

# POS 2112: American State & Local Government

University of Florida | Spring 2025

## Course Information

### Meeting Place

AND 0101

### Meeting Time

T: 11:45am – 1:40pm &  
R: 12:50pm – 1:40pm

### Final Exam

AND 0101

May 1<sup>st</sup>  
R: 10:00am – 12:00pm

## Instructor Information

### Instructor

Matthew J. Uttermark, PhD

### Email

[matthewuttermark@ufl.edu](mailto:matthewuttermark@ufl.edu)

### Office Location & Hours

AND 0206  
T: 9:30am – 11:30am &  
R: 11:00am – 12:00pm

## General Information

### Description

*“To stay experimentation in things social and economic is a grave responsibility. Denial of the right to experiment may be fraught with serious consequences to the nation. It is one of the happy incidents of the federal system that a single courageous State may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel social and economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.”*  
- Louis Brandeis

Each U.S. state is comprised of a unique set of individuals and institutions. There is variation in the composition of each state including population size, racial and ethnic groups, gender, income, and urban/rural populations. Each state has an executive, legislative, and judicial branch but the structure and rules of the institutions that makeup these branches vary substantially. States also differ on the types of policies that they enact based on their population, economy, and other factors. In this course we will examine the politics of the American states with a focus on this variation in individuals, institutions, and policies. We will examine the role of states in the federal system, foundations of state governments, state institutions such as governors, legislatures, bureaucracies, and courts, and the connection between state and local governments. We will study political parties, campaigns and elections, and political participation and representation. Finally, we will analyze and evaluate state policies in areas includes budgets, taxation, economic development, environment, healthcare, education, welfare, and criminal justice.

Students who successfully complete this course will:

- 1) Be able to explain the ways states are organized and the key institutional actors and processes they employ.
- 2) Be able to demonstrate general knowledge of the role of political parties, direct democracy, interest groups, federalism and intergovernmental relations in the American states and how Florida compares to other states in those areas.
- 3) Have the skills to interpret data on state institutions and processes and fiscal conditions.
- 4) Develop analytical and critical skills to understand primary literature in state politics and policy.

## Grading

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A	93-100	B	83-86.99	C	73-76.99	D	63 – 66.99
A-	90-92.99	B-	80-82.99	C-	70-72.99	D-	60 – 62.99
B+	87-89.99	C+	77-79.99	D+	67-69.99	F	< 59.99

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**Grade Rounding** As a matter of policy, the instructor does not round grades in coursework. Please do not email the instructor at the end of the semester asking that your final grade be rounded up.

**Please Note** The gradebook for this course is updated every two weeks.

## Evaluation

**Class Engagement (10%)** Please come to class, ask questions, and be prepared to engage with the material. I encourage you to ask questions in class—especially when material is unclear. Throughout the semester I will randomly take attendance at least six times. You will be graded on the first five class engagement exercises that you complete.

**State Comparative Analysis Assignments (10% each, total of 30%)** For this set of assignments you will complete three assignments taking an in-depth comparative look at state institutions, state voting and elections, and state policy. Assignment directions and a rubric will be posted on Canvas. Due dates for the assignments are listed under the course schedule.

**Midterm (30%) & Final (30%)** There will be a midterm and finale, administered in-class. Both exams will be designed to test your understanding of key concepts and ideas covered in the class. The test may consist of true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions. More information will be provided when we come closer to the examination period.

## Course Materials

### Required Text

O'M Bowman, Richard C. Kearney, and Carmine P. F. Scavo. State and Local Government. 10<sup>th</sup> edition. Cengage, 2022

Electronic copies of the textbook are available and can be used in this class.

This book should be available for purchase in the campus bookstore, Amazon.com and Chegg.com, among other sites. In the reading schedule, this book is referred to as **S&LG**.

Other readings (book chapters, journal articles) will be made available on the course site.

## Class Policies

**Makeup Work** Make-up work will be accepted in this course if a student has a university approved absence. University approved absences include:

- A documented illness (or serious illness of a dependent child).
- A death in the family.
- Call to active military duty.
- Jury duty.
- A religious or work-restricted holy days.
- Official university activities (i.e., a student athlete competing in a meet).

It is your responsibility to inform me and get documentation before the absence occurs. For example, if you are ill the day of an assignment, I require a signed note from a medical doctor dated the day of the exam. I will then work to determine how to make-up the assignment. Late work submitted up to 48 hours after a deadline may receive up to half credit, unless otherwise documented.

**Incomplete Grades** I do not expect to hand out a grade of "Incomplete" to any student in this course. However, a grade of "Incomplete" will only be given if there is an agreement between the instructor and the student prior to the end of the semester. The instructor reserves the right to determine a legitimate reason for assigning an incomplete grade.

