

State & Local Politics

Information

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Course: POLS 3150

Office Hours: T 12:00–2:00 (MAIN 324B)

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to state and local politics. Our coverage of state and local politics will emphasize the design and performance of subnational institutions. Specifically, we will devote considerable attention to principles of constitutional design at the national and subnational levels, vertical and horizontal federalism, and the structure and powers of state-level executive, legislative, and judicial branches. In addition, we will consider the reciprocal relationship between subnational political institutions and public policy. Although we will spend the bulk of our time considering how interstate variation in the design of subnational political institutions affects democratic performance in general, we will also devote special attention to Utah. By the end of the semester you will have acquired factual knowledge, learned fundamental principles and theories, and improved your ability to analyze and critically evaluate issues concerning state and local politics.

Reading

Readings and a detailed course schedule are available on Canvas.

Grading

Grades will be comprised of the following components:

- First Exam (35%)
- Second Exam (35%)
- Research Paper (20%)
- Presentation (10%)

Final grades will be distributed according to the following scale:

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

Course Schedule

Constitutional Foundations

1. The Federal Framework

- The U.S. Constitution
- The Federalist Papers [nos. 44-46]
- Wechsler, The Political Safeguards of Federalism

2. State Constitutions

- Tarr, Understanding State Constitutions
- Brennan, State Constitutions and the Protection of Individual Rights
- Zackin, Of Ski Trails and State Constitutions

3. A Utah Case Study

- The Utah Constitution
- Flynn, The History of Utah's Constitution
- Greenwood et al., Utah's Constitution

Political Institutions

1. Executives

- Beyle, The Evolution of the Gubernatorial Office
- Ferguson, Roles, Functions and Powers of the Governors
- Walker, Utah State of the State Address

2. Legislatures

- Bowser & Moncrief, Term Limits in State Legislatures
- Powell, Patterns of State Legislative Campaign Finance
- Squire, The Professionalizing of State Legislatures since 1900

3. Courts

- Bonneau, The Composition of State Supreme Courts
- Shugerman, The Puzzling Rise of Merit
- Hall, State Supreme Court Elections in Contemporary Democracy

Public Policy

1. Theoretical Foundations

- Shipan & Volden, Policy Diffusion
- Smith & Tolbert, Instrumental and Educative Justifications of Direct Democracy
- Moncrief & Squire, Public Policy and the Role of the States in a Federal System

2. Institutional Case Studies

- Sokol, Uneasy Executives
- Huber & Shipan, Legislation, Agency Policymaking, and Medicaid in Michigan
- Brace & Boyea, Judicial Selection Methods and Capital Punishment

3. Campaigns and Elections

- Moncrief & Squire, Elections and Political Parties
- Carsey, Virginia's 1993 Gubernatorial Campaign
- Baum & Klein, Voter Responses to High Visibility Judicial Campaigns

Local Politics

1. Foundations

- Briffault, Home Rule for the Twenty-First Century
- Einstein, Glick & Lusk, Mayoral Policy Making
- Svara, City Councils

2. Applications

- Hajnal & Trounstine, Race and Class Inequality in Local Politics
- Kelling & Wilson, Broken Windows
- Jackson, Not in Your Front Yard

3. Utah

- Smart, A Rocky Marriage: The Salt Lake City Council and Mayor Jackie Biskupski
- Henline, Providence's Proposition 2 Backers React to Ordinance's Defeat
- Logan City Council Minutes

Research Project

The research project involves a case study of state or local government. There are three requirements. First, attend an official proceeding conducted by a state or local government entity. Advanced notice regarding most state and local government proceedings is available through the [Utah Public Notice Website](#). In-person attendance is mandatory absent demonstration of a hardship within the first week of class if foreseeable, or as soon as possible if unforeseeable. If a hardship is deemed to exist, audio or visual recordings of a proceeding may serve as a substitute. Second, write a paper analyzing how that proceeding informs our understanding of the way that institutional entity operates and the potential impact of its actions on residents. Third, give a presentation to the class outlining the results of your case study. The paper and presentation are respectively worth 20% and 10% of the final course grade. Additional details will be provided separately.

Course Policies

Applicable [university policies](#) will be followed. These include, but are not limited to, policies on matters such as [excused absences](#), [classroom conduct](#), [academic integrity](#), and [disability-related accommodation](#). Students are bound by university policies regardless of prior knowledge or understanding. As a result, it is good practice to periodically review these policies.

Although the university's policy on [excused absences](#) addresses numerous contingencies, it delegates discretion to faculty with respect to several matters. As a result, the following policies are adopted pursuant to university's regulations. First, excused absences will generally be limited to the mandatory and "other allowable" reasons delineated by university policy. There is a strong presumption against the grant of excused absences for any other reason, though exceptions may be considered on a case by case basis. Second, appropriate independent documentation must generally be provided for any excused absence. If documentation cannot be provided for good reason, other verification may be required. I reserve the right to determine what constitutes acceptable documentation or verification for purposes of classifying an absence as excused subject to applicable university policy. Third, without an excused absence, make-up exams can be taken and late papers submitted within 24 hours of the original deadline with a 20% reduction in grade for that course component. Time will be tolled on non-business days, including weekends and university holidays.

The syllabus is subject to change with notice.