have questions about the readings, please ask them either in class or in the recitation sessions.

Assignments and Grading

There will be three exams in this course: two midterm exams and one final exam. Each midterm exam will be worth 15% of your final grade each. The final exam will be worth 20% of your final grade and will be cumulative. Each exam will include multiple-choice questions. The material covered on the exams will be distributed roughly evenly between the readings and the main lectures. We will not have time to review all of the reading material during class, and there will be a significant amount of material presented during the lectures that is not in the readings. Thus, it is very important to both attend the lectures and do the readings if you hope to do well on the exams.

Attendance will be taken randomly six times during the semester. You are allowed to miss one of those times without any excuse. This attendance grade will count for 10% of your final grade.

Once a week students will participate in small group recitation sessions lead by one of the TAs for the course. **You MUST be registered for a discussion section for this course (numbered 101-601 through 609) in addition to being registered for this course in order to get credit for this course. Students who fail to register for a section will receive an F for the course.** The recitation sessions provide you with an opportunity to ask questions about the course lectures and readings. They will also involve additional assignments, including readings, in-class assignments, quizzes, and group discussions. Your attendance, participation, and performance on assignments in your recitation section will count for 10% of your final grade for the course. The specific content of the recitation assignments and discussions will be determined by your TAs. Attendance at the recitation sessions is expected – more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade. Thus, it is critical that you attend the recitation session AND that you attend the specific section for which you are registered as the assignments will likely differ from one section to the next. Recitation sections **will not** meet the first week of class.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students MUST earn a grade of at least a C- in their Recitation Section in order to pass the entire class. Any student who fails the Recitation Section will automatically fail the class regardless of their performance on any other assignments.

Finally, you will complete three (3) short papers (3 ½ pages each) for this course. The papers will be based entirely or primarily on readings assigned from the *Annual Editions* reader. The papers will be discussed and graded in your recitation sections. Each paper will count for 10% of your final grade for the course, so the three papers count a total of 30% of the course grade.

Each paper will be a critical essay focusing on a topic provided to you. The essays will place heavy emphasis on reading and analyzing several of the articles provided in the *Annual Editions* reader. You can make reference to other course material (textbook and lectures), but at least 80% of your essay should deal with the assigned articles. Each paper should be 3 ½ pages long. Your paper grade will be lowered by 10 percentage points for every half page under that limit. If the paper is longer than 4 pages, TAs will stop reading after 4 pages and base the grade only on those 4 pages. Papers will be due during

your recitation section meeting during the week indicated on the class schedule. Papers turned in later that day will have their grades lowered 10 percentage points, and will be lowered an additional 10 percentage points for every additional day they are late. Papers will use standard margins (1 inch top and bottom, either 1 or 1 ¼ inch side margins), fonts (Times New Roman in Word, 12-point size), and line spacing (double space). If you are not sure, this should run you about 300 words per page. We really do not want to get down to counting words, so just hit the goals and we will all be happy.

Your papers should start with a clear statement about the main thesis of the paper – do not waste time and space on fluffy flowery introductions. Be clear and specific in your writing. Make sure every sentence needs to be there. If you can say it with 12 words instead of 20, do so. If you can write a paragraph with 3 sentences instead of 4, do so. This is not an English composition class, but if poor writing interferes with communicating your message to the reader, then you will lose points. Sloppy writing (poor grammar, punctuation, etc.) will also cause you to lose points. Do **NOT** use any direct quotes from any source – I want to see your argument in your own words. That said, you need to provide some citation to your sources. Cite the articles in the *Annual Editions* reader by the last name of the author of the article and the essay number. For example, if you were making reference to essay #6 by Garry Boulard, you could write something like:

Several cities used eminent domain to help in efforts to revitalize their economies (Boulard, #6).

Or:

Boulard (#6) notes that several cities used eminent domain as part of their revitalization efforts.

If you cite the textbook or a lecture, just use the citation (DMS Chapter #) or (Carsey lecture, date). If you make reference to any other source, cite that source in the paper by the last name of the author and the year it was published, then provide the full bibliographic information at the end of the essay. Such bibliographic information does NOT count toward the 3 ½ page length requirement.

Papers should NOT have a separate title page. They should NOT re-type the prompt for the essay. They should simply include your name, your PID number, and the number of the essay (Essay 1, Essay 2, or Essay 3) all in the top left corner of the paper. Please single space this information, then double space the text of the paper. Do NOT skip lines between paragraphs. Do NOT include separate section headings. Do NOT write any one-sentence paragraphs. Turn in hard copies stapled once in the upper left-hand corner (no e-mail, no paper clips).

Finally, each TA has some flexibility in tailoring the writing assignments. While I provide supervision and structure for the writing assignments, the TAs do all of the implementation and grading. Thus, if your TA gives you specific directions about the paper assignments, you need to follow those directions. If you have questions, contact me or your TA.

The topics for each paper will be distributed in class well before the due dates. Be sure to direct your essay specifically to the questions asked in the prompt. You should NOT merely summarize the content of the articles you read for each paper. You need to go beyond that to provide some analysis and to make an argument. But remember, you need to support your argument – an ideological rant (whether it matches the ideology of your TA or not!) should not be a part of your papers.

