

PS 2100: State Government
Harry S Truman School of Government and Public Affairs
University of Missouri

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Office hours: Thursday and Friday, 9 am to 10 am or by appointment

Course Description

This course serves as a fundamental introduction to state government. The curriculum covers four main areas: (1) the role of state government in the U.S. and its relationship with federal and local government; (2) the institutional actors in state politics, such as the executive, legislative, and judicial branches; (3) the non-institutional stakeholders in state politics, like citizens, interest groups, and the media; and (4) an overview of the state policymaking and budgeting process. Beyond just learning content, this course aims to equip students with the skills needed as citizens, especially in the context of state politics and policymaking.

Course Objectives

In this course, students will achieve the following objectives through lectures and engaging activities:

1. Gain a thorough understanding of our state governmental systems, including their roles in state politics and their connection to the federal government and local governments.
2. Identify the relevant institutional and non-institutional actors that influence specific issues and understand their roles in those issues.
3. Establish effective civic engagement strategies to address personal or social issues, advocate for change, or request action from the government.

Course Format

This is an online asynchronous course, which means it does not have a physical classroom meeting space or designated meeting time. However, it is essential to note that **this course is not self-paced**. A structured weekly schedule and quizzes have been designed to promote consistent engagement. All course materials, including lecture slides, videos, assignments, quizzes, and examinations, will be accessible through Canvas. If you encounter any Canvas access or usage difficulties, please seek assistance from the university's technical support team.

Important Term Dates

- Last day to drop a course without a grade: February 19
- Last day to withdraw from a course: April 29

Courses will appear on your transcript as a withdrawal and have a grade of W or F.

- Refund schedule: Refund amounts are based on the percentage of class length elapsed before dropping as follows:
 - XXX last day of 100% refund
 - XXX last day of 50% refund
 - XXX last day of 25% refund
 - Visit <https://cashiers.missouri.edu/professional-tuition/current-fee-reassessment-schedule/> for more information.

Readings

- Moncrief, G. F., & Squire, P. Why states matter: An introduction to state politics (3rd edition). Rowman & Littlefield. (The page notation in the syllabus is based on the third edition, but any edition of the book is acceptable.)
- All other readings will be available through Canvas.

Course Assignments and Grading

1. Weekly Quiz (30%)

Weekly quizzes will be administered throughout the semester to encourage consistent engagement with the course material. Each quiz will count for 2% of your final grade. These quizzes will assess your understanding of the content covered during the week's lectures and will be accessible from Monday through Sunday, with a **submission deadline of 11:59 pm on Sunday**. The quizzes will primarily consist of multiple-choice questions and are intended to be open-book and open-note, with no set time limit for completion. **Late submissions will not be accepted** unless the instructor has granted an extension.

If you do not achieve full credit on a quiz, you have the option to submit a correction assignment to regain the lost credit, potentially earning back the full credit. For the correction assignment, you are required to provide explanations for why the correct answer is indeed correct and why the incorrect answers are incorrect, but only for the questions you answered incorrectly. For example, if a quiz consists of five questions, and you answered four of them correctly but one incorrectly, you will only need to correct your answer to the one you got wrong.

This correction assignment must be submitted via email to the instructor at ytsai@mail.missouri.edu. The deadline for the correction assignment is the next **Sunday at 11:59 pm**, following the initial deadline of the quiz. **Late submissions will not be accepted.**

2. Midterm and Final Exam (40%)

The midterm (20%) and final exam (20%) will consist of multiple-choice questions and short essay questions. They will be completely open-book and open-note. However, students must complete the exams independently. The midterm exam will cover the first half of the class (weeks 1 to 8), while the final exam will cover the second half (weeks 9 to 15). The midterm

exam must be completed on Canvas between March 11 and March 17 (due by 11:59 pm), and the final exam must be completed between May 6 and May 10 (due by 11:59 pm). There will be a time limit of 60 minutes once you begin each exam unless you have received an accommodation from the university. **Late submissions will not be accepted** unless the instructor has granted an extension.

3. Assignments (30%)

There will be three assignments, each worth 10% of the final grade.

(1) Assignment 1: Federalism (due week 4)

In this assignment, you will pick a topic (the topics will be available on Canvas). Your goal is to identify federal and state regulations on this specific topic and explore how federalism explains the variation across states and the relationship between different levels of government.

(2) Assignment 2: Voting and Election (due week 8)

In this assignment, you will pick a position of an elected official you find most important to you (governor, legislator, judge, etc.). Your goal is to identify the election process of the officials in your state and the voting regulations and procedures you need to follow to cast your ballot.

(3) Assignment 3: Actors and Actions in Politics and Policy (due week 14)

In this assignment, you will pick a made-up scenario involving a regular citizen who encounters an issue with the government (the scenarios will be available on Canvas). Your goal is to identify the institutional and non-institutional actors that can influence the issue and explore the actions a regular citizen could take to claim their right or pursue their goal.

All assignments must be submitted by 11:59 pm on the Sunday of the week they are due. **There will be a late penalty of 10% of the credits for each 24-hour period the submission is overdue** unless the instructor has approved an extension before the deadline.

