

State Politics Seminar

POS 6127

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Time: Monday 2-4, 8:30-11:30am
Classroom: Anderson 216
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Course Description

The American states are a natural laboratory for experimentation. The states represent 50 units of analysis with largely similar cultures, populations, and political structures, but with significant variation across a range of institutions, political processes, and public policies. As such, they are an excellent venue to test general hypotheses concerning political institutions, political behavior, and policymaking. In this seminar we will primarily focus upon the comparative study of state politics; that is, we will use the comparative method to analyze institutions, political behavior, and public policy across the states. In particular, we will take a critical look at how various political institutions in the American states shape political behavior and electoral politics. Finally, since we are situated in the Sunshine State, some attention will be paid to the changing landscape of electoral politics of Florida. In pursuing the above goals, the course provides a broad overview of the research on American state politics and policy.

Course Goals

Students will gain knowledge of current research on American state politics, including recent theoretical and methodological approaches to studying sub-national politics, with the aim of being able to evaluate and master published work and, eventually, publish their own research. It will also, I hope, allow you to avoid making [ignorant](#) claims.

Course Requirements

This course draws a mix of political science Ph.D., M.A., and undergrad Honors students, as well as students from other disciplines. The professional expectations and goals of these sub-populations may vary, but I will do my best to ensure that this seminar caters to your professional interests.

Participation

Your weekly attendance is required. I follow UF's [guidelines](#) for attendance. Furthermore, all students are expected to participate in class discussions, which means not only showing up for class, but being fully prepared to critically discuss the assigned articles. I don't expect students to read the Supplemental books. I also don't expect you to have full mastery of all the weekly readings. Try to work through them all, but focusing your effort on two or three. Participation is worth 10% of your final grade. Do not assume that by merely showing up for class you will earn full participation credit.

Book Discussion Leader

Students will lead a class discussion on a book related to the required readings. This responsibility is worth 10% of your final grade. Discussion leaders will email to me a two page handout by *noon on the Sunday prior to our Monday morning class*; I will distribute it to your fellow students ahead of class. The handout should provide a brief summary of the book, including: 1) main research question being addressed; 2) theories or hypotheses being tested; 3) summary of the data employed; 4) findings. Book discussion leaders should plan on a 10 minute presentation on the key findings from the book. Book discussion leaders may not sign up for the same class session for which they are writing a thought piece, but should be familiar with that week's readings. You will sign up for your book discussion during our first session.

Thought Pieces

Students are required to write three response papers during the semester, what I like to call "thought pieces." The three includes one that everyone will do in week 5 (February 3). Rather than summarizing, you are to react to the assigned material, critically analyzing the theses, themes, and assumptions of the readings and evaluating the appropriateness of the research designs or methods. When analytically questioning, comparing, and criticizing the texts, students should try to relate and interpose the arguments and empirical findings of the readings to previous readings or current political events. You should only briefly summarize the arguments of the readings. Each thought piece is to be roughly 800 words. They may be written in the first person. When quoting from or citing the assigned articles, just refer to them by the author's name, date, and page numbers in the body of the text (e.g., Smith 1998: 45-6).

You will sign up for your three thought pieces during our first session. Your thought pieces must be emailed to me by *noon on the Sunday prior to our Monday morning class* as a Microsoft Word or PDF attachment. Turning your assignments in early allows me to consider your thoughts, which in turn, helps to give me an idea of how to structure our discussions. *I do not accept late thought pieces.* Each essay is worth 10% of your final grade (30% total). I expect students who turn in thought pieces to be especially ready and willing participants during class.

Research Paper

Students will write an original research paper (18-25 pages) on some aspect of state politics. The paper may be a standalone paper, your prospective dissertation, or your Honors Thesis/University Scholars Program topic. Your research may build on previous research, but it must be additive, theoretically/conceptually or empirically. A two- to three-page research prospectus is due in class on February 24, 2020. Students should meet with me individually prior to that class to discuss their research proposals. The prospectus should state your research question, your tentative argument, research design, and hypotheses, as well as the data and research methods you plan to use. You might also mention any foreseeable limitations to your research. A preliminary bibliography of sources should also be included. In the final two periods of class, students will present their research (approximately 10-15 minutes for each paper). The final research paper is due on April 27 at 5pm, as an emailed attachment. It is possible that I might be interested in collaborating on one of my ongoing research projects. I have lots of data (aggregate-level & survey), and I also have collected many archival materials that I will share with enterprising students who are interested in co-authoring a paper with me.

