

POLS 220: State and Local Politics

Fall 2012
TR 12:45-2
McGannon 121

Instructor: Dr. Jason Windett
Office: McGannon Hall 127
Office Hours: TR 10-12 and by appt.

E-mail: jwindett@slu.edu
Web: TBA
Office Phone: 977-3622

Course Description

This course examines state and local political institutions and practices in the context of American federalism. Emphasis is placed on procedural and policy differences as well as political issues in state, regional, and local governments. We will be examining the general structure and behavior of state government across all 50 states. This is not a course in Missouri or St. Louis politics, but we will spend time discussing the local content of our state's government. At the end of the course, you should have the basic foundation and knowledge of state political institutions.

Course Objectives and Goals

This course serves as an introduction to the study of state politics in the United States. The course has several goals, including:

1. covering the unique features of state governments, focusing on theoretical frameworks of political institutions, political behavior, and public policies of the various states.
2. examining the changing role of the states and municipalities in their relationships with the federal government.
3. exploring issues regarding a public policy at the state and local level.

Course Requirements

There is one required text for the course:

Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis, 10th Edition (2013) edited by Virginia Gray, Russell Hanson, and Thad Kousser. Sage Press.

You need to make sure you purchase the tenth edition which is new for this year. This is a traditional textbook. Each day there will be readings from this book assigned to coordinate with the class lecture. Students are expected to complete the book readings **AND** all other assigned readings **BEFORE** coming to class.

Assignments and Grading

Exams

There will be two midterm exams and final exam. The midterm exams will be worth 15% of your final grade each while the final exam counts for 25% of your final grade. Each exam will include a multiple choice section, as well as short essays. The final exam will include a comprehensive portion, as well as a portion focused on the final few class sessions. I will do my best to reserve the final day before the exams for a review session, but this is only time permitting as we may need to catch up.

Attendance and Class Participation

Attendance and participation account for 15% of your overall course grade. You are expected to be an active participant in our discussions and classroom activities. An emphasis will be put not only on quantity of participation, but the quality of comments. If speaking in class is difficult for you, come see me. I reserve the right to administer quizzes if participation becomes a problem.

Individual conduct during these discussions must remain professional. Discussing politics is often a dangerous area due to the ideologically divergent nature of many current political issues. In order to maintain decorum in the classroom, you must remain respectful and courteous of opposing opinions and ideas. Each student is encouraged and expected to offer their thoughts, but must also be prepared for their opinions to be challenged by others. When responding to opposition, I must insist you critique opposition ideas and positions, and not the individual putting forth the ideas.

Class attendance is required. You will be allowed two unexcused absence over the course of the semester. After that, each additional unexcused absence will lower your attendance grade by one letter grade. **If you miss 8 classes, you will fail the course.** If you know you will be missing a class, please let me know as soon as possible. If you are more than ten minutes late to class, I reserve the right to mark you absent.

Paper

The paper accounts for 30% of your overall course grade. The paper will be 10 pages. A 10 point deduction will be made for every half page less than 10. I also reserve the right to deduct fractions of this amount. I will stop reading if it is too long. The typesetting standards are 1 or 1.25 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double spacing. Papers are due in class on the day listed on the syllabus, and will be lowered by 10 points for each day late. Papers turned in after class but on the due date will be considered one day late.

The purpose of the writing assignments for this course is to explore the process of lawmaking. Many complain the job of legislators is filled with partisan bickering, in-fighting and pompous speeches that have little to do with policy. Others however argue legislators serve as important figures in pushing bills through the legislative process. In this assignment, you will be responsible for exploring legislator behavior within the institutional process of lawmaking. You will be responsible for choosing a piece of legislation within a state. The actual law, as well as the state is up to you. You will write a 10 page papers due on November 27th.

You have all probably read newspaper articles on the bill making process. Much of what you read however is based on the floor debate and activity within some body chamber of legislature. The first half of the paper will be in a similar fashion. You will obtain either video or audio of the floor debate of the bill you are following. Your will focus on what goes on during the debate. What are the important parts of the legislation? Who supports the bill? Who opposes this legislation? What is your general impression of this debate? You will need to take very detailed notes in order to write the actual paper. Only report on what you observe or listen to. Be sure when you select your legislation you have access to the audio or visual debate. Most state legislative websites have archived audio.