Percentages as Assigned to Letter Grades

Letter grade	Raw Score	Letter grade	Raw Score
A+	100 to 97	C+	< 80 to 77
A	< 97 to 94	C	< 77 to 74
A–	< 94 to 90	C–	< 74 to 70
B+	< 90 to 87	D+	< 70 to 67
B	< 87 to 84	D	< 67 to 64
B–	< 84 to 80	D–	< 64 to 60
		F	< 60

Course Outline

Week 1 (Jan. 16–Jan. 21) Introduction to Course

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 1

Week 2 (Jan. 22–Jan. 28) Federalism

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 2 pp.18–39
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 3 pp.68–71

Week 3 (Jan. 29–Feb. 4) State Constitution

- Readings
 - Simon, Christopher A., Brent S. Steel, and Nicholas P. Lovrich. State and local government and politics: Prospects for sustainability (2nd Edition). Oregon State University. Chapter 5A–5E. The book is available at:
<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/862>
 - Missouri lawmakers fail to raise bar to amend constitution, easing path for abortion rights. AP News. May 12, 2023. <https://apnews.com/article/ballot-initiative-petition-voter-missouri-republican-8e4d5b8293eb864235cf347410d5d7f5>
 - Yeargain, Quinn. (2022). What All State Constitutions Say About Abortion, and Why It Matters. Bolts. <https://boltsmag.org/state-constitutions-and-abortion/>

Week 4 (Feb. 5–Feb. 11) Election and Political Parties

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 8 pp.186–203, 210–215
 - Ingraham, Christopher (2018). Low voter turnout is no accident, according to a ranking of the ease of voting in all 50 states. The Washington Post.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2018/10/22/low-voter-turnout-is-no-accident-according-ranking-ease-voting-all-states/>
- Assignment (1) due this week

Week 5 (Feb. 12–Feb. 18) Legislatures

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 4 pp.77–80 (The Rise, Fall, and Resurrection of the State Legislatures), Chapter 5 pp.117–121 (Legislative Capacity)
 - Leiter, D. (2018). The Sweeping Changes of Clean Missouri: Issues of Redistricting Reform in Missouri. *Missouri Policy Journal*, 1(7), 5.
<https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/mpj/vol1/iss7/5/>

Week 6 (Feb. 19–Feb. 25) Governors and the Executive Branch

- Readings

- Moncrief & Squire Chapter 4 pp. 80–87 (The Increasing Power of the Governor), Chapter 5 pp. 112–115 (Gubernatorial Capacity)
- Shared power used to be the norm in statehouses. Now it's nearly extinct. Virginia Mercury. Jan 16, 2023. <https://www.virginiamercury.com/2023/01/16/shared-power-used-to-be-the-norm-in-statehouses-now-its-nearly-extinct/>

Week 7 (Feb. 26–Mar. 3) Public Officials and Bureaucracy

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 4 pp. 87–91 (The Increasing Importance of the State Government Bureaucracy), Chapter 5 pp. 115–117 (Bureaucratic Capacity)
 - Lofstrom, Magnus et al. (2021). Policy Brief: Racial Disparities in Law Enforcement Stops. Public Policy Institute of California. <https://www.ppic.org/publication/policy-brief-racial-disparities-in-law-enforcement-stops/>

Week 8 (Mar. 4–Mar. 10) Judicial System

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 4 pp. 91–99 (The Courts as a Parallel Dimension of Federalism), Chapter 5 pp. 121–125 (Judicial Capacity)
 - State Courts vs. Federal Courts. Judicial Learning Center. <https://judiciallearningcenter.org/state-courts-vs-federal-courts/>
- Assignment (2) due this week

Week 9 (Mar. 11–Mar. 17) Interest Groups and Lobbying

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 2 pp. 36–39 (The Inherent Tensions within Federalism)
 - Simon, Christopher A., Brent S. Steel, and Nicholas P. Lovrich. State and local government and politics: Prospects for sustainability (2nd Edition). Oregon State University. Chapter 4B, 4C, 4G. The book is available at: <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/862>
- Midterm Exam: Open from Mar 11, 00:00 am to Mar 17, 11:59 pm

Week 10 (Mar. 18–Mar. 24) Public Opinions and Media

- Readings
 - Pinna, M., Picard, L., & Goessmann, C. (2022). Cable news and COVID-19 vaccine uptake. Scientific Reports, 12(1). <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-20350-0>
 - Elite Misperceptions: Examining Asymmetry in Partisan Political Participation. Chicago Policy Review. August 28, 2018. <https://chicagopolicyreview.org/2018/08/28/elite-misperceptions-examining-asymmetry-in-partisan-political-participation/>

Spring Break (Mar. 25–Mar. 31)

Week 11 (Apr. 1–Apr. 7) Civic Participation and Direct Democracy

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 8 pp.204–210 (The States and Direct Democracy)
 - St. Louis ReCAST Projects for Community Well-Being. <https://stlouiscountymo.gov/st-louis-county-departments/public-health/recast/project-reports/culminating-report/>

