

PLS 202: State and Local Government Bradley University

Spring 2015
Professor Josh M. Ryan

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Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 1-3 pm and by appointment. You are also welcome to stop by my office at other times and I'll make every attempt to meet with you.

Class Time: 9:00-10:00, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

Course Description

This course is meant to provide an introduction to state and local governments. We will be examining political actors and the rules and institutions which govern their behavior with a particular focus on policymaking at the state and local level. Though we will occasionally discuss American politics at the national level, most of our time will be spent discussing and analyzing the structure of sub-national government and some of the important policy debates which occur at the state level, including education, the environment, urban planning, and criminal justice. This course will examine politics from a scientific perspective—we will attempt to characterize political action and behavior in a systematic and empirical manner.

I have two goals for this class. The first is to introduce you to how state governments work and where they fit into our system of federalism. While I realize most of you will pursue careers in areas other than political science, understanding the basic processes of how governments work, both at the national and state and local levels is critical to being an active and informed citizen. When most of us think of “The Government”, we think of the President and Congress even though most governments in the United States are state and local entities. Further, these governments are more connected to our daily lives and have more influence over some very important policy issues than does the Federal government. We will study state and local governments in a comparative context. That is, we will compare the rules, procedures, actors and outcomes across states and localities. After all, the whole point of having a local governments is to produce unique outcomes within geographic areas as a result of unique cultures. While this is not a class on Illinois or Peoria politics *per se*, we will often discuss how Illinois and Peoria compare to other state and cities.

The second goal of the class is to develop a greater understanding of important policy issues. Not only should you have a basic understanding of how government works, you should also be informed about the major policy and ideological debates occurring within states. To this end, we will often discuss some of today's important political issues with the purpose of helping you understand why these issues foster disagreement and how these disagreements may affect political outcomes. My hope is that by examining issues critically you will form your own opinions about these issues, and also develop the tools which allow you to evaluate future policy debates.

The class will consist of both lectures and discussions. My lecture style is less informal than other professors but more interactive. This means I depend on class participation to drive the lecture. It is critical that you come to lecture prepared and willing to engage with myself and your classmates. Readings should be done before class. While I am always happy to clarify the readings, I will assume, if there are no questions, that everyone has done the reading and understands it. Fridays are devoted to student-led discussion. More details below.

This class, like many in political science, often deals with subjects that are controversial. Engaging with these issues is an important part of being an informed citizen and as such, we will not shy away from discussing controversial current events. This also means you should never feel embarrassed or afraid to share your opinion, even if it means disagreeing with other students in the class. However, each of us should remember that we have different experiences and different viewpoints. We must always be respectful of other students and other opinions. I take this policy very seriously and have **zero tolerance** for inappropriate, crude, disrespectful, or demeaning comments. I reserve the right to use an appropriate punishment for any student who engages in disrespectful behavior. This may include removal from the class, receiving a zero on participation for the semester, or being reported to university officials. Please speak with me promptly if you feel there is a civility problem in the classroom. See the Bradley Standards of Conduct at <http://www.bradley.edu/campuslife/studenthandbook/policies/conduct/>

If you need to contact me or set up a time to meet outside of my regularly scheduled office hours, don't hesitate to speak to me after class or send me an email. I check my email at least once daily and usually multiple times per day. If you have questions or do not understand the material please come to my office hours prior to the day before the midterm, final, etc. For any other issues or questions you may have, please speak to me throughout the semester.

Reading

The course has one required textbook:

Governing States and Localities. Smith, Greenblat, and Mariani Vaughn. 2010.

Fourth edition. Washington DC: CQ Press. Referred to as TXT in the schedule below.

There will also be additional reading that will either be emailed to you or given out in class. Finally, you are required to read the Chicago Tribune (which can be read online). I also strongly recommend you read a newspaper from your hometown or home state. Stateline.org, csg.org, and ncs.org are also good sources of information.

Course Requirements and Other Information

As mentioned, readings are assigned for the week and should be completed by the start of the first class for the week (Monday). This ensures that you will fully understand the lecture topics, and that you are able to engage with other students and myself. There are many things I will not cover that will be in the reading, or topics that I will assume you know already from which I will build on. Because there is a relatively light amount of reading, you will be expected to complete all of it on time. Many weeks, the required reading is a chapter in the textbook and additional reading, noted as "supplemental readings" in the syllabus. I will email you a copy of these supplemental readings at least a week ahead of time. Falling behind on the reading is

the single easiest way to do poorly in this class. It is very difficult to catch up on the reading in the week before the test. Trust me on this.

I have a no cell phone or laptop policy (or screens of any kind, including ipads, kindles, etc.). If I see or hear a cell phone the entire class will have a pop-quiz on the spot which will count toward the participation portion of your grade. For the sake of your classmates, please ensure your cell phone is on silent and please do not text in class. If you cannot avoid looking at your phone, please leave it at home. I do not allow laptops because experience has shown me they create distractions for other students. Please go to the bookstore and buy a notebook to take notes in.

There will be three tests (see below). The tests will cover both the readings and lectures. Anything mentioned in class or in the readings is fair game. This includes policy discussions, current events, and any other topics discussed in class but not mentioned in the reading. If you cannot take one of the tests at the normal time, you should drop the class. Make-up exams will be allowed at my discretion, and only under the most unusual extenuating circumstances. The make-up exams will be essay format and will be given during the last hour of the final. If you miss more than one test you will not be allowed to make-up both. I will require documentation for any missed exam.

I will periodically send out emails to the class list. You are automatically subscribed to the list through your campus email account if you are enrolled in the class. The list will allow me to inform you of changes in assignments, the schedule or to assign additional reading. I cannot send emails out to a non-Bradley email account. The Bradley email account is an official means of communication between myself and the students. If you have any questions, please see <http://www.bradley.edu/irt/policies/5.02.html> and/or speak with me.

