

PoliSci 452: State & Local Government

Dr. Jessy Defenderfer
Political Science Department
Office: 213A Bakeless

Spring 2017
MW: 4:30-5:45
Bakeless 211

Office hours: MW 1-2:00,
Tu 12-3:00, and by appt
jdefende@bloomu.edu



“I don't want this parks department to build any parks because I don't believe in government. I think that all government is a waste of taxpayer money. My dream is to have the park system privatized and run entirely for profit by corporations, like Chuck E. Cheese. They have an impeccable business model.”

— Ron Swanson in *Parks and Recreation*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

State and local governments play a critical—although often underappreciated—role in American democracy. They help pay for essential public services, administer safety net programs for vulnerable residents, and often serve as a source of policy innovation, generating new ideas that eventually become adopted by the national government. This course provides a description and analysis of what these roughly 90,000 governments do. Learning objectives include the interdependent relationship among governments in our federal system or what we call intergovernmental relations, the structure of the institutions of government at the state and local level (executive, legislative, and judicial branches), and the political organizations (political parties and interest groups) that affect our political system. Students will explore a variety of issues that confront state and local governments and learn the differences and similarities that exist between the states.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Smith, K.B. and Greenblatt, A. (2016). *Governing States and Localities* (5th Ed.). Washington, DC: CQ Press.

The 5th edition is required, though you may choose any format: new, used, rented, e-books, paperback, or hardback. You can purchase the text on-line or at the university bookstore.

Additional required course readings and materials will be found at the listed URLs or on BOLT.

ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Three Exams (45% of total grade).** There will be three in-class examinations; each worth 15% of the total grade. All exams may consist of matching, multiple-choice, essay, and short answer items. Everything from the textbook and readings, in-class videos, guest speakers, and lecture material is fair game for the in-class examinations. Students may not leave the classroom for bathroom breaks during examinations.

2. **State Government Paper & Presentation (25% of total grade).** Students are required to conduct a comparison on a policy issue facing the states. It can be any issue not already discussed in depth in the class. For instance, we will discuss voter photo id specifically in the course; that topic, then, cannot be used in student research. This paper requires a state-by-state comparative element, so using fracking as an example, a suitable paper would be the differences between Ohio and Pennsylvania policy on fracking. The paper must be at least 8-pages and is 15% of the total grade; it is due the day of your presentation. The presentation is worth 10% of the total grade. The presentation is 7-minutes long and requires a demonstration of balanced research and presentation skills. Students will also respond to questions from the audience. Detailed assignment procedures to follow in separate document.
3. **Local Government Paper (10% of total grade).** Students will attend the same local government meeting twice during the semester and write a critical analysis and reflection of the meeting based on course material. For example, if you attend a Bloomsburg Town Council meeting, you must attend a second Bloomsburg Town Council meeting (not a planning board meeting or committee meeting). The town council meets: Jan 23, Feb 13 & 27, March 13 & 27, and April 10. You have broad discretion to choose a complementary local government meeting (like a school board meeting) that you would like to attend, but you need to **plan this right away** to make sure that you will be able attend two meetings before it is due on April 12. The paper must be at least three, double-spaced pages. Detailed assignment procedures to follow in a separate document.
4. **Class Participation (15% of total grade).** Class participation requires attendance. I will take attendance at each class. I will also take note of those making quality contributions to class discussion. In addition, for each textbook chapter there will be a reading quiz that must be completed before the start of class on that new topic. The quiz will be on BOLT, and you can take it at your leisure, but it must be completed before we start discussing the chapter in class. If discussion lags in the class and it appears as if no one read the chapter, I may administer a pop quiz. Other in-class activities or assignments will be included in the participation grade at the discretion of the instructor.
5. **Harrisburg Class Trip (5% of total grade + Bonus).** The course includes a day-long, class trip to the Pennsylvania General Assembly on Wed, March 29. Attendance on the trip is mandatory and is worth 5% of your grade and an additional 3-percentage point increase on your lowest exam grade.

Grading Scale

- A: Outstanding understanding/application with very few errors, if any
 B: Above average knowledge/application with some errors
 C: Basic knowledge/application with a number of notable errors
 D: Some amount of knowledge/application with significant shortcomings
 F: Minimal knowledge, if any, of course material

A = 93 – 100%

B = 83 – 86.9

C = 73 – 76.9

D = 60 – 66.9

A- = 90 – 92.9

B- = 80 – 82.9

C- = 70 – 72.9

F = 59.9 and below

B+ = 87 – 89.9

C+ = 77 – 79.9

D+ = 67 – 69.9

COURSE POLICIES

You are expected to check your university email account daily and utilize the BOLT features of the course on a regular basis. In an effort to be fair to all class members, please take note of my detailed course policies below.

During class, refrain from using all forms of social media technology. No phones and no texting. You may use your laptop for note taking or following along with the readings *only*.

Class attendance is critical to your success; without your presence, you cannot receive credit for quizzes or in-class activities. You do not need to email me if you will miss a class period with no assignments due. As adults, I expect that there will be moments when you may have to prioritize life circumstances over class. If your absence is a university authorized absence, you must bring the proper documentation to me the very **next class period** you are present. I will then remove that absence from the attendance calculation. When missing a class, you need to take upon yourself the responsibility of acquiring missed notes and announcements from another student in the class. Not being prepared for class or for an assignment due as a result of a previous absence will not excuse you from that activity.

Class absence is not an excuse for missing any graded assignment. Due to the nature of *pop* quizzes and group activities, I do not offer make-up opportunities for these missed assignments. For all other missed assignments, I apply a letter grade reduction to late or missed assignments, and this letter grade reduction continues for every 24-hour period past the due date and time. Please note: passing the class is contingent on your completion of *each* graded assignment. For example, it may be possible to receive a passing grade and not hand-in the paper; however, I consider this failure to complete the class, which will result in a failing grade.

The unexpected can happen, and I want to be sensitive to a variety of situations when major course assignments are missed. The Bloom attendance policy provides an avenue for students to make up an assignment due to an **authorized** absence (What's an authorized absence? see: http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3506). I will consider late assignments with prior permission or a written excuse from a medical professional. Health center notes are subject to my discretion, and employment and family vacations do not count as extenuating circumstances. **The number one rule is to contact me in advance of class with any serious situation that may arise.** I can only make honest judgments of unexpected events if I am aware of the situation, so email as soon as possible. All considerations of rescheduled assignments must be placed in writing (email is fine), and I reserve the right to consider special requests before responding. If you are at all unsure of the attendance policy, please see me.

I will take inquiries about the grades of assignments by appointment. However, specific disputes or issues with the graded assignment must first be placed in writing prior to our meeting (email is fine). Please note: When you ask me to review a grade, I review the whole assignment, meaning that I review the grade for accuracy throughout the document, not just in the area of your concern. Additionally, I will consider disputes for one week after the class has received the graded assignment (e.g., I will not discuss the merits of your midterm grade during the final week of class).

In general, expect a response to your questions and e-mails within 24 hours during the week and

within 48 hours over the weekend. As most of you are new to the college experience, I strongly encourage you to read the following guide to academic **e-mail etiquette**: <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>. Remember, you are writing to me as your instructor not texting your best friend. I grant each student one inappropriately addressed email. I will gently remind you in that email to write in proper letter form. After the midterm of the semester, I will stop responding to emails written inappropriately.

Overall, I ask for conscientious students—those who are prepared and can manage their course requirements and personal lives. Displays of responsibility go a long way in my book. Finally, enrollment in this course implies understanding and acceptance of the aforementioned policies.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed. Illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, misrepresentation in connection with examinations and course assignments, and recycling whole or partial papers to be used a second time without prior approval. Informal and formal avenues of sanction are available to instructors and some penalties are severe. I do not overlook instances of academic dishonesty. Please read: http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3512. It is your responsibility to write original papers for every class, use your own words, and properly cite published works as appropriate for assignments. Please note that all assignments loaded to BOLT Dropbox are screened through Turnitin.

The BU Writing Center Can Help: BUWC is a free resource that offers support for undergraduate and graduate writers assistance in getting started, clarity, grammar, organization, citations or any other aspect of writing or the English language. Appointments