

POS 3122: State Politics
Department of Political Science
Spring 2015
M/W/F 10:40-11:30 pm (Turlington Hall 2342)

Instructor: Mitchell Sellers (msellers@ufl.edu)
Office: Anderson 330
Office Hours: Monday 11:30-1:30 (and by appointment)
Homepage: <http://people.clas.ufl.edu/msellers/>

- To help me keep track of email messages, please include POS 3122 in the subject line of any email message you send to me.

Course Description and Objectives:

This course is an investigation of major problems and issues in American State Politics. The emphasis is on the political institutions and organizations, political behavior in state politics and the impact of state politics on policy making at national, state and local levels. This course seeks to understand how state politics operates and influences the development of public policy. This course focuses on political institutions and political behavior to explain political outcomes.

State politics is an exciting field of study. While most states look and function similar to federal government, there are differences across the states that can dramatically alter the power dynamics of political actors, such as powers given to the governor, the strength of political party within states and whether or not judges are elected. This course takes advantage of the variation across the states to understand how political institutions influence politics and public policy.

The primary learning objectives are:

- For students to understand the ways in which political institutions can vary across the states, and how this influences politics.
- For students to develop a solid foundation of how state governments operates and influences their lives.
- For students to use the comparative method to think critically about how politics functions across the United States.

Required Text (copies on reserve at Library West)

Donovan, Smith, Osborn and Mooney. *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform*, 4th ed. (Boston: Cengage, 2013).

Class Participation/Attendance

Students are expected to do the readings, attend class, and participate in class discussions. My lectures will be organized around the topics and readings found in the schedule outlined below. Lectures will include interactive discussion of the core themes of the readings. Students should **read the assigned literature before class** in order to participate.

Attendance will not be graded, but you are responsible for the content of all classes, including issues raised in the spontaneous class discussions. Also, note that class participation account for

10% of your grade, so missing classes will negatively influence your final grade. As a matter of mutual courtesy, please let the instructor know when you're going to be late, when you're going to miss class, or if you need to leave early. Please try to do any of these as little as possible. If you must miss a class, please request notes from your classmates prior to contacting me. I do not share my powerpoint slides, except under extenuating circumstances.

Class Debates

The course will have a series of debates throughout the semester (9 debate days with 4-5 students participating in each debate). All students are expected to participate in one debate, where they will assume the identity of a political figure that is a major proponent or opponent on the debate topic. Debate days and identities are selected at the start of the semester. In addition to participating in the debate, students are expected to write a 400-600 word paper (due 2 days before the day of the debate), where they will provide a brief overview of their political figure's involvement in the topic, as well as a detailed overview of their policy stance. **Students are expected to bring in evidence from current events, scholarly articles or reputable news sources to support the arguments made in their paper and during the debate.** Do not rely on talking points from CNN or Fox News, and wikipedia is not allowed.

Students are expected to attend all debates and are required to submit one question to the discussant (Mr. Sellers). The paper is worth 5% of your final grade and participation in the debate is worth 10%, for a total of 15% of your final grade. A more detailed explanation of what is expected from debate participants is provided on E-Learning.

Essays

Students are expected to write two short essays. These essays are intended to stimulate student engagement with the content and to prepare students for upcoming exams. The paper should be between 800-1,000 words (double-spaced, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins) and must include a References page (not part of the word count) if outside sources are utilized.

Essays must be submitted on E-learning before midnight on the due date. Any assignments submitted after midnight will be treated as late regardless of an excused attendance (submission is online and can be done early). Grades and comments will be returned via E-learning in the grades section. Each essay is worth 10% of your overall grade, which accounts for 20% of your final grade.

A more detailed explanation of what is expected from these essays and how to write a good paper is provided in the files section on E-Learning. Note that Turnitin evaluates all submissions for plagiarism. Be sure to cite any and all sources that you draw from. Any plagiarism will be given a 0 for the assignment, and will be submitted to the University for Disciplinary Review.

Exam 1 and Exam 2

There are two exams – Exam 1 (midterm) and Exam 2 (not cumulative). Both exams will test your knowledge of the material covered in the lectures and in the assigned readings. The exams will consist of 35 multiple choice questions. Exam 1 is worth 25% of your final grade; Exam 2 is worth 30% of your final grade.

