

# POS 2112: AMERICAN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

University of Florida — Fall 2019  
LIT 113, MWF 8:30AM–9:20AM

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Office Hours:  
Monday 9:30AM–10:30AM,  
Tuesday 10:00AM–11:00AM,  
and by appointment

## Course Description

A study of the politics, institutions, and policy processes of state and local governments. The course focuses on how these governments play pivotal roles in key policy areas such as taxes, health care, education, and social welfare. This requires an understanding of how public policy and political decisions are made at the state and local level, including how the general principles of federalism affect state and local governments.

As states are frequently described as “laboratories of democracy,” a focus of the course is examining the similarities and differences between state and local governments across the country. In doing so, we will assess how variation across political institutions, and in citizens’ attitudes, affects the politics and policies of subnational governments. Particular attention will be played to the politics, governmental structures, and policies of Florida, Alachua County, and the City of Gainesville.

The course will provide students with a basic understanding of the various institutions, organizations, and policy processes that most affect our everyday lives – those in state and local governments. This course offers a foundation and preparation for upper-level courses in the sub-field of American Politics.

## Required Readings

The two required books are available at local bookstores, online, and as an e-book. Both books are also on [reserve](#) at [Library West](#). Additional reading will include book chapters and journal articles, and periodically I may assign news articles that are relevant to the topics we are discussing. These readings will be discussed in lecture and should be considered required reading. Announcements and links to these articles will be provided on [Canvas](#).

- Todd Donovan, Daniel A. Smith, Tracy Osborn, and Christopher Z. Mooney. *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform*. 2015, 4th Edition (Cengage Learning). ISBN: [9781285441405](#).
- J. Edwin Benton. *Government and Politics in Florida*. 2008, 3rd Edition (University Press of Florida). ISBN: [9780813031705](#).

I strongly encourage students to subscribe to [The New York Times](#)' "Morning Briefing" email newsletter. It is free and provides news and information on the United States, Canada, and the Americas, each weekday morning. I also recommend following a combination of major news sources (e.g., *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*), political news sources (e.g., *The Hill* and *Politico*), and academic-oriented blogs (e.g., *Mischiefs of Faction* and *Monkey Cage*).

## Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students enrolling in the course should be able to:

- *Explain* the structure, historical development, and roles of governing institutions at the federal, state, and local level;
- *Evaluate* the role of the public in shaping policy outcomes through elections, political parties, and interest groups;
- *Describe* issues, such as the role of federalism, civil rights, and civil liberties, that consistently affect the activities of state and local governments; and
- *Think critically* about current events and engage with others, especially those with opposing viewpoints, in articulate, considerate, and logical ways.

