

AMERICAN STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PSCI 497A-01E

Fall 2013

2:00-3:15 PM T/Th

BA 257

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Office hours: 3:30-4:30 T; 10-12 W and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to understand how sub-national entities operate and the impact the political system and process have on representation and public policy creation. This course focuses on the government institutions and political behavior in the states and their localities. The study of state and local politics is inherently comparative in nature. This course takes advantage of the variation among and within states and localities, focusing on three themes:

The operation of state governments – How do the different institutions and actors in and around state government behave to yield to important public services we get from these governments?

Diversity among the states – What are the differences among the states, and what are the causes and effects of these differences?

Institutions can affect policy – How does the arrangement and organization of state and local governments and political organizations affect public services?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course

1. Students will understand and use appropriately a variety of concepts necessary to describe, interpret, and explain the differences of politics, policy, and government institutions around the country.
2. Students will identify how political systems operate in the United States and how they vary among the states.
3. Students will analyze the effects of these differences among the states.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Smith, Kevin B. and Alan Greenblatt. 2013. *Governing States and Localities* (4th edition). Washington, DC: CQ Press (ISBN: 978-1-4522-2633-0).

Kousser, Thad. 2005. *Term Limits and the Dismantling of State Legislative Professionalism*. New York: Cambridge University Press (ISBN: 052154873X).

Additional readings may be supplied on the web or in class.

CLASSROOM CIVILITY

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment which is conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from using electronic devices, challenging instructor's authority, eating or drinking in class, coming in late or leaving early, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class. No student should expect to raise his or her hand more than three times during any class period. This policy is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate. To this effect, no student will be allowed to "dominate" any class period.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Switch off (or mute) personal electronic devices (cell phones, smartphones, iPads, iPods, mp3 players, and any kind) during class. If any of these devices are present in class, you will be asked to store them or leave the class immediately. Also tape recorders, camera and video phones, and all other visual and auditory recording or retention devices, are strictly prohibited in this class. Please do not bring or use those devices.

You may only use the laptop to take notes in a word processing program. No surfing or instant messages are allowed. Any student who uses the laptop for any purpose other than taking notes will not be allowed to use that laptop in this course for the rest of the term.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. For example, forgetting to cite an author and page number with a quote is plagiarism, as is direct copying and pasting from a website. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and notification to the Dean of Students. Plagiarism is often a result of improper citation and/or acknowledgement of sources; therefore, we will be going over plagiarism in class so you can avoid common pitfalls (and an F!). If a student needs additional assistance, please consult me during my office hours.

CLASS FORMAT

Class sessions will consist of a mix of lecture, full-class and small-group discussion, and in-class exercises and simulations. In order to participate fully in each class session and to get the most out of the course that you can, you should:

1. Read the assigned materials before class,
2. Attend class ready to engage the material,
3. Participate in classroom discussions and activities, and
4. Read the assigned materials again after class.

NEWSPAPER AND WEB SOURCE

I expect you to keep abreast of political events by reading a quality newspaper. I suggest that you follow state and local government and politics news generally in the media and online this semester (and forever afterward). I recommend reading one of the daily papers from a larger city

(*Dallas Morning News, Texas Tribune, Houston Chronicle, Austin American-Statesman, San Antonio Express-News*, for instance) to keep informed on important political events within Texas. By staying current on the news, the class material we discuss will be easier to follow and, hopefully, more enjoyable to talk about.

In addition to any newspaper or magazine, also see the web sites. <http://www.stateline.org>, <http://www.votesmart.org>, and <http://www.governing.com/> are excellent sources of comparative state government news stories. Keep an eye on these sites weekly.

Finally, go to some web sites that provide useful information on state and local politics and government. These include:

- Council of State Governments (Publishes the *Book of the States*): <http://www.csg.org>
- National Governors Association: <http://www.nga.org>
- National Center for State Courts: <http://www.ncsc.org>
- National Conference of State Legislatures: <http://www.ncsl.org>
 Voter ID Requirements: <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=16602#ak>
 Early & Absentee Voting Laws: <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=16604>
 Term Limits Overview: <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=14849>
 State Primary Rules: <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=20112>
 NCSL's Ballot Measures Database: <http://www.ncsl.org/default.aspx?tabid=16580>
- National Institute on Money in State Politics: <http://www.followthemoney.org/index.phtml>
- Initiative & Referendum Institute: <http://www.iandrinstute.org/>
- National league of cities: <http://www.citymayors.com/orgs/natleague.html>