Make-up Exams, Missed Classes and Late Papers

It is expected that no students will miss any exams or classes. No make-ups on exams or participation points will be possible unless due to university excused absences, which will require documentation and must be brought to Mr. Sellers' attention **prior** to the class that you know that you will miss. An unexcused absence on an exam results in a grade of 0%. Essays not turned in by their due date will incur a grade reduction of 10% every day after the deadline (and will not be accepted if it is more than 2 days late). Since essays are submitted through E-learning, this applies to all students (even those with excused absences). No planned opportunities for extra credit exist in this course.

Summary of Grading

Class Participation/Attendance	10%
Class Debate	15%
Essays	20% (2 worth 10% each)
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	30%

Course Grades

Final grades will be assigned based on the scale below:

90% - 100%	A	70% - 75%	C
88% - 89%	A-	68% - 69%	C+
86% - 87%	B+	66% - 67%	D+
80% - 85%	B	60% - 65%	D
78% - 79%	B-	58% - 59%	D-
76% - 77%	C+	57% or less	E

Unless a computational error has been made, grades will not be changed after the end of the semester. Only in the rarest of circumstances will I grant an Incomplete ('I').

Academic Dishonesty

For University's honesty policy regarding cheating and use of copyrighted materials, see: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/procedures/honestybrochure.php>

Written assignments will be checked for plagiarism against published works, other papers submitted by classmates at the current and previous semesters and internet pages using Turnitin, which is UF's plagiarism detection software. It is expected that submitted work for individual assignments will solely reflect the student's own efforts. Be sure to cite all sources.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: If you require classroom accommodation because of a disability, you must first register with the Dean of Students Office (<http://oss.ufl.edu/>). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to you, which you then give to the instructor when requesting accommodation. The College is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to assist students in their coursework.

Counseling and Student Health

Students may occasionally have personal issues that arise in the course of pursuing higher education or that may interfere with their academic performance. If you find yourself facing problems affecting your coursework, you are encouraged to talk with an instructor and to seek confidential assistance at the University of Florida Counseling Center, (352) 392-1575, or Student Mental Health Services, (352) 392-1171. Visit their web sites for more information: <http://www.counsel.ufl.edu/> or <http://www.health.ufl.edu/shcc/smhs/index.htm#urgent>.

*Crisis intervention is always available 24/7 from:
Alachua County Crisis Center: (352) 264-6789.*

Course Schedule

Section 1: Introduction to State Politics

Week 1: January 7-9

Jan 7 Intro to Course
Readings: None

Jan 9 Intro to Political Institutions and the Comparative Method
Readings: DSOM – p. 1-10; 27-36 (in Chapter 1)

Week 2: January 12-16

Jan 12 The History and Changing Power Dynamics in State Government
Readings: DSOM – p. 40-51 (in Chapter 2)

Jan 14 Socioeconomic, Cultural and Political Contexts of States
Readings: DSOM – p. 10-27 (in Chapter 1)
Fitzpatrick & Hero. "Political Culture and Political Characteristics of the American States: A Consideration of Some Old and New Questions." *The Western Political Quarterly* (1988): 145-153.

Jan 16 NO CLASS: Southern Political Science Association's Annual Conference
Readings: None – Prepare for Next Week

Week 3: January 19-23

Jan 19 NO CLASS: Martin Luther King Day
Readings: None – Prepare for the Rest of the Week

Jan 21 Political Parties
Readings: DSOM – Chapter 5

Jan 23 Interest Groups
Readings: DSOM – p.178-201 (in Chapter 6)

Section 2: Political Actors

Week 4: January 26-30

- Jan 26 Intro to State Legislatures
Readings: DSOM – Chapter 7
- Jan 28 State Legislative Reforms
Readings: King. "Changes in Professionalism in US State Legislatures."
Legislative Studies Quarterly (2000): 327-343.
- Jan 30 Debate: Should legislators be term limited?
Readings: None

Week 5: February 2-6

- Feb 2 Intro to Governors and Gubernatorial Power
Readings: DSOM – p. 255-283 (in Chapter 8)
- Feb 4 Gubernatorial Interaction with Legislatures, Judges and Bureaucracy
Readings: Ferguson. "Chief Executive Success in the Legislative
Arena." *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 3.2 (2003): 158-
182.
- Feb 6 Debate: Should governors use unilateral powers? If so, when?
Readings: None

Week 6: February 9-13

- Feb 9 State Agencies
Readings: DSOM – p. 283-293 (in Chapter 8)
- Feb 11 Intro to State Judges, Judicial Campaigning and Partisan Judges
Readings: DSOM – p. 298-299; 323-341 (in Chapter 9)
- Feb 13 Judicial Interaction with Legislatures, Governors and Bureaucracy
Readings: Brace and Boyea. "State Public Opinion, the Death Penalty, and
the Practice of Electing Judges." *American Journal of
Political Science* 52.2 (2008): 360-372.