Week 12 (Apr. 8–Apr. 14) Public Policy

- Readings
 - Overview of CDC's Policy Process.
<https://www.cdc.gov/policy/paeo/process/docs/CDCPolicyProcess.pdf>
 - Berry, F. S., & Berry, W. D. Innovation and Diffusion Models in Policy Research. Theories of the Policy Process (C. Weible & P. Sabatier, Ed.). Routledge. (Available via Canvas) pp.223–231

Week 13 (Apr. 15–Apr. 21) State Budgets, Taxation, and Finance

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 3

Week 14 (Apr. 22–Apr. 28) Local Government

- Readings
 - Moncrief & Squire Chapter 7
- Assignment (3) due this week

Week 15 (Apr. 29–May. 5) Case Study and Review

- Readings
 - Constitutional Amendment Would Limit Missouri Governor's Budget Authority. St. Louis Public Radio. October 22, 2014. <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/government-politics-issues/2014-10-22/constitutional-amendment-would-limit-missouri-governors-budget-authority>
 - PA. court sides with plaintiffs in K-12 school funding case. Pennsylvania Capital-Star. February 7, 2023. <https://www.penncapital-star.com/education/pa-court-declares-k-12-public-school-funding-system-unconstitutional/>
 - What's at Stake in Ohio's Referendum on Amending the State Constitution. The New York Times. August 8, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/08/08/us/ohio-referendum-constitution-abortion.html>
 - How a Mississippi Mayor and the State Supreme Court Overturned the People's Vote on Medical Marijuana. FEE Story. May 20, 2021. <https://fee.org/articles/how-a-mississippi-mayor-and-the-state-supreme-court-overturned-the-people-s-vote-on-medical-marijuana/>

Week 16 (May. 6–May. 10) Final Exam

- Final Exam: Open from May 6, 00:00 am to May 10, 11:59 pm

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. **Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest**, regardless of whether the effort is successful. The academic community regards breaches of academic integrity as extremely serious. Sanctions for such a breach may include academic sanctions from the instructor, including failing the course for any violation, to disciplinary sanctions ranging from probation to expulsion. When in doubt about plagiarism, paraphrasing, quoting, collaboration, or any other form of cheating, consult the course instructor or the [Office of Academic Integrity](#).

Here are some of the guidelines on what resources or help are allowed in this class:

- Using the writing center, proofreading service, or any software or AI tools to check your grammar and/or proofread your writing is allowed. Using these resources to generate content directly is **not** allowed.
- Discussing with classmates or any other people on the assignments is allowed. But you need to submit your own work. Asking others to complete the assignment for you is **not** allowed. Referring to others' assignments and then merely rephrasing in your own words is **not** allowed. Writing the first draft on your own and checking with other people to make some corrections is allowed.
- Quizzes and exams must be completed independently. You can refer to lecture materials, personal notes, textbooks, readings, or other online or paper-based resources. Seeking help from others (including humans and AI tools) during quizzes and exams is not allowed.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is **using others' ideas and words without clearly acknowledging their source**. To avoid plagiarism, you must give credit whenever you use another person's idea, opinion, or theory; any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings—any pieces of information—that are not common knowledge; quotations of another person's actual spoken or written words; or **paraphrase** of another person's spoken or written words.

- Assignments with any plagiarism will receive a zero. Serious or multiple instances of plagiarism will be reported to the university.
- If you are unsure about what counts as plagiarism, please reach out to the instructor.

Students with Disabilities

If you anticipate barriers related to the format or requirements of this course or if you have emergency medical information you feel you need to share with an instructor, please let me know as soon as possible. If disability related accommodations are necessary (for example, a note taker, extended time on exams, captioning), please establish an [accommodation plan](#) with [the University of Missouri Disability Center](#) and then notify me of your eligibility for accommodations.

FERPA

The [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) of 1974 is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records; to establish the rights of students to inspect and review their education records; and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. The law applies to any individual who is or has been in attendance at an institution *and* regarding whom the institution maintains educational records. Once students have matriculated to the University of Missouri, i.e., enrolled in coursework, FERPA rights transfer to the student, regardless of the student's age.

Students can enable certain individuals to have access to their education records by signing a [FERPA waiver](#). The consent must specify records to be disclosed, state the purpose of the disclosure and identify the party or class of parties to whom the disclosure must be made.

Intellectual Pluralism

The University community welcomes intellectual diversity and respects student rights. Students who have questions or concerns regarding the atmosphere in this class (including respect for diverse opinions) may contact the departmental chair or divisional director, the [Office of Academic Integrity](#), or the [MU Equity Office](#).

Mental Health

The University of Missouri is committed to supporting student well-being through an integrated network of care, with a wide range of services to help students succeed. The MU Counseling Center offers professional mental health care, and can help you find the best approach to treatment based on your needs. Call to make an appointment at 573-882-6601. Any student in crisis may call or go to the MU Counseling Center between 8:00-5:00 M-F. After hours phone support is available at 573-882-6601. Visit their website at <https://wellbeing.missouri.edu/> to take an online mental health screening, find out about workshops and resources that can help you thrive, or learn how to support a friend.