

GVPT 460

Problems in State and Local Government

Fall Semester 2017

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 am – 12:15 pm

Tydings 0101

Professor: Dr. Stella Rouse

Office: 1137 Tydings Hall

email: srouse@umd.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:00 – 11:00 am, or by appointment

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.

On completion of this course, each student should have an in-depth understanding of and be able to discuss the following:

- The responsibilities of state and local governments in the United States
- The role of federalism in the United States
- State constitutions

- State finances and tax policies
- Political attitudes and participation as they relate to state politics
- Political parties and interest groups
- Leadership at the state and local levels
- State-level legislative processes
- The power and role of bureaucracies
- The state role in a number of policy domains

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.

Texting or talking on cell phones, having independent conversations during lecture/class discussions, and repeatedly coming to class tardy or leaving early will not be tolerated.

Opt-in Laptop Use Policy in Class:

It is my experience the use of computers, tablets, phones and other electronic device in class not only undercuts your ability to learn, but also distracts and hampers the ability of others to concentrate on course content and discussions. Therefore electronic devices may not be used in class UNLESS you **opt-in** to the laptop seating section of the classroom. If you are interested in sitting in this section, *please send me an email by midnight on September 4, 2017 explaining the reason for why you want to sit in this section and utilize a computer during class.* Laptop use will not be permitted outside of this seating section.

Course required texts and materials

- Kevin B. Smith & Alan Greenblatt, *Governing States and Localities* (CQ Press, 6th edition, 2016); ISBN#9781506360263*
- Kevin B. Smith, Editor, *State and Local Government* (CQ Press, 2016-2017 Edition, 2017); ISBN#9781506358208*
- Washington Post Local (on-line) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/>

* These books can be purchased as a bundle through the UMD bookstore.

- Pew Stateline <http://www.stateline.org/live/states/Maryland>
- Selected articles- provided through websites (links) or ELMS

Recommended resources for additional exploration

The *Governing States and Localities* student companion website:

<http://edge.sagepub.com/smithgreenblatt5e>

This site is a particularly good resource for review of course materials.

Assignments

1. Exams: Two exams, a mid-term and a final, comprise 45% of your final grade. Exams will consist of multiple choice, identify/short answer, and essay questions. The final exam is cumulative. *All readings, lectures, and class discussions are fair game on the exams
2. Quizzes: There will be six announced quizzes in this course. I will drop the lowest two quiz grades. **There will be no make-up quizzes allowed.**
3. Short Critical Essay: During the course of the semester, each student will be responsible for writing a short (4-5 pages) critical response paper on a topic approved by the professor. A menu of topics will be offered or students have the opportunity to select a topic of their own.
4. End of the semester project and presentation: Interview with Government Official. Each student will arrange a personal interview with an elected state or local official. The student will prepare a list of no fewer than 20 questions in advance of the interview and then will interview the official. The student will then compile a report, including information on the choice of interviewee, the questions posed, and a summary of the interviewee's answers. The paper should conclude with a summary of the interview experience. The student will give a 10 minute presentation on the interview experience at the end of the semester.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is required and will count as part of your final grade in the course. Attendance does not simply mean showing up for class, but it also refers to participating in class discussion.

Attending class all the time but never participating – or – participating during irregular attendance will not result in a good grade for attendance/participation.

I will give you **four (4) absences** for the semester without affecting your attendance grade. This should cover religious holidays, minor emergency situations, any brief illnesses, or other legitimate reasons for missing class. Due to this leeway in attendance, I will allow excused absences for major illnesses or emergencies or verified university commitments only with written verification. No other absences will be excused.

Exam Make-ups and Late Assignments

I will only consider exam make-ups under specific and compelling documented emergencies (serious illness, accident, family crises, etc.) or university-authorized absences. I try to avoid major grading events (e.g. exams, writing deadlines) on major religious holidays. However, if for

some reason a major grading event is scheduled for or due on a religious holiday a student observes, the student must notify the instructor, in writing, prior to the end of the second week of the semester and arrange to take the exam or turn in assignment prior to that date. Make-up exams may differ in format from the regular exam.

Penalty for unexcused late assignments are as follows: a deduction of a full letter grade (or 10 points) if assignment is completed by end of due date; a deduction of an additional letter grade (or 10 points) for every day late after due date (including weekends). **Please note that the university attendance/absence policy or my policy does not apply to days when exams or assignments are due.**

Grade Components

Grades for the course are determined by a student's performance in the following areas:

Mid Term Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%
Project (written)	15%
Project (presentation)	10%
Essay	10%
Quizzes	10%
Class Participation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Letter grades will be determined as follows:

A+	100 to 97	C	76 to 74
A	96 to 93	C-	73 to 70
A-	92 to 90	D+	69 to 67
B+	89 to 88	D	66 to 64
B	87 to 85	D-	63 to 60
B-	84 to 80	F	59 or below
C+	79 to 77		

****Grades will be rounded to the first decimal with .5 being the cutoff to round up to the next letter grade (exp. 79.4 is a C+ and 79.5 is a B-). Please do not email me requesting an exception to this rule.***

Other Important Information

Academic Honesty

The work done in this course is expected to be solely the effort of each individual student. Cheating and plagiarism (representing the words or ideas of others as one's own or copying the work of another without giving proper credit) 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 Office of Student Conduct's "What is Academic Dishonesty?" available at:

<http://osc.umd.edu/osc/AcademicDishonesty.aspx>

Students with Disabilities

Every effort will be made to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office. We are not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who do not provide documentation. These students will be referred to the DSS office. Please provide information about disability and registration with DSS as early as possible in the semester, but no later than September 14, 2017. I will not allow make-ups to DSS students if the information is provided after exams are taken. Information about the university's disability services is available at:

<https://www.counseling.umd.edu/ads/>

ELMS

Important communication regarding the class is conducted via ELMS. This includes posting of syllabus, announcements, and grades. Students are required to be proficient users of ELMS and to ensure that their emails are registered with ELMS and that they are receiving ELMS communication for this course. **Lack of communication through ELMS is not an excuse for not being aware of changes to the syllabus that result in late/missed assignments.**

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 Calendar

Week 1:

Introduction to State and Local Politics

Agenda/assignments: Course Overview; Purchase Books; Read Ch. 1 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Introduction to State and Local Government: They Tax Dogs in West Virginia, Don't They?"