Week 7: February 16-20

- Feb 16 Debate: Should judges be elected? If so, how – partisan elections, retention etc?
Readings: None
***** Paper 1 Due *****
- Feb 18 Mobilizing the Electorate and the Role of Media in Campaigning
Readings: DSOM – p. 74-79 (in Chapter 3)
[Big Data Meets the Ballot Box in 2014 Midterm Elections](#)
[Voter Turnout Always Drops Off for Midterm Elections, but Why?](#)

Feb 20 Direct Democracy's Role in Participation and Policymaking
Readings: DSOM – p. 108-113; 127-135 (in Chapter 4)

Week 8: February 23-27

Feb 23 Debate: What does direct democracy do to elections, and turnout?
Readings: None

Feb 25 Exam 1

Feb 27 Problems and Concerns of State Policymaking
Readings: None

Week 9: March 2-6

***** NO CLASS: Spring Break *****

Section 3: Public Opinion and State Public Policy by the Issue

Week 10: March 9-13

March 9 Policy Change: Hot Topics and Public Opinion
Readings: [As 2014 Brings New State Laws, A Look at Public Opinion on the Issues](#)
[The Most Liberal and Conservative Big Cities](#)
[As Americans Head to the Polls, State and Local Governments Viewed Favorably](#)
[14 Striking Findings from 2014](#)

March 11 Public Opinion: Understanding Public Opinion
Readings: Erikson, Wright and McIver. "Political Parties, Public Opinion, and State Policy in the United States." *The American Political Science Review* (1989): 729-750.

March 13 Debate: Should politicians be responsive to public opinion?
Readings: None

Week 11: March 16-20

March 16 Criminal Justice: Mandatory Sentencing, 3-Strikes and Marijuana Legalization
Readings: Mauer. "The Causes and Consequences of Prison Growth in the United States." *Punishment & Society* 3.1 (2001): 9-20.

March 18 Debate: Should marijuana be legal? If so, under what conditions and why?
Readings: None

March 20 Fiscal Policy: Welfare and Social Services
Readings: DSOM – p. 489-510 (in Chapter 14)

Week 12: March 23-27

March 23 Fiscal Policy/Healthcare: Medicaid, SCHIP and Healthcare Concerns
Readings: DSOM – p. 510-521 (in Chapter 14)

March 25 Morality Policy: Overview
Readings: DSOM – p. 450-473 (in Chapter 13)

March 27 Morality Policy: LGBT Rights
Readings: DSOM – p. 473-483 (in Chapter 13)

Week 13: March 30-April 3

March 30 Debate: What role should government play in regulating morality?
Readings: None

April 1 Environmental Policy
Readings: Scheberle. "The Evolving Matrix of Environmental Federalism and Intergovernmental Relationships." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 35.1 (2005): 69-86.
Find out more about states' environmental policy at:
<http://www.ncsl.org/research/environment-and-natural-resources.aspx>

April 3 Immigration Policy
Readings: [17 States Challenge Obama's Immigration Move](#)
[2014 Immigration Report](#)
[2005 Immigration Report](#)
Find out more about states and immigration law at:
<http://www.ncsl.org/research/immigration.aspx>

Week 14: April 6-10

April 6 Election Laws: Early Voting, Voter ID and
Readings: DSOM – p. 81-95 (in Chapter 3)

April 8 Education Policy: Tuition Rates, Common Core and Education Debates
Readings: DSOM – p.13-14 (in Chapter 1); p. 525-529; 540-550 (in Chapter 15)
[No Common Opinion on the Common Core](#)

April 10 Debate: Should Florida continue the Bright Futures scholarship program?
Readings: None
***** Paper 2 Due *****

Week 15: April 13-17

April 13 Local Government
Readings: DSOM – p. 383-390 (in Chapter 11)

April 15 Intergovernmental Relations
Readings: Gerlak "Federalism and US Water Policy: Lessons for the Twenty-
First Century." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 36.2
(2006): 231-257.

April 17 NO CLASS: Midwest Political Science Association's Annual Conference
Readings: None

Week 16: April 20-24

April 20 Debate: What should be the role of state government?
Readings: None

April 22 Exam 2

Important Dates:

Feb 16 – Paper 1 Due

Feb 25 – Exam 1

April 10 – Paper 2 Due

April 22 – Exam 2