

Roger Austin
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Office Hours: Before/after class, TBD, and by appointment

Monday thru Friday, 5th Period
2 pm to 3:15 pm
Anderson 34
Office: 307 Anderson

State & Local Politics

POS 2112; Section 221B

Summer B 2025 (6.17.25)

“Thinking is the hardest work known to man. This would account for why so few engage in it.” Henry Ford

Goals of the Course

Why do we have state and local governments? What functions do they perform and in which areas do they have primary responsibility for policy formation and execution? The American federal system of government is complex and gaining an appreciation and understanding of this is the chief goal of this course. Consequently, we will study federalism and then the various institutions, organizations and policy processes that most affect our everyday lives – those in the state and local governments. We will take a somewhat comparative approach, but with our vantage point, we’ll spend more time on Gainesville and Florida than elsewhere.

Since you’ll have read the material before class, coverage of topics will combine lecture and class discussion, plus academic and non-academic readings, and other hands-on materials as appropriate to our topics. We will also have occasional guest speakers and occasional student debates. By the end of the semester, students will have been introduced to all aspects of state and local politics from the academic and practical sides. With any luck, you’ll be armed and dangerous and ready to intelligently make whatever decisions you decide to make in the years to come.

Reading Materials

Required:

- Donovan, Smith, Olson and Mooney, *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform*, 4th Edition, Cengage Learning/Wadsworth, 2015. I encourage you to rent this or buy used editions when available. **(DSOM)**
- *Federalist Papers* – 10, 17, 45, 47-48 & 51 – free online. **(FP)**
- There will be other various assigned articles as well
- Florida Constitution – free online at MyFlorida.com
- US Constitution – free online
- SayfieReview.com and/or Sunburn/FloridaPolitics.com. These free sites provide complete coverage of all things Florida, including links to every newspaper in Florida, news, editorial, political cartoons, plus government websites and much, much more. There’s a good chance your hometown newspaper is there. And all for free. You can (i.e., that means should) even sign up for a free daily reminder email.

Recommended:

To facilitate our daily class discussions, I’d like to suggest and to encourage you to find a daily newspaper with good coverage of state and local politics. **Please note that as a UF student, you get free online access to both the NY Times and Wall Street Journal.** Additionally, try listening to/watching local radio and TV news and public affairs programming; much of this can be done online. Finally, try to track Internet sites, Podcasts and/or blogs on state and local issues: Politico.com, RealClearPolitics.com, fivethirtyeight.com, NYTimes.com, Pollster.com, Pew, Brennan Center, et al. If you find something really interesting, please send it to me and I may share it with the entire class.

Policies and Grading

Food and drinks in class are fine. You are also expected to clean up after yourselves. Attendance will not be taken, but we’ll miss you and, of course, there’s no telling what fun you’ll miss. Your grade will reflect your performance in the following areas:

- **10% Class Participation** – this means more than just sitting there
- **30% Reflection Paper** – due on Canvas by 11:59 pm on Friday, July 11 based on the prompt given; hint, very likely to be on Federalist 10

- **30% First Exam** – in class tentatively on Wednesday July 23??
- **30% Comparative Policy Paper from Policy Working Group** - due on Canvas by 4:59 pm on Friday, August 8 based on the prompt given.

Questions on exams will be drawn about equally from the readings, from lectures and class discussions; there is no Multiple Choice or True/False – it will be short answer and essay so you can explain your position and I always give essay options. Papers should be approximately 4-5 pages (with no upper limit), double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12-point type, numbered pages, plus References if needed. Logic, facts and evidence are welcome as is good grammar, and I grade on all of the above.

Grading Scale:	90-100	A – 90-91 = A-
	80-89	B – 80-81= B-; 88-89=B+
	70-79	C – 70-71=C-; 78-79=C+
	60-69	D
	0-59	E

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

I take academic dishonesty very, very, very, very seriously. If I find evidence of cheating or plagiarism or other academic dishonesty, I will personally initiate disciplinary action.

Students with Special Needs

It is the responsibility of students needing special accommodation for this course to contact me at the beginning of the semester. I will make every effort to meet your needs in accordance with UF Guidelines.

Office Hours

Feel free to come to office hours for any reason, academic or otherwise. If office hours are not convenient for you, I'll find a time that is. I am also very easy to reach by email and typically respond quite quickly; this is the best way to reach me.

Course Schedule

Section I – Federalism

<u>Week/Dates</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Notes/Other</u>
1 – 6/30-7/3 Happy July 4 th – No Class Friday!	DSOM – Preface and Chapters 1 and 2; FP	Prompt given out

Section II – Campaigns & Elections

<u>Week/Dates</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Notes/Other</u>
2 – 7/7-11	DSOM – Chapters 3, 4, 5 & 6	Reflection Paper Due 7/12

Section III – Institutions

<u>Week/Dates</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Notes/Other</u>
3 – 7/14–18	DSOM – Chapters 7, 8 & 9	
4 – 7/21-25	DSOM – Chapters 7, 8 & 9	Midterm Wed July 23(tent)

Section III - Policy & Special Topics

<u>Week/Dates</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Notes/Other</u>
5 – 7/28-8/1	DSOM – Chapters 10 - 12	
6 – 8/4–8	DSOM – Chapters 13 - 15	Policy Paper Due August 8