

GVPT 460
Seminar in American State and Local Government
Spring 2010 MW 2:00pm-3:15pm

Professor: Stella Rouse
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Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00pm-2:00pm
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Course Description, Objectives, and Goals

The American system of Federalism forges a unique relationship between national government and state and local governments. The U.S. Constitution was written to address concerns about the division of power between the federal and state governments, but this relationship is not static and is subject to much debate and interpretation. In fact, in recent years there have been significant changes in the relationship between the national government and the states, especially in areas such as education, healthcare, and budgetary domain.

The decisions made by state and local governments affect the daily lives of individuals much more so than decisions made in Washington, D.C. Ironically, however, citizens pay more attention and participate at much higher levels when choices about the national government are involved. As “policy laboratories,” state and local governments are at the forefront of new ideas and solutions that are later adopted by the federal government. This class will take a comparative approach to the study of state and local politics by focusing on variations in states and communities to provide a better understanding about political behavior and policy making. As such, **this is not a course on Maryland politics**, but examples from Maryland will be used, when appropriate.

The goal of this course is to show students how to critically think about the role and operation of state and local governments in the United States. This includes the **structure and function** of state, county, and local governments; changes in the **relationship between the federal and sub-national governments** (i.e. the nature of federalism); the structure of state and local **political economies**; and the role of sub-national governments in **specific policy areas**. A more practical goal of the course is to provide students with the knowledge necessary for them to understand and participate in politics.

Course Expectations

In line with the expectations of an upper division seminar course, students will be assigned a fair amount of reading and will be expected to come to class prepared for a lively discussion on the weekly topics. Irregular attendance and non-completion of the reading assignments will be reflected in the student’s overall class performance. Further, students are expected to exhibit the ability to be analytical, to grasp concepts and theories, and to convey an understanding of the material both during class discussions and through written assignments (papers, quizzes, and exams).

Students are also expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to learning. As such, our classroom will be a place where people can feel comfortable

expressing diverse opinions without fear of ridicule or intimidation. It is expected that students will remain respectful of others, regardless of whether or not they share similar opinions and beliefs.

Other disrespectful activities that will not be tolerated:

Texting or talking on cell phones, having independent conversations during lecture/class discussions, and repeatedly coming to class tardy or leaving early.

Required Readings

1. *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform (The Essentials)*. 2009. Todd Donovan, Christopher Z. Mooney and Daniel A. Smith. Wadsworth, Cengage Learning ISBN#9780495567899
2. *Inside the Carnival: Unmasking Louisiana Politics* 2006. Wayne Parent. LSU Press, ISBN# 9780807131985
3. *The Baltimore Sun* (on-line)
<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/>
4. *Stateline.org (Maryland)*
<http://www.stateline.org/live/states/Maryland>
5. Selected articles/- provided through Blackboard, websites, and/or course reserves

Grading Procedures

Course grades will be comprised of the following:

1. Mid Term Exam = 25% of final grade
2. Final Exam = 35% of final grade
3. One research paper = 25% of final grade
4. Quizzes = 10% of final grade
5. Class participation = 5% of final grade

* Exams: Two exams comprise 60% of your final grade. Exams will consist of multiple choice, identify/short answer, and essay questions. Final exam is cumulative.

* Analytical Paper: Research paper will be about 12 pages, double spaced, and will be due on the final day of class. **Ten points will be deducted for every day that the paper is turned in late.** Information about the paper will be provided at a later date.

* Class Participation: Class Participation is measured by attendance and by willingness to participate in class discussions. Attending class all the time but never participating – or – participating during irregular attendance will not give you a good grade for class participation

* Quizzes: Quizzes will be unannounced and are based on the assigned readings. I will drop the lowest two quiz grades. There will be no make-up quizzes allowed.

*All readings, lectures, and class discussions are fair game on the exams

Grades for this class are computed on the university standard scale:

- | | |
|----------|--------------------|
| A | 100 to 90 |
| B | 89 to 80 |
| C | 79 to 70 |
| D | 69 to 60 |
| F | 59 or below |

Make-ups

I will only consider exam make-ups under specific and compelling documented emergencies (serious illness, accident, family crises, etc.) or university-authorized absences. Students who will be **absent due to religious holidays** must notify the instructor, in writing, prior to the end of the second week of the semester. Make-up exams will differ in format from the regular exam, consisting mainly of short answer and essay questions.

Academic Honesty

The work done in this course is expected to be solely the effort of each individual student. Plagiarism (representing the words or ideas of others as one's own or copying the work of another without giving proper credit) and cheating will not be tolerated. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the course (regardless of prior class achievement) and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. If you are unsure about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please refer to the Student Honor Council's "Code of Academic Integrity," available at: <http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html>.

Important Note About Course Syllabus and Class Schedule

The syllabus is designed as a tentative calendar for how the class will be structured. It is not meant as a strict schedule. It is very likely that throughout the semester the class schedule will be revised at the discretion of the instructor. We may spend more/less time on a particular topic. It is your responsibility to attend class and to be informed of any revisions to the syllabus.

Tentative Course Schedule and Important Dates:

Week 1:

I. Introduction to State and Local Politics **Jan. 25 & 27**
Mon. January 25 - Overview of Course
Wed. January 27 - Donovan et al. Chapter 1

Week 2:

I. Introduction to State and Local Politics (cont.) **Feb. 1 & 3**
II. Federalism: State Politics within a Federal System
(February 5- Last Day to drop/add course)

Donovan et al. Chapter 2

James Madison Federalist Paper #45 <http://www.foundingfathers.info/federalistpapers/fed45.htm>

Tubbesing, Carl. 2007 "American Federalism: What a Ride..." *State Legislatures* (January)

Blackboard

Robertson, David Brian. 2005. "Madison's Opponents and Constitutional Design." *American Political Science Review* 99: 225-43.