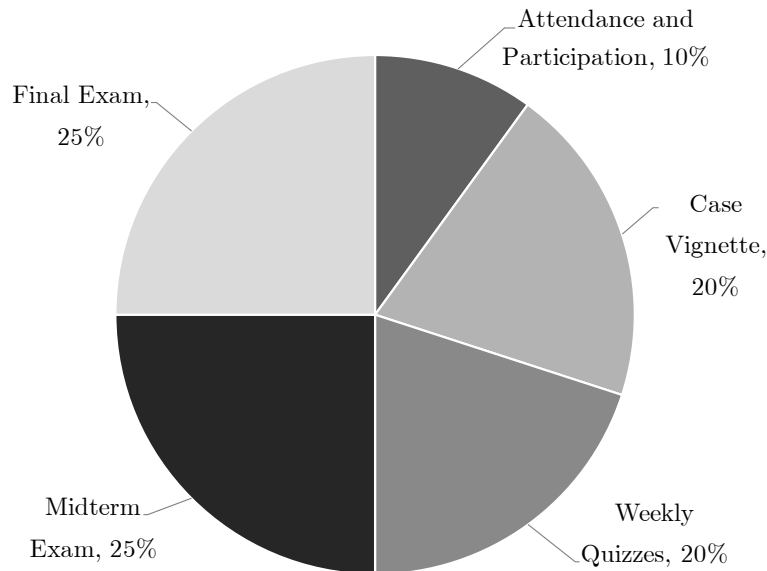
## Course Requirements

- **Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend all class meetings and be prepared for an in-depth discussion of the assigned course material. You are expected to arrive to class on time and stay for the duration. Note that physical attendance does not equal active participation. It is important that assigned readings are completed *before* class, allowing yourself time to critically engage arguments and themes. Attendance and participation is 10% of the overall course grade.
- **Weekly Quizzes:** Quizzes test your knowledge and understanding of the reading and lectures for the week. The weekly quizzes will consist of several multiple-choice questions. For thirteen (13) weeks, a quiz is due on Friday by midnight. The quizzes are worth 20% of the overall course grade.
- **Case Vignette:** Students will complete one case vignette, which provides an opportunity to apply the concepts and terms of a chapter from *State and Local Politics* to contemporary political events and public policy. The vignette is worth 20% of the overall course grade and is due no later than November 25. More information will be provided in class regarding this assignment.
- **Midterm and Final Exam:** Two non-cumulative exams, which will each consist of a mixture of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and short answer questions. Multiple-choice questions will involve higher order concepts that will require students to apply concepts discussed in lecture, not simply memorize terminology. Each exam is worth 25% of the overall course grade.
- **Extra Credit:** Students may attend a [Gainesville City Commission](#) meeting for up to five-points added to your lowest exam score. Extra credit assignments may be submitted at any point during the semester but no later than December 7. Additional information regarding this assignment is provided on Canvas. See instructor for alternative assignment.

## Grading Rubric

### Grade Distribution

The course grade will be assigned as follows:



### Letter Grade Distribution

Letter grades will be assigned per the following numerical scales:

$\geq 93$	A
90 – 92	A-
87 – 89	B+
83 – 86	B
80 – 82	B-
77 – 79	C+
73 – 76	C
70 – 72	C-
67 – 69	D+
63 – 66	D
60 – 62	D-
$\leq 60$	E

Final course grades will be rounded up if greater than or equal to .5 (e.g., 92.5). Additional extra credit will not be provided, aside from that stipulated above.

## Course Policies

- **Office Hours:** During the semester, office hours are an opportunity to get help with assignments and discuss course material, such as reviewing exams and grades. Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this time. Appointments are also available.

- **Lecture:** Attendance is *required* and students are encouraged to participate by asking questions. Material will be covered in the lectures that is not in the course readings. Topics in any films which will be shown is also fair game for the exam.
- **Exams:** For in-class exams, students will be asked to remove hats, caps, and sunglasses, and stow cell phones, computers, tablets, and smartwatches. Initiating or receiving outside communication using an electronic device during an exam constitutes receipt of outside information and will result in failure of the exam. Absences from exams will be excused only with written and verifiable documentation of illness, death of an immediate family member, or a conflicting university or legal obligation.
- **Make-up Exams:** Make-up exams will be administered if the absence is excused according to the stipulations above. Students who miss the exam for an unauthorized reason – i.e., not an excused absence – may take the exam at the discretion of the instructor and receive a one-letter grade penalty. Make-up exams will be administered in an alternative format (e.g., short-response and essay) and must be completed within five school days of the original exam date unless precluded due to excused medical, family, university, or legal reasons.
- **Late Assignments:** For every day an assignment is submitted after the original due date, 10% of the maximum score will be deducted from the assignment score. No assignments will be accepted once they are five or more days late.
- **Children in Class:** For students with children, it is understandable that unforeseen disruptions can occur in childcare. While not a long-term solution, bringing a child to class with you when such disruptions in childcare occur is acceptable. In these cases, all students should work together to create a welcoming environment for both the parent and child.
- **Class Demeanor:** Students are expected to arrive to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Derogatory comments, personal attacks on others, or interrupting the class will not be accepted. Please avoid the use of cell phones and restrict eating to outside of the classroom (unless medically necessary). Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.
- **Recording:** The [Student Honor Code](#) prohibits the unauthorized recording – video or audio – of any academic activity, including lecture. Please contact the instructor to obtain permission.
- **Technology:** Laptops and tablets may be used for note-taking during lecture. The instructor retains the prerogative to limit usage if warranted.
- **Cookie Policy:** If a student's cell phone rings during class, the student should bring cookies, or a healthier treat if preferred, for the entire class, at a future date to be arranged with the instructor.
- **Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations via GatorEvals at [ufl.bluer.com/ufl](http://ufl.bluer.com/ufl). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens at the end of the semester. Summary results are available to students at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results](http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results).
- **Subject to Change:** This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor to accommodate instructional and/or student needs. Proper notification will be provided to students of relevant changes.