Grading

There are six grades for this class: participation, current events, quizzes, and three midterms.

Participation 10%

I do not take attendance *per se* so if you miss a class, it is not necessary to tell me. However, there are some costs to missing class. First, you will miss items that are discussed in class that will be on the test. Second, you will be graded on your participation in class. This means that you should be an active learner, asking questions in class of me, and engaging in discussion with your fellow students. If you miss class you cannot participate in discussions and you will miss important information that will be on the test.

I know that some students will be uncomfortable about participating in class. I have a few thoughts about this. First, I understand that even very good students may have trouble speaking in front of groups. However, I also recognize that first, without discussion the class will be extremely boring and will consist of me giving boring lectures for an hour a day, three days a week. This is bad for both me and you. Second, learning to speak in front of other people, especially about controversial issues like politics in general, and voting, participation, religion,

and race specifically (all things we will discuss in this class) is one of the most important skills you can learn in life, and being able to formulate coherent thoughts verbally and respond to others' arguments is part of the point of a liberal arts education. I will do my best to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking to the class and to me. If you absolutely feel like you cannot speak in class, you should come to my office and have discussions in person with me.

Quizzes 25%

There will be a quiz at least once a week. Quizzes will consist of four questions and students will receive one point for taking the quiz, for a total of five points per quiz. Though quizzes will be given at least once a week there may be additional pop-quizzes given at my discretion based on the participation level of the class. There will be no makeup quizzes given if you miss class for any reason, however, I will drop one quiz grade. This means that you can miss one quiz and not be penalized. Missing three or more quizzes however will negatively affect your grade. The material on the quiz will mostly consist of material from the reading so it is absolutely critical you keep up with the reading.

Current Events Fridays 5%

On Current Events Fridays all students will come to class prepared to offer a summary of, and discuss, at least one article from a national paper or political magazine pertaining to American politics. The article should be in hand (printed out, cut out, etc.) with a 4-8 sentence typed and printed summary of the article. The summary should include: 1. Your name 2. The title of the article 3. The author of the article 4. The source of the article 5. The web address where the article can be found. Students will be called on to offer their current events topic and generate a brief discussion. Your presentation and summary will be graded on a 1-5 scale. At the end of class, you will be required to turn in both the printed article and your written summary. Students who are called on but are not prepared to discuss a current event will receive a zero for their current events grade. Current events will also be graded when turned in at the end of class. I will also be circulating articles for students to look at in preparation for class.

Three Midterms, @ 20% each

The format of the midterms will be multiple choice and short answer/identification. The last test is not a final but a third midterm and will not be cumulative in the strict sense. Of course, material in this type of class is by its nature cumulative, but the last test will cover only the relevant sections. There will be constrained choice on the short answer (meaning you will have to answer 3 of 4, for example). The multiple choice portion will be worth 75% of the test grade and the short answer/identification will be worth 25%. The date of the tests are listed in the schedule below.

Misc. Grading Information

I will be happy to regrade anything with the understanding that the grade could be higher or lower than the original grade. In order to have me regrade something, you need to give me a written explanation of your specific concerns within one week. There will be no review sheet for the tests, but we will review in class.

There will be no extra credit assignments given or accepted.

Plagiarism and/or cheating will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating will a grade of zero on the assignment and be reported to the Director of Residential Life and Student Judicial System. Please see the Student Handbook and Undergraduate Catalog for Bradley's policies on plagiarism.

You must complete all assignments to pass the class.

Schedule

Please note this schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to change it or add or subtract readings or assignments.

Jan. 21: Syllabus

Reading: The syllabus

Jan. 23: Introduction to state and local government

Reading: TXT Chapter 1

Jan. 26-Jan. 28: The Constitution and Federalism

Reading: TXT Chapter 2; The Declaration of Independence; The Constitution, Federalist 45

Jan. 30: Current Events

Reading: None

Feb. 2-4: The Constitution and Federalism (cont.)

Reading: TXT Chapter 2; The Declaration of Independence; The Constitution, Federalist 45

Feb. 6-9: State Constitutions

Reading: TXT Chapter 3

Feb. 11-16: Finances and Budgets

Reading: TXT Chapter 4; McNichol and Johnson, "Recession Continues to Batter State Budgets."

Feb. 18-23: Legislatures

Reading: TXT Chapter 7, Squire "Measuring State Legislative Professionalism."

Feb. 25: Review for Midterm

Reading: None

Feb. 27: Midterm 1

Reading: None

March 2-6: Governors

Reading: TXT Chapter 8, Carter and Schap, "Line-Item Veto: Where is Thy Sting?", pgs. 103-107

March 9-13: The Bureaucracy

Reading: TXT Chapter 10

March 16-20: No School, Spring Break

March 23-27: Courts

Reading: TXT Chapter 9, Gann Hall, "State Supreme Courts in American Democracy," pgs. 315-324

March 30-April 6: Local Government

Reading: TXT Chapter 11

April 8: Review for Midterm

Reading: None

April 10: Midterm 2

Reading: None

April 13-15: Metropolitics

Reading: TXT Chapter 12, Leinberger, "Suburbia, The Next Slum?"

April 18: Current events—No class

Reading: None

April 20-22: Demographics

Reading: The Future is Ours, Chapter 2, Teixeira, "The Emerging Democratic Majority Turns 10."

April 24-29: Public Opinion and Participation

Reading: TXT Chapter 5, Abrams and Fiorina, "The Big Sort That Wasn't."

May 1: Current Events

Reading: None

May 4: Review for Midterm 3

Reading: None

Final on Monday, May 11th at 2:30 pm