The second half of the paper will deal more directly with the actual policy you are following. You will read the actual content of the bill in its entirety. What is the most important aspect of the actual policy? Is there a partisan slant? Is there a regional bias? Or will it help the entire state? You should spend 1 to 1.5 pages of this paper comparing what is in the content of the bill and what the floor debate contained. Is the focus of the debate the same as that of the bill? What does this tell you about the lawmaking process? Again, you should be able to find this information on state legislature websites.

Writing Services

I encourage you to take advantage of the writing services in the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with any kind of writing project, multimedia project, and/or oral presentation. They offer one-on-one consultations that address everything

from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, call 977-3484 or visit <http://www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml>.

Grade Scale

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to grades based on overall performance in the course. There will be no extra credit offered in the course, nor will there be curving grades.

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
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		

Honor Code

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student's own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. **Academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in an automatic grade of an F for the course** and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty: <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

Expectations and Procedures

Technology

Put everything on mute and in your bag. I do not want to see cell phones in the class at all. You do not need to use your laptop for this course. Please take notes the old-fashioned way. This will dissuade the trend of college students to browse the web, check e-mail, and frequent social networking sites during lecture. I will post all lecture powerpoints on blackboard after the daily lecture. If I use additional material I will post it on blackboard so you may access it at a later point.

Communication

I will post grades, send class e-mails, etc. . . with Blackboard. Be sure that you can access the e-mail address listed. I will only send e-mail out to your SLU e-mail accounts listed on the course roster in Blackboard. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses you may use.

I am very accessible both during and after normal work days. Please feel free to contact me or stop by my office if you need to talk. Also, please contact me immediately if you are going to miss an exam or need to reschedule. I do not like to give make up exams, but under extenuating situations, I will make allowances. Please contact me prior to the exam if you need to reschedule, I will not allow make up exams if contacted after the exam period.

Disabilities

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to www.slu.edu/success.

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

Readings

In addition to the readings required for lecture from the text, you will also be assigned additional readings. Each day we will spend part of the time discussing these readings. I may add readings to the syllabus as the semester moves along to fit into the weekly discussions.

Tentative Course Schedule

Part I: The Political Context of States

- Aug 28: Introduction and course overview. What do we mean by “Politics”?
- Aug 30: No class, Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association
- Sep 4: Putting States in a Larger Political Context
Gray, Hanson and Kousser (GHK), Chapter 1
Daniel Elazar “Marketplace and Commonwealth.” Posted on Blackboard
- Sep 6: Federalism
GHK, Chapter 2
[Kettl “A Decade To Remember”. Governing. February 2010.](#)
- Sep 11: Parties
GHK, Chapter 3
[Goodman, Pushing the Envelope, Governing, May 2008.](#)

- Sep 13: Parties cont. and Elections.
- Sep 18: State and Local Direct Democracy
GHK, Chapter 5
“Policy Forum: Do Ballot Initiatives Undermine Democracy?” (posted on Blackboard)
- Sep 20: Interest Groups
GHK, Chapter 4
- Sep 25: Catch up and Review
- Sep 27: Exam 1

Part II: Institutions and Actors in State Politics

- Oct 2: State Legislatures
GHK, Chapter 6
- Oct 4: State Legislatures cont.
- Oct 9: Governors and the Executive Branch
GHK, Chapter 7
- Oct 11: Governors and the Executive Branch, cont.
- Oct 16: The Bureaucracy
- Oct 18: State Courts
GHK, Chapter 8
[Patton, Robe Warriors, Governing, March 2006](#)
- Oct 23: NO CLASS, Fall Break
- Oct 25: Inter-Institution Interaction
- Oct 30: Catch Up and Review
- November 1: Exam 2

Part III: Public Policy

- Nov 6: Election Day (GO VOTE). What to expect?
- Nov 8: Agenda Setting
- Nov 13: Policy Innovation and Diffusion
- Nov 15: State Fiscal Policy
GHK, Chapter 10
- Nov 20: State Fiscal Policy cont.
- Nov 22: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break
- Nov 27: PAPERS DUE IN CLASS Morality Policy
GHK, Chapter 14
Meier, “Drugs, Sex, Rock and Roll.” Policy Studies Journal. 1999 (posted on Blackboard)
- Nov 29: NO CLASS.

- Dec 4: Education Policy
GHK, 12 and 13
- Dec 6: State Health and Social Welfare Policy
GHK, Chapter 11
- Dec 11: Last Day of class. Catch Up and Review
- Dec 18: Final Exam, 12-1:50