## University Policies

- **Accommodation:** Students requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center \(352-392-8565\)](#) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.
- **Academic Honesty:** Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Cheating in any form undermines the integrity and mutual trust essential to a community of learning and places at a comparative disadvantage those students who respect and work by the rules of that community. It is understood that any work a student submits is indeed his/her own. Plagiarism – that is, lifting without giving credit from something someone else has written such as a published book, article, or even a student paper – is forbidden and is, in most cases, fairly easily detected. There are other, more obvious forms of academic dishonesty, such as turning in work completed by someone else, bringing inappropriate notes into an exam, and offering or receiving whispered, signaled, or other forms of assistance during an exam. Working with fellow students in exam study groups is not only acceptable but also encouraged, as long as one is refining ideas that are essentially his or her own. Included within this definition of academic integrity is the assumption that all documents and excuses provided as explanations for late or missed assignments have not been falsified. Please review the University’s policies regarding [student conduct and conflict resolution](#), available through the [Dean of Students Office](#). Any violations of the Student Honor Code will result in a failing grade for the course and referral to Student Judicial Affairs.
- **Communication Courtesy:** Per [university policy](#), all members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all messages and other electronic communications. Under Florida law ([FS 119.07](#)), GatorLink emails are public records. If you do not want your email to be released in response to a public records request, contact the instructor in person. Per university and federal policies, grades may not be discussed via e-mail or over the phone. Please allow 24-48 hours for a response.
- **Counseling and Wellness Center:** Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: [counseling.ufl.edu](#), [352-392-1575](#); and the University Police Department: [352-392-1111](#) or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

## Important Dates

Aug. 25	Last Day to Add or Drop a Course
Sept. 2	Labor Day, No Class
Oct. 4	Homecoming, No Class
Nov. 11	Veterans Day, No Class
Nov. 25	Last Day to Drop with a “W”
Nov. 26	Course Evaluations Open
Nov. 27 & 29	Thanksgiving, No Class
Dec. 4	Last Day of Classes
Dec. 5 & 6	Reading Days
Dec. 6	Course Evaluations Close
Dec. 18	Final Grades Available

## Course Schedule

The following outline is tentative. Weekly coverage may change depending on the progress of the class. However, you must keep up with the reading assignments. The reading assignments should be completed *prior* to the beginning of the corresponding class. Readings other than the *State and Local Politics* and *Government and Politics in Florida* textbooks are provided on Canvas. We will spend time at the beginning of each class addressing questions related to the reading as well as current events.

### Introduction to State Politics in a Federal System

Week 1, August 21–23: Course Structure and Introduction to State & Local Government

- Syllabus
- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 1
- “How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps” by Amelia Hoover Green (2013; Canvas)

Week 2, August 26–30: The Constitution and the History of Federalism

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 2
- *Federalist* Nos. 17, 39, and 45
- “A Countryman, II.” by Roger Sherman (1787; Canvas)
- Syllabus Quiz: August 26
- Weekly Quiz 1: August 26
- Weekly Quiz 2: August 30

Week 3, September 4–6: States in a Federal System and Florida Politics

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 2
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapters 1 and 2
- Weekly Quiz 3: September 6