Blackboard

Week 3:

III. Participation, Elections, and Representation **Feb. 8 & 10**

Donovan et al. Chapter 3

Gramlich, John. 2008. "Groups Push to Expand Ex-Felon Voting" (September)
<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=342831>

Wright, Gerald C., Robert S. Erikson, and John P. McIver. 1987. "Public Opinion and Policy Liberalism in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science* 31 (4): 980-1001.
Blackboard

Week 4:

IV. State and Local Direct Democracy

Feb. 15 & 17

Donovan et al. Chapter 4

2008 Ballot Measure Results

<http://www.ncsl.org/LegislaturesElections/ElectionsCampaigns/2008BallotMeasureResults/tabid/16480/Default.aspx>

Decision Time for Early Voting in Maryland

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/25/AR2008102501864.html>

California Votes for Prop 8 (WSJ)

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122586056759900673.html>

Prop 8 Decision: Gay Marriage Ban Upheld by California Supreme Court

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/05/26/prop-8-decision-upheld-by_n_207697.html

Gerber, Elizabeth. 1996. "Legislative Response to Threat of Popular Initiatives." *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (1): 99-128.

Blackboard

Week 5:

V. Political Parties and Interest Groups

Feb. 22 & Feb. 24

Donovan et al. Chapter 5

Burden, Barry C. 2003. "Ballot Regulations and Multiparty Politics in the States." *PS: Political Science & Politics*

Blackboard

Boehmke, Fredrick. 2002. "The Effect of Direct Democracy on the Size and Diversity of State Interest Group Populations." *Journal of Politics* 64 (3): 827-844.

Blackboard

Interest Groups Complicate California's Budget Woes

<http://www.consumerwatchdog.org/corporateering/articles/?storyId=28398>

Week 6:

Tue. **March 1** - Catch up/Review

Thu. **March 3** - **Exam #1**

GVPT 460

Week 7:

VI. State Legislatures

Mar. 8 & 10

Donovan et al. Chapter 6

Hogan, Robert E. 2004. "Challenger Emergence, Incumbent Success, and Electoral Accountability in State Legislative Elections" *Journal of Politics* 66 (4): 1283-1303.

Blackboard

Barabas, Jason and Jennifer Jerit. 2004. "Redistricting Principals and Racial Representation." *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 4: 415-436.

Blackboard

Week 8:

Spring Break

Mar. 15 & 17

Week 9:

VII. Governors

Mar. 22 & 24

Donovan et al. Chapter 7

MacDonald Jason P. and Lee Sigelman. 1999. "Public Assessments of Gubernatorial Performance." *American Politics Research* 27: 201-15.

Blackboard

Bernick, E. Lee. 1979. "Gubernatorial Tools: Formal vs. Informal." *Journal of Politics* 41: 656-64.

Blackboard

Week 10

VIII. The Court System

Mar. 29 & 31

Donovan et al. Chapter 8

Hall, Gann Melinda. 2001. "State Supreme Courts in American Democracy: Probing the Myths of Judicial Reform." *American Political Science Review* 95: 315-330.

Blackboard

Hanssen, F. Andrew. 2004. "Learning about Judicial Independence : Institutional Change in the State Courts." *Journal of Legal Studies* 33(June): 431-73.

Blackboard

Week 11:

IX. The Structure of Local Governments

Apr. 5 & 7

(April 9—Last Day to Drop Course)

Donovan et al. Chapter 9

Gimpel, James. 1993. "Reform Resistant and Reform Adopting Machines: The Electoral Foundations of Urban Politics." *Political Research Quarterly* 46: 371-82.

Blackboard/Reserves

GVPT 460

Week 12:

X. State and Fiscal Politics

Apr. 12 & 14

Donovan et al. Chapter 10

Pew Research Center: “Escalating Financial Crises Grips States.”

<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/991/state-financial-crisis>

U.S. News and World Report: “As Financial Crises Spreads, Threat to State Budgets Grows Too.” available at: <http://www.usnews.com/articles/news/national/2008/10/17/as-financial-crisis-spreads-threat-to-state-budgets-grows-too.html>

Cato Institute: “Do Tax Cuts Work? Just Look at the States.”

http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=4374

Week 13:

State Policy Arenas: Morality Politics; Education

Apr. 19 & 21

(*No Class April 21)

Meier, Kenneth J. 1999. “Sex, Drugs, Rock, and Roll: A Theory of Morality Politics.” *Policy Studies Journal* 27 (4): 681-695.

Blackboard

Ross, Ashley, Stella M. Rouse, and Kathleen A. Bratton. 2010. “Latino Representation and Education: Pathways to Latino Student Performance.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly* 10 (1)

Blackboard

Week 14:

State and Local Politics: Case Studies (cont.)

Apr. 26 & 28

Inside the Carnival: Unmasking Louisiana Politics

Week 15:

State and Local Politics: Case Studies (cont.)

Mon. May 3

The Nine Lives of Marion Berry (documentary- tentative)

Wed. May 5

Catch up
Research Paper Due

Week 16:

Mon. May 10

Exam Review

FINAL EXAM-

**Monday, May 17th
1:30 pm – 3:30 pm**