8/29 Tue. Ch.1 (Smith and Greenblatt)

8/31 Thur. No Class

Week 2:

Introduction to State and Local Politics & Federalism

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.1 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 2 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Federalism: The Power Plan"; Smith Reader pp. 1-10; read: [College Park, MD may let non-citizens vote](#)

9/5 Tue. Ch.1 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch. 2 (Smith and Greenblatt)

9/7 Thur. Ch2 (Smith and Greenblatt)

Week 3:

Federalism & Constitutions

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.2 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch.3 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Constitutions: Operating Instructions"; read: [White House info sheet on state and local governments](#)

9/12 Tue. Ch.2 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch. 3 (Smith and Greenblatt)
9/14 Thur. Ch.3 (Smith and Greenblatt) **(Quiz #1)**

Week 4:

State Finances & Political Attitudes and Participation

Agenda/assignments: Read Ch.4 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Finance: Filling the Till and Paying the Bills; Start Ch. 5 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Political Attitudes and Participation: Venting and Voting"; Smith Reader pp.17-32

9/19 Tue. Ch.4 (Smith and Greenblatt)/
9/21 Thur. Ch.4 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch. 5 (Smith and Greenblatt)

Week 5:

Political Attitudes and Participation & Parties and Interest Groups

Agenda/assignments: Read/review Ch.5 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 6 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Parties and Interest Groups: Elephants, Donkeys, and Cash Cows"; Smith Reader pp.33-45

9/26 Tue. Ch.5 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch.6 (Smith and Greenblatt)
9/28 Thur. Ch.6 (Smith and Greenblatt) **(Quiz #2)**

Week 6:

Parties and Interest Groups & Legislatures

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.6 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 7 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Legislatures: The Art of Herding Cats"; Smith Reader pp. 49-60.

10/3 Tue. Ch.6 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch. 7 (Smith and Greenblatt)
10/5 Thur. Ch.7 (Smith and Greenblatt)

Week 7:

Legislatures & Midterm Exam

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.7 (Smith and Greenblatt); Review Chs. 1-7 and all related readings for exam

10/10 Tue. Ch.7 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Exam Review
10/12 Thur. **Midterm Exam**

Week 8:

Governors and Executives & The Courts

Agenda/assignments: Read Ch.8 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Governors and Executives: There is No Such Thing as Absolute Power"; Smith Reader pp. 61-75; Start Ch.9 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Courts: Turning Law into Politics"; Smith Reader pp. 77-91.

10/17 Tue. Ch.8 (Smith and Greenblatt)

10/19 Thur. Ch.8 (Smith and Greenblatt)/Ch.9 (Smith and Greenblatt)

Week 9:

The Courts & Bureaucracy

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.9 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 10 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Bureaucracy: What Nobody Wants but Everybody Needs"; Smith Reader pp. 93-108.

10/24 Tue. Ch.9 (Smith and Greenblatt) **(Quiz #3)**

10/26 Thur. Ch.10 (Smith and Greenblatt)

Week 10:

Bureaucracy & Local Government

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.10 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 11 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Local Government: Function Follows Form"; Smith Reader pp. 109-130; read: [P.G. County: Cutting Garbage Pickup Sparks Nasty Backlash](#)

10/31 Tue. Ch.10 (Smith and Greenblatt)/Ch. 11 (Smith and Greenblatt)

11/2 Thur. Ch.11 (Smith and Greenblatt) **(Quiz #4)**

Week 11:

Local Government & Metropolitcs

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.11 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 12 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Metropolitcs: The Hole Problem of Government"; read: [Metro's Lack of Dedicated Funding](#)

11/7 Tue. Ch.11 (Smith and Greenblatt)/Ch. 12 (Smith and Greenblatt)

11/9 Thur. Ch.12 (Smith and Greenblatt)

Week 12:

Metropolitcs & Education

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.12 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 13 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Education: Reading, Writing, and Regulation"; Smith Reader pp. 149-157.

11/14 Tue. Ch.12 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch. 13 (Smith and Greenblatt)

***Critical Essay Due**

11/16 Thur. Ch. 13 (Smith and Greenblatt) **(Quiz #5)**

Week 13:

Education & Health and Welfare

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.13 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 15 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Health and Welfare: State, Heal Thyself"; Smith Reader pp. 162-163;

11/21 Tue. Ch.13 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch.15 (Smith and Greenblatt)

11/23 Thur. No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 14:

Health and Welfare; The Environment & Project Presentations

Agenda/assignments: Review/read Ch.15 (Smith and Greenblatt); Start Ch. 16 (Smith and Greenblatt) "Environment and Climate Change: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally"; Smith Reader pp. 158-161.

11/28 Tue. Ch.15 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Ch. 16 (Smith and Greenblatt)

11/30 Thur. Ch.16 (Smith and Greenblatt)/ Project Presentations **(Quiz #6)**

Week 15:

Presentations/Review

Agenda/assignments: Project Presentations & Exam Review

12/5 Tue. Project Presentations

12/7 Thur. Project Presentations/ Exam Review

***Written Project Due**

Week 16:

FINAL EXAM

Wednesday, December 13, 8:00 am – 10: 00 am