**Plagiarism** Any form of cheating will NOT be tolerated. If you are caught plagiarizing any written work you will receive an automatic zero on the assignment and will be reported to the university in accordance with University of Florida policy. Plagiarism is

defined as: handing in a paper you did not write, attempting to pass off someone else's work as your own, or using your own ideas, information, or phraseology of other writers without giving proper credit in your text. Self-plagiarism – handing the same written assignment for multiple courses – is also prohibited. See the university honor code for more information.

**Email Policy** Please avoid emailing the instructor with questions that can be answered by reading the syllabus. This document contains information on how your grade is calculated and what is covered each day in class. Additionally, if you wish to set up an appointment with the instructor outside of office hours, please provide a list of times to meet in the first email sent to the instructor. The instructor monitors email from 9am – 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

**Course Evaluations** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback professionally and respectfully is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email that they will receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

**Student Accommodations** Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation, please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Health & Wellness Resources** If you or someone you know is struggling with any crisis including, but not limited to, gender, sexual, racial, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Florida resources available. Some of these include:

- U Matter, We Care: 352-392-1575, [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu)
- RESPECT – UF Division of Student Affairs: [respect.ufsa@ufl.edu](mailto:respect.ufsa@ufl.edu)
- Counseling and Wellness Center: 352-392-1575, [counseling@ufl.edu](mailto:counseling@ufl.edu) (available 24/7)
- Alachua County Crisis Center's Crisis Line: 352-264-6789
- Student Health Care Center: 352-392-1161, [shcc@ufl.edu](mailto:shcc@ufl.edu)
- Multicultural & Diversity Affairs: 352-392-1217, [multicultural@ufl.edu](mailto:multicultural@ufl.edu)
- UFPD Office of Victim Services: 352-392-1111, [police@ufl.edu](mailto:police@ufl.edu)
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: 352-733-0111

**Academic Resources** The resources listed below are not exhaustive of all the academic resources that are available to students, but these encapsulate those that are helpful for students taking courses online, those seeking library support, or those looking for help with writing, tutoring, and general study skills:

- E-Learning Technical Support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2), [learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:learning-support@ufl.edu)
- Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>.
- Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138, <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.
- Academic Resources: provides services like tutoring, <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu>.

**Academic Integrity** Students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies several behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Conduct Code](#). If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

**Class Recordings** Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course.

A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

## Course Schedule

This syllabus is subject to change as necessary over the course of the semester. Regularly check Canvas and your e-mail for updates on any changes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>Jan 14</b>	Introduction to State & Local Politics	Syllabus Review S&LG Ch.1	
<b>Jan 16</b>	Introduction to State & Local Politics		
<b>Jan 21</b>	Federalism	S&LG Ch.2 Dinan & Heckelman (2020)	
<b>Jan 23</b>	Federalism		
<b>Jan 28</b>	State Constitutions	S&LG Ch.3	
<b>Jan 30</b>	State Constitutions		
<b>Feb 4</b>	State Legislatures	S&LG Ch.6 Carey et al. (2006)	
<b>Feb 6</b>	State Legislatures		
<b>Feb 11</b>	Governors	S&LG Ch.7 Barrilleaux & Berkman (2003)	
<b>Feb 13</b>	Governors		
<b>Feb 18</b>	Public Administration	S&LG Ch.8 Palus & Yackee (2016)	
<b>Feb 20</b>	Public Administration		
<b>Feb 25</b>	State Judiciaries	S&LG Ch.9	
<b>Feb 27</b>	State Judiciaries		State Institutions Comparative Analysis Due
<b>Mar 4</b>	Midterm		

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
<b>Mar 6</b>	Citizen Participation, Elections, & Direct Democracy	S&LG Ch.4 Tolbert et al. (2003)	
<b>Mar 11</b>	Citizen Participation, Elections, & Direct Democracy		
<b>Mar 13</b>	Citizen Participation, Elections, & Direct Democracy		
<b>Mar 18</b>	No Class: Spring Break		
<b>Mar 20</b>	No Class: Spring Break		
<b>Mar 25</b>	Political Parties & Interest Groups	S&LG Ch.5	
<b>Mar 27</b>	Political Parties & Interest Groups		State Voting & Elections Comparative Analysis Due
<b>Apr 1</b>	Local Governments	S&LG Chs.10 & 11 Bowman & Kearney (2012)	
<b>Apr 3</b>	Local Governments		
<b>Apr 8</b>	Tax Policy	S&LG Ch.13 Franko (2021)	
<b>Apr 10</b>	Tax Policy		
<b>Apr 15</b>	Social Welfare Policy	S&LG Ch.17	
<b>Apr 17</b>	Social Welfare Policy		
<b>Apr 22</b>	Environmental Policy	S&LG Ch.18	State Policy Comparative Analysis Due
<b>Apr 24</b>	No Class: Reading Day		
<b>May 1</b>	Final Exam		