

PS 221--POLITICS IN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS
Fall 2013

T-Th 9:30-10:45
Business Administration 105
Instructor: Kevin B. Smith
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Hours: 11-noon MF
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Departmental Learning Objectives

- A. To become familiar with the basic descriptive information pertaining to the exercise of power in pursuit of public policy in at least three fields of the discipline.
- B. To become familiar with the basic theories and concepts that are relevant to the chosen fields.
- C. To be able to engage in critical thinking, whether written or oral, about political subjects.
- D. To become familiar with the basic sources of information that are important for the chosen fields.

Course Description and Objectives

PS221 is an introductory survey of American state and local politics. The course is designed to better equip students to understand the political institutions and processes of regional governments in the United States, their policy responsibilities, and their impact on the day to day lives of citizens. The general approach to this topic will be comparative in nature, i.e. we will focus on the variation among regional governments and attempt to come to some understanding of why those differences exist and what effect they have on government decision-making. The course is roughly divided into three broad sections. The first section deals with the context and structure of politics at the sub-national level. The second section covers the linkage mechanisms that connect citizens to the institutions of state and local government. The third section examines the key institutions of state and local government.

Required Texts

Smith, Greenblatt *Governing States & Localities, 4th Edition*
Smith *State and Local Government 2012-13*

Grades

Grades are assigned on a points basis. There are a total of 200 possible points for the course, assigned on the following basis:

Midterm	40 points
Quizzes	30 points
Class participation	10 points
Paper 1	25 points
Paper 2	25 points
Final	70 points

Letter grades are assigned on the following basis: A+ 194-200 points / A 187-193 / A- 180-186 / B+ 174 -179 / B 167-173/ B- 160-166 / C+ 154-159 / C 147-153 / C- 140-146 / D+ 134-139 / D 127-133 / D- 120-126 / F =>119

The Midterm and Final will be in-class examinations covering both reading and lecture material. The format for these tests will include some multiple choice, true-false, fill in the blank, matching and short answers. **The final is comprehensive**, i.e. it will be based on all the lecture and reading material covered in class. The purpose of all examinations is to assess your grasp of the primary elements of the course, and you will be given more details on the exams in class. **MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL ONLY BE GIVEN IF THERE IS A CLEAR AND COMPELLING REASON TO DO SO.** This means you must have, at a minimum, a documented, university-approved absence. All make-ups will be in-class essay exams--no exceptions. *I will not give course incompletes except in the most extreme and documented circumstances.*

There are quizzes associated with each week's assigned readings. These will be posted on Blackboard and you are responsible for taking these quizzes as you complete the reading assignments. **Quizzes should be completed before the class dates associated with the weekly readings.** So, for example, the week 2 assigned reading is Chapter 1 in the main textbook and the first class for that week is Sept. 3. This means you should have done the readings and completed the online quiz before start of class on Sept. 3. The quizzes are time stamped and only those completed before the relevant due times will be counted.

You are required to write two papers for this class. **The paper must pose a specific question and attempt to answer that question using the comparative method discussed in class.** The paper should include, at a minimum the following elements: (1) A clear statement of the question of under consideration, and an explicit answer to it. (2) An argument and comparative evidence to support your answer. (3) A minimum of 5 cites (these should NOT include any readings assigned in class). The paper should be typed, double-spaced, with standard 1 inch margins, and the text should be no larger than 12 point in a standard font such as Times New Roman or Arial. It should be no longer than 5 pages of text (an extra page or two for bibliography or references is allowed). Due dates for the papers are listed in the course schedule below. **LATE PAPERS ARE DOCKED 3 POINTS FOR EVERY DAY THEY ARE LATE.** This sanction begins immediately following the class period when the papers are due, i.e. if the paper is not turned in by the end of the class period on the due date 3 points are docked, and a further 3 points are docked the next day and so on. The purpose of the paper is to assess your critical thinking skills when applied to reasonably complex political arguments.

All students are expected to participate in class discussions, and this is a graded portion of the course. The first and fundamental requirement for participation is attendance—if you are not here you cannot participate and this will be reflected in your grade. Showing up, however, is not enough. To get a good score on the participation component of your grade you need to ask questions, respond to questions and generally verbally engage in the life of the class.

Absences

I will take attendance beginning in the second or third week of the semester. Attendance will not be formally graded, but I will take it into account when assigning final grades. Anyone who is close (within two or three points) of the next highest grade and has four or fewer absences I'll give the benefit of the doubt to and assign the higher grade. Anyone with five or more absences will receive no such consideration. Note that I am not counting the nature of the absences here. Excused absences because of sickness, athletics etc will allow a student to make up work or a test, but these are counted as absences for the purposes of "rounding" grades.

Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct

I take academic dishonesty seriously. *Anyone found guilty of fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism will, at a minimum, receive an F for this course.* Fabrication means altering information, falsification means inventing information. Plagiarism means presenting someone else's work as your own, either by not giving proper acknowledgement of the source or by presenting work in whole or in part any work that has been prepared by or copied from another person. Anyone found cheating on a test will also receive an F

for the course, with cheating including, but not limited to, using notes, textbooks or other people's work to aid test taking.

Accommodation for Students With Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

The following provides a basic outline for the course. The lectures parallel the topics in the assigned readings, but they are not substitutes for them. The readings are prerequisites for the lectures and should be completed on the earliest date.

Week 1 (Aug 27) : Introduction to Class
(Aug 20): NO CLASS.

Week 2 (Sep 3/5) Studying the States and the Comparative Method
GS&L Ch. 1

Week 3 (Sep 10/12) Federalism
GS&L Ch. 2
S&LG Essays 1, 2, 3 and 4

Week 4 (Sep 17): State Constitutions
GS&L Ch. 3
(Sep. 19) NO CLASS

Week 5 (Sep 24/26): State Budgets
GS&L Ch. 4
S&LG Essay 32, 34 and 35.

Week 6 (Oct 1/Oct 3) Public Opinion and Voting in the States
GS&L Ch. 5
S&LG Essays 5 & 6

First Paper Due Tues Oct 1.

Week 7 (Oct 8/10): Parties and Interest Groups
GS&L Ch. 6
S&LG Essays 8, 10 and 11.

Week 8 (Oct. 15) MIDTERM EXAM
(Oct 17) TESTS RETURNED/EXAM REVIEWED

Week 9 (Oct 22): NO CLASS—FALL BREAK
(Oct 24): Legislatures

GS&L Ch. 7
S&LG Essays 14 and 15.

Week 10 (Oct 29/31) Legislatures
Same readings as Week 9

Week 11 (Nov 5/Nov 7) Governors and the Executive Branch
GS&L Ch. 8
S&LG Essays 17 and 18

Week 12 (Nov 12/Nov 14) State Courts
GS&L Ch. 9.
S&LG Essays 20, 21 and 23

Second paper due Tues. Nov 12.

Week 13 (Nov 19/Nov 21) Bureaucracy
GS&L Ch. 10
S&LG Essays 24, 25, and 27

Week 14 (Nov 26) Bureaucracy
Same readings as Week 13
(Nov 29) NO CLASS-THANKSGIVING

Week 15 (Dec 3/Dec 12) Local Government
GS&L Ch. 11 and 13
S&LG Essays 29 and 20.

Final Exam: 10 a.m.-Noon Wednesday Dec 18