UF Honor Code

All students are expected to abide by the [UF Honor Code](#), which reads, in part: "I affirm that this work in its entirety is mine alone, and that I have received no outside assistance from anyone else, including classmates, other students, or faculty. I understand that plagiarism, seeking or receiving other unauthorized assistance, or any false representations regarding this exam [or other work] are serious offenses punishable under the Student Honor Code."

Ph.D. Grading

Class Participation	10%
3 Thought Pieces	30% (10% each)
Book Discussion Leader	10%
Research Paper/Campaign Plan	50%

The following cutoffs will be used for grades:

A 93–100%	A– 90–92%	
B+ 87–89%	B 84–86%	B– 80–83%
C+ 77–79%	C 74–76%	C– 70–73%
D+ 67–69%	D 64–66%	D– 60–63%
E < 60%		

Only in the rarest of all circumstances will I grant an Incomplete ('I').

Required Readings

You will have to either purchase a few books, or alternatively, borrow them from the UF library. To access the articles that are required, click on the hypertext links within the on-line course schedule (for most of them, you must be logged into the UF system via VPN). I will make available to you any other readings.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to the Field (*Leveraging the 50 States, but why Single-State Cases are Still Valuable*)

January 6 (Sign-Up for Thought Pieces and Book Discussion Leaders)

Readings:

Jewell, "[The Neglected World of State Politics](#)" (1982)

Brace & Jewett, "[The State of State Politics Research](#)" (1995)

Mooney, "[State Politics and Policy Quarterly and the Study of State Politics: The Editor's Introduction](#)" (2001)

Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, "[Size Doesn't Matter: In Defense of Single-State Studies](#)" (2002)

Week 2: *Federalism vs. Socio-Cultural Diversity of the American States*

January 13

Readings:

- 1) Hero, "[Social Capital and Racial Inequality in America](#)" (2003)
- 2) Gray, "[The Socioeconomic and Political Contexts of States](#)" (2018)
- 3) Kelly & Witko, "[Federalism and American Inequality](#)" (2012)
- 4) Cramer, [The Politics of Resentment](#) (2016) (chapter 1)
- 5) Hopkins, [The Increasingly United States](#) (chapter 2)
- 6) Hersh & Nall, "[The Primacy of Race in the Geography of Income-Based Voting](#)" (2015)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Books:

- Hero, [Faces of Inequality: Social Diversity in American Politics](#) (2000)
- Hopkins, [The Increasingly United States](#) (2018)
- Gelman, [Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do](#) (2009)
- Gimpel and Schuknecht, [Patchwork Nation: Sectionalism and Political Change in American Politics](#) (2003)
- Nall, [The Road to Inequality: How the Federal Highway Program Polarized America and Undermined Cities](#) (2018)
- Hertel-Fernandez, [State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States—and the Nation](#) (2019)

Discussion Book Sign-Up: _____ (pick one)

Week 3: No Class (MLK Day)

January 20

Week 4: *Election Administration & Voting*

January 27

Readings:

- 1) Berinsky, "[The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the United States](#)" (2005)
- 2) Burden, et al., "[Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform](#)" (2014)
- 3) Hicks, et al., "[A Principle or a Strategy? Voter ID laws and Partisan Competition in the American States](#)" (2015)
- 4) Menger, Stein, and Vonnahme, "[Reducing the Undervote with Vote by Mail](#)" (2017)
- 5) Barreto, et al., "[The Racial Implications of Voter Identification Laws in America](#)" (2018)
- 6) Barreto, et al., "[Do Absentee Voters Differ from Polling Place Voters?](#)" (2006)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Books & Articles:

- Alvarez and Grofman, eds., [Election Administration in the United States](#) (2014)
- Burden and Stewart III, eds., [The Measure of American Elections](#) (2014)
- Springer, [How the States Shaped the Nation: American Electoral Institutions and Voter Turnout](#) (2014)
- Leighley & Nagler, [Who Votes Now? Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the US](#) (2014)
- Hanmer, [Discount Voting; Voter Registration Reforms and their Effects](#) (2009)

Discussion Book Sign-Up: _____ (Springer)

Week 5: Voting and Elections in Florida

February 3

Readings:

- 1) Herron & Smith, "[The Effects of House Bill 1355 on Voter Registration in Florida](#)" (2013)
- 2) Shino & Smith, "[Timing the habit: Voter registration and turnout](#)" (2018)
- 3) Merivaki, "[Access Denied? Investigating Voter Registration Rejections in Florida](#)" (2018)
- 4) Merivaki & Smith, "[Casting and Verifying Provisional Ballots in Florida](#)" (2016)
- 5) Herron & Smith, "[Precinct Closings and Wait Times during the 2012 General Election](#)" (2015)
- 6) Amos, Smith, & Ste. Claire, "[Reprecincting and Voting Behavior](#)" (2017)
- 7) Herron & Smith, "[Race, party, and the consequences of restricting early voting in Florida in the 2012 general election](#)" (2014)
- 8) Smith, "[Vote-By-Mail Ballots Cast in Florida](#)" (2018)
- 9) Biggers & Smith, "[Does threatening their franchise make registered voters more likely to participate? Evidence from an aborted voter purge](#)" (2018)
- 10) Herron, et al., "Ballot design, voter intentions, and representation: A study of the 2018 midterm election in Florida" (2020)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1 - 4 _____ & _____
5 - 8 _____ & _____
9 & 10 _____ & _____

Supplemental Book:

Corrigan and Binder, [Florida and the 2016 Election of Donald J. Trump](#) (2019)

Week 6: Electoral Variation Across the States

February 10

Readings:

- 1) Myers, "[The Failed Diffusion of the Unicameral State Legislature, 1934-1944](#)" (2018)
- 2) Smith & Fridkin, "[Delegating Direct Democracy: Interparty Legislative Competition and the Adoption of the Initiative in the American States](#)" (2008)
- 3) Miller & Krosnick, "[The Impact of Candidate Name Order on Election Outcomes](#)" (1998)
- 4) McGhee, et al., "[A Primary Cause of Partisanship? Nomination Systems and Legislator Ideology](#)" (2013)
- 5) Santucci, "[Maine ranked-choice voting as a case of electoral-system change](#)" (2018)
- 6) Bowler, Brockington, and Donovan, "[Election Systems and Voter Turnout](#)" (2001)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Books:

Hale, Montjoy, & Brown, eds., [Administering Elections: How American Elections Work](#) (2015)

Brown, Hale, & King, eds., [The Future of Election Administration](#) (2019)

Cain, Donovan, and Tolbert, eds., [Democracy in the States: Experiments in Election Reform](#) (2018)

Discussion Book Sign-Up: _____ (Brown, Hale, & King)

Week 7: Politics of the South

February 17

Readings:

- 1) Key, [Southern Politics in State and Nation](#) (1949), Chapter 14
- 2) Aldrich, "[Southern Parties in State & Nation](#)" (2003)
- 3) McKee & Springer, "[A Tale of Two Souths: White Voting Behavior in Contemporary Southern Elections](#)" (2015)
- 4) Cascio & Washington, "[Valuing the Vote](#)" (2013)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-4 _____ & 1-4 _____

Supplemental Books:

- Key, [Southern Politics in State and Nation](#) (1949)
Maxwell & Shields, [The Long Southern Strategy](#) (2019)
Acharya, Blackwell, & Sen, [Deep Roots](#) (2018)
Hood et al., [The Rational Southern](#) (2014)
Faulkenberry, [Poll Power: The Voter Education Project and the Movement for the Ballot in the Am. South](#) (2019)
Caughey, [The Unsolid South: Mass Politics and National Representation in a One-Party Enclave](#) (2018)
McKee, [The Dynamics of Southern Politics](#) (2019)
Bateman, Katznelson, and Lapinski, [Southern Nation: Congress and White Supremacy](#) (2018)

Discussion Book Sign-Up: _____ (Acharya, Blackwell, and Sen)

Week 8: Research Paper Prospectus Due

February 24

No Class

Week 9: Spring Break

March 2

Week 10 Redistricting

March 9

Readings:

- 1) McDonald, "[A Comparative Analysis of Redistricting Institutions in the United States, 2001-02](#)" (2004)
- 2) Lublin, et al., "[Has the Voting Rights Act Outlived Its Usefulness: In a Word, 'No'.](#)" (2009)
- 3) Fougere, Ansolabehere, and Persily, "[Partisanship, Public Opinion, and Redistricting](#)" (2011)
- 4) Fraga, "[Redistricting and the Causal Impact of Race on Voter Turnout](#)" (2015)
- 5) Barreto, Segura, & Woods, "[The Mobilizing Effect of Majority-Minority Districts on Latino Turnout](#)" (2004)
- 6) Hicks, et al., "[Revisiting Majority-Minority Districts and Black Representation](#)" (2018)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Book:

- McKee, ed., [Jigsaw Puzzle Politics in the Sunshine State](#) (2015)

Week 11: Public Opinion & Policy Responsiveness in the States

March 16

Readings:

- 1) Parry, et al., "[The State of State Polls: Old Challenges, New Opportunities](#)" (2008)
- 2) Caughey & Warshaw, "[Public Opinion in Subnational Politics](#)" (2018)
- 3) Pacheco, "[Using National Surveys to Measure Dynamic U.S. State Public Opinion](#)" (2011)
- 4) Enns & Koch, "[Public Opinion in the U.S. States: 1956 to 2010](#)" (2013)
- 5) Lax & Phillips, "[The Democratic Deficit in the States](#)" (2012)
- 6) Caughey & Warshaw, "[Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936-2014](#)" (2018)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Book:

Erickson, Wright, & McIver, *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States* (1993)

Week 12: Direct Democracy

March 23

Readings:

- 1) Haider-Markel, et al., "[Win, Lose, or Draw?](#)" (2007)
- 2) Bowler, Nicholson, and Segura, "[Earthquakes and Aftershocks: Race, Direct Democracy, and Partisan Change](#)" (2006)
- 3) Donovan, Tolbert, & Smith, "[Priming Presidential Votes by Direct Democracy](#)" (2008)
- 4) Smith & Tolbert, "[Direct Democracy, Public Opinion, and Candidate Choice](#)" (2009)
- 5) Biggers, "[Can a Social Issue Proposition Increase Political Knowledge?](#)" (2012)
- 6) Parry, Smith, & Henry, "[The Impact of Petition Signing on Voter Turnout](#)" (2011)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Books:

Smith & Tolbert, *Educated by the Initiative* (2004)
Biggers, *Morality at the Ballot* (2014)
Nicholson, *Voting the Agenda* (2005)
Dyck & Lascher, *Initiatives without Engagement* (2018)

Book Sign-Up: _____ (Nicholson) & _____ (Dyck & Lascher)

Week 13: State Legislatures & Representation

March 30

- 1) Wright & Schaffner, "[The Influence of Party: Evidence from the State Legislatures](#)" (2002)
- 2) Masket, "[What is, and Isn't, Causing Polarization in Modern State Legislatures](#)" (2019)
- 3) Rogers, "[Electoral Accountability for State Legislative Roll Calls and Ideological Representation](#)" (2017)
- 4) Cammisa & Reingold, "[Women in State Legislatures and State Legislative Research](#)" (2004)
- 5) Preuhs & Juenke, "[Irreplaceable Legislators? Rethinking Minority Representatives in the New Century](#)" (2011)
- 6) Clark, "[Collective Descriptive Representation and Black Voter Mobilization in 2008](#)" (2013)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Books:

Squire & Hamm, *101 Chambers: Congress, State Legislatures, and the Future of Legislative Studies* (2005)
Clark, *Gaining Voice: The Causes and Consequences of Black Representation in the American States* (2019)

Book Sign-Up: _____ (Clark)

Week 14: Governors & Courts

April 6

- 1) Brown, "[Are Governors Responsible for the State Economy?](#)" (2010)
- 2) Atkeson & Partin, "[Economic and Referendum Voting](#)" (1995)
- 3) Gann Hall, "[State Supreme Courts in American Democracy: Probing the Myths of Judicial Reform](#)" (2001)
- 4) Brace & Boyea, "[State Public Opinion, the Death Penalty, and the Practice of Electing Judges](#)" (2008)
- 5) Gill & Eugenis, "[Do Voters Prefer Women Judges?](#)" (2019)
- 6) Hughes, "[New-Style Campaigns in State Supreme Court Retention Elections](#)" (2018)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ & 4-6 _____

Supplemental Books:

Kousser & Phillips, *The Power of American Governors* (2012)
Bonneau & Hall, *In Defense of Judicial Elections* (2009)

Book Sign-Up: _____ (Kousser & Phillips)

Week 15: Inequality, Public Policy, & Diffusion

April 13

Readings:

- 1) Franko, "[Understanding Public Perceptions of Growing Economic Inequality](#)" (2017)
- 2) Bucci, "[Organized Labor's Check on Rising Economic Inequality in the U.S. States](#)" (2018)
- 3) Filindra, "[Immigrant social policy in the American states](#)" (2013)
- 4) Hawes & Rocha, "[Social Capital, Racial Diversity, and Equity](#)" (2011)
- 5) Ojeda, et al., "[Federalism and the Racialization of Welfare Policy](#)" (2019)
- 6) Grumbach, "[From Backwaters to Major Policymakers: Policy Polarization in the States, 1970–2014](#)" (2018)

Thought Piece Sign-Up: 1-3 _____ 4-6 & _____

Supplemental Books:

Karch, *Democratic Laboratories: Policy Diffusion among the American States* (2007)
Michener, *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism, and Unequal Politics* (2018)

Book Sign-Up: _____ (Michener)

Week 16: Research Presentations

April 20

April 27: Research Papers Due (emailed as an MS Word attachment), by 5pm.