Final grades for the course will be based on the follow scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to individual grades based on overall performance in the course and/or extenuating circumstances. There is no grading curve. There will be no extra credit.

Letter Grade	Percentage Score	Letter Grade	Percentage Score	Letter Grade	Percentage Score
A	93-100	B-	80-82	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	C+	77-79	D	63-66
B+	87-89	C	73-76	F	62 or below
B	83-87	C-	70-72		

As a reminder, the contributions of the various assignments to your final grade are as follows:

Midterm Exam 1:	15%
Midterm Exam 2:	15%
Final Exam:	20%
Four short Papers:	30% (10% for each one)
In-class Attendance:	10%
Recitation Sections:	10%

Communication

I make every effort to communicate to you my expectations, your responsibilities, and the substantive information covered in this course. I will send e-mails to the entire class. I maintain a Blackboard site for the class, and I will make announcements and issue some reminders in class. Note that I will only send e-mail out to your UNC e-mail accounts as listed on the course roster in Blackboard. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses that you might use. I am also very easy to reach if you need to communicate with me. Come to my office hours, call my office, or even better, send me an e-mail. It is important for you to stay in touch, particularly if any problems arise. I don't like to change exam schedules. If a situation arises where I need to give a make-up exam, I reserve the right to give it during the final week of the semester. I reserve the right to give a make-up exam that differs substantially from the normal exam in order to protect the integrity of the exam process. I or any faculty member will be much more understanding if you just communicate with us early and up front.

A Note on Academic Honesty

In order for me to evaluate your work fairly, you have to do your own work. It is much easier to study, work hard, and complete your own assignments than it is to try and figure out some way to "beat the system" without getting caught. Cheating, plagiarism, and all other forms of academic dishonesty are pretty easy to spot and come with severe consequences. All students should familiarize themselves with the Academic Honor Code at UNC (<http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html>). Students caught cheating in any form in this course may receive an F for the course and may be turned over for further disciplinary action by the University. By taking this class, you have committed to comply with all aspects of the Honor Code regarding all aspects of this course.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should; (1) contact the office of Learning Disabilities at UNC (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html>), (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

Responsibilities

The success of this course depends upon all of us meeting our responsibilities. Myself and the TAs are responsible for being prepared each week to present and discuss course material, for challengingly you academically and stimulating your curiosity, and for being available for and responsive to your questions and inquiries. You are responsible for being prepared each week as well, for asking questions when you are confused and actively engaging the material, for doing your own work, for meeting the course requirements, and for pushing yourselves to get the most out of this course that you can. Ultimately, this is your education and you should take responsibility for it.

Course Schedule

The schedule provided serves as a guideline for the semester. As we proceed, we may discover that some topics take a bit longer than expected to cover while others take less time. We may also add or change a few of the topics along the way. Readings associated with each topic are listed on the schedule and should be read by you prior to coming to class. It may be the case that additional readings will be assigned during the semester. Those readings will be provided for you either in class or online. Announcements regarding such changes will be made in class and distributed to students via e-mail. However, the dates for the exams will NOT change, nor with the due dates for the papers.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Aug. 25	Introduction and course overview
Aug. 30	Theories and Definitions of Politics Read: Donovan, Mooney, and Smith (DMS) Chapter 1
Sept. 1	Federalism Read DMS Chapter 2
Sept. 6	Labor Day – No Class
Sept. 8	Public Opinion, Participation and Elections Read DMS Chapter 3
Sept. 13	Public Opinion, Participation and Elections
Sept. 15	Direct Democracy Read DMS Chapter 4
Sept. 20	Political Parties Read DMS Chapter 5
Sept. 22	Interest Groups Read DMS Chapter 6
Sept. 27	Catch-up and Review
Sept. 29	Exam 1
Oct. 4	Legislatures Read DMS Chapter 7 First Paper Due in this Week in Recitation
Oct. 6	Legislatures
Oct. 11	Legislative Elections
Oct. 13	Legislative Elections
Oct. 18	Governors Read DMS Chapter 8
Oct. 20	Governors
Oct. 25	The Bureaucracy
Oct. 27	The Courts Read DMS Chapter 9
Nov. 1	The Courts Second Paper Due this Week in Recitation
Nov. 3	Inter-Institutional Interaction
Nov. 8	Catch-up and Review
Nov. 10	Exam 2
Nov. 15	Linking Public Policy and Public Opinion in the States
Nov. 17	Policy Innovation and Diffusion Across the States
Nov. 22	Taxing and Spending Read DMS Chapter 10
Nov. 24	Thanksgiving Holiday – No Class
Nov. 29	Morality Policy Read DMS Chapter 13 Third Paper Due this Week in Recitation
Dec. 1	Social Welfare and Health Policy Read DMS Chapter 14
Dec. 6	Education Policy Read DMS Chapter 15
Dec. 8	Putting it all together – What does Political Science tell us about the States?
Dec. 10	Final Exam: 8:00 a.m. Murphy Hall room 116