GRADING

The final grade will be determined on the following basis:

Requirement	Percentage
Attendance/Discussion	10%
Quizzes	10%
Class Activity	10%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Research Paper	25%

Grading Scale

Standard	Grade	Points
Excellent	A	100-90
Good	B	89.9-80
Average	C	79.9-70
Below Average	D	69.9-60

I will do my best to help students with any other needs they may have. Do not wait until the end of the semester to see assistance as that will be too late to make a difference. In all cases, it is necessary for the student to discuss their concerns with me as soon as possible after the concern develops. There is little that can be done at the end of the semester to compensate for earlier difficulties.

Note: I am not responsible for your scholarships, academic eligibility in extracurricular activities, or graduation eligibility. Do not come to me pleading that you “need” or “have to” get a certain grade. The grade you earn is the grade you will get. Under no circumstance will I arbitrarily change a grade, so do not ask. NO exceptions! Also, there will be NO extra project for this class regardless of the situation. Also, I am not allowed to dispense or discuss grades over the phone or via email, but grades will be posted on the class web.

ATTENDANCE

“Eighty five percent of success is merely showing up.” — Woody Allen —

Attendance is mandatory. Class attendance is crucial to your understanding of the concepts, issues, processes and not all of them will be covered in the assigned texts. Attendance is part of the course experience the same as lectures, texts, exams, and other course elements. Attending class can only help your grade so I strongly suggest you show up to class on a regular class.

Class attendance counts 10% toward your final grade. Roll will be taken regularly. Repeated absence will be detrimental to your final grade, as will repeated tardiness, which is disruptive to your classmates. Students sleeping, talking, text messaging or otherwise not paying attention in class will be marked absent. Students who arrive late or leave early will be counted as absences.

Consistent with University policies and procedures, students who are absent for more than 4 class meetings will be administratively dropped from the class. There will be no “excused” absences aside for official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.

CLASS DISCUSSIONS

The class discussion component comes from your overall involvement in discussion during the semester. You will have several opportunities to participate in class discussion.

QUIZZES

I will give random in-class quizzes in order to gauge student understanding and to promote student participation during lecture. In order to take a quiz, students are responsible for bringing scantron Quizstrip (No. 815-E) sheets to all classes. Questions for the quizzes will come primarily from previous lectures and assigned readings so it is important to attend class regularly and take good notes. No makeup quizzes will be given but I will drop one quiz with the lowest scores in calculating overall quiz scores. Quizzes count 10% toward your final grade.

CLASS ACTIVITIES

There will be several class activities. Students should complete these activities and turn in their results before due. More specific information will be provided later.

EXAMINATIONS

There will be three exams. There is not a final exam in this course. The exams will be primarily objective: multiple choice, true-false, or matching. The exams will cover material from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussion. The exams will always include material from the readings that have not been discussed in lectures. Each exam is comprised of 40 multiple choice questions worth 100 points each. Bring scantrons (No. 882-E) and pencils. Store all materials beneath your seat during the exam. Once the first exam is turned in, no more exams will be distributed so show up on time.

Exams are the property of the instructor and will not be returned to the student. However, copies of each exam will be available in my office and for review at any appropriate time. Students are encouraged to review their exams after they have been graded. Such reviews should be soon after each exam. After each exam full grade information will be posted on the class web. This information will be updated after each exam and immediately before the final exam period. It is each student's responsibility to check this grade information after each exam and notify the instructor if s/he believes it contains any errors. Errors can be corrected if brought to the instructor's attention promptly. Do not wait weeks or until the end of the semester to discover or mention errors. By then it is probably too late.

MAKEUP EXAMS

I expect that students will take exams on the day that they are given. If you have a legitimate reason for missing an exam (e.g. severe illness or injury requiring professional medical care, participation in official university activities) AND you have supporting documentation for your absence, then you may request taking the make-up exam. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements to take a make-up exam within two days of the date the exam was missed. If you have an excuse that is documented and have been verified by me and do miss the exam, all make up exams will be held at 5 pm, December 3. In addition, students will not be permitted to make up more than one exam on this day. Make-up exams, at the discretion of the instructor, may be in a complete essay format or a short identification format.

RESEARCH PAPER

A major portion of this class will be the completion of a research paper focusing on term limits. This research paper requires students to develop analytic arguments, to provide empirical evidence, and to develop writing skills. You should check with me on the subject (research question) of your paper before writing it in order to make sure it will fit the requirements. I will try to write short comments on your research question and research paper and return them to you.

The research question should be one page in length and due by 4 pm, Wednesday, October 16. A research paper should be 9-10 pages in length (A paper should not exceed 12 pages) and it is due by 4 pm, Friday, December 6. A good paper will include an introduction, thesis statement, and a conclusion. A handout with details on the research paper will be distributed later.

Research paper will be graded based on the following criteria:

- Overall soundness of argument
- Quality of research
- Writing: organization, grammar, word choice, writing style
- Presentation and formatting: margins, font, page numbers, bibliography

STUDENT CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

I expect all students to maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty which is discussed in Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12 Academic Honesty. “Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one’s own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material.”

Academic dishonesty affects all individuals at the University and accordingly will not be tolerated. For this class, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant penalties.

Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Failure to comply with the commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Because this is a web-enhanced course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

Regular access to a good quality computer

Regular, high-quality Internet access, specifically, a high-speed internet connection, not dial-up or a cellular phone. Students should use the eCollege tutorial to test the quality and speed of their

browser and ensure that it is compatible with the system. Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.

Access and Navigation

Student will access this course using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students can access their online courses using through the myLeo portal or directly from the URL <http://online.tamuc.edu>. In order to login, students will need both their CWID and password to access the myLeo site. If you do not know what your CWID or password is, please contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000 or by e-mail, helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

eCollege Student Technical Support

Technical support for eCollege is provided around the clock (24 hours a day/7 days a week) so if students experience technical issues with the class page itself they should contact the student help desk for assistance. Students can access support through one of three following methods:

1. Chat support: Students can access real-time chat support from within the course page by clicking on “Tech Support” in the tool bar and then clicking on “Chat Online.”
2. Phone: Students can access phone support by calling the toll free phone number for eCollege, 1-866-656-5511.
3. E- mail: Student can request assistance by e-mail eCollege directly at helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. Please note that you might not receive a response for 24 hours if you use the e-mail option.

eCollege also has extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the ‘Help’ button on the toolbar.

INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT COMMUNICATION: OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

The best way to contact me is to stop by my office during office hours or to schedule an appointment. Outside of class email is also the dominant means of communication between the instructor and students. The instructor can usually be reached by email with little difficulty. Due to the vast increase in spam email, any email sent to me MUST include a subject line such as “PSCI 497A” identifying it as class related. Without such a subject line, it is likely to be deleted without being read.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses.

Aug. 27

Introduction and Organizational Meeting

Aug. 29, Sep. 3 & 5

Overview: Principles of Politics (Lowi. Principles of Politics)

Sep. 10 & 12

Approach to State and Local Government (Ch. 1)

Sep. 17 & 19

Sep. 24 Federalism and Constitutions (Chs. 2 & 3)
 Sep. 24 **Exam #1**
 Sep. 26 & Oct. 1 Term Limits (Ch. 7; Thad all chapters)
 Oct. 3 & 8 Political Parties and Interest Groups (Ch. 6)
 Oct. 10 & 15 Legislatures (Ch. 7)
 Oct. 16 **Due Research Question**
 Oct. 17 & 22 Redistricting (Ch. 7)
 (Simulation: The Redistricting Game)
 Oct. 24 **Exam #2**
 Oct. 29 & 31 Political Participation (Ch. 5)
 Nov. 5 & 7 Elections and Campaigns (Ch. 5)
 (Film: Film questions will be distributed in class)
 Nov. 12 & 14 Governors and Executives (Ch. 8)
 Nov. 19 Finance (Ch. 4)
 Nov. 21 **Exam #3**
 Nov. 26 (Simulation: Budget-Making)
 Nov. 28 Thanksgiving
 Dec. 3 & 5 **Research Presentation**
 Dec. 6 **Due Research Paper**

IMPORTANT DATES

Sep. 24 (Tue)	Exam #1
Oct. 16 (Wed)	Research Question
Oct. 24 (Thr)	Exam #2
Nov. 21 (Thr)	Exam #3
Dec. 6 (Fri)	Research Paper