### Political Institutions

Week 4, September 9–13: State Legislatures

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 7
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 7
- Weekly Quiz 4: September 13

Week 5, September 16–20: Governors

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 8
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 8
- Weekly Quiz 5: September 20

Week 6, September 23–27: State Courts

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 9
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 9
- Weekly Quiz 6: September 27

## Linkage Institutions

Week 7, September 30–October 2: Participation, Elections, and Representation

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 3
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 3
- *The Rise and Fall of the Voting Rights Act* by Charles S. Bullock III, Ronald K. Gaddie, and Justin J. Wert (2016): Chapter 1, pgs. 5–7 & 16–23 (Canvas)
- [“We gave you a chance: Today’s \*Shelby County\* decision in Plain English”](#) by Amy Howe of SCOTUS Blog (2013)
- [“Why Does No One Vote in Local Elections?”](#) by Zoltan L. Hajnal in *The New York Times* (2018)
- Weekly Quiz 7: October 4

Week 8, October 7–11: Direct Democracy

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 4
- [“Researching Initiatives and Referendums: A Guide for Florida”](#) by Elizabeth Outler in *Legal Reference Services Quarterly* (2008)

Week 9, October 14–18: Midterm and Political Parties

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 5
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 5
- Midterm Exam: October 14
- Weekly Quiz 8: October 18

Week 10, October 21–25: Interest Groups and Campaign Finance

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 6
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 6
- *Federalist* No. 10
- “Campaign Finance in the United States: Assessing an Era of Fundamental Change” by Nathaniel Persily, Robert F. Bauer, and Benjamin L. Ginsburg of The Bipartisan Policy Center (2018; Canvas)
- Weekly Quiz 9: October 25

## State and Local Policymaking and Public Policy

Week 11, October 28–November 1: Local Government and Land Use Politics

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapters 11 and 12
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapters 10 and 11
- *Married to the Mouse: Walt Disney World and Orlando* by Richard E. Foglesong (2001): Chapter 4 (Canvas)
- Weekly Quiz 10: November 1

Week 12, November 4–8: Fiscal Policy

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 10
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 12
- “[Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind](#)” by Larry Bartels in *Perspectives on Politics* (2005): Pgs. 15–23
- Budget Simulation Activity
- Weekly Quiz 11: November 8

Week 13, November 13–15: Education Policy

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 15
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 13
- “[Even With Affirmative Action, Blacks and Hispanics Are More Underrepresented at Top Colleges Than 35 Years Ago](#)” by Jeremy Ashkenas, Haeyoun Park, and Adam Pearce of *The New York Times* (2017)
- Weekly Quiz 12: November 15



Week 14, November 18–22: Health Care and Social Welfare Policy

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 14
- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapters 14 and 15
- “[How one of America’s least healthy counties got so sick](#)” (video) by Julia Belluz of *Vox* (2016)
- Weekly Quiz 13: November 22

Week 15, November 25: Morality Policy

- *State and Local Politics*: Chapter 13
- “[Morality Policy and Federalism: Innovation, Diffusion and Limits](#)” by Robyn Hollander and Haig Patapan in *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* (2017): Pgs. 1–10 & 15–18
- “[The death penalty in America: expensive, racially skewed, and still popular](#)” by Dara Lind of *Vox* (2015)
- “[The N.R.A. Lobbyist Behind Florida’s Pro-Gun Policies](#)” by Mike Spies of *The New Yorker* (2018)
- Case Vignette: November 25

## State and Local Politics, Political Science, and Policy Choice

Week 16, December 2–4: All Politics Is Local

- *Government and Politics in Florida*: Chapter 17
- “[The day Philadelphia bombed its own people](#)” by Lindsey Norward of *Vox* (2019)
- “[After the political science relevance revolution](#)” by Marc Lynch of *The Washington Post* (2016)
- Extra Credit (optional): December 7
- Final Exam: December 12, 12:30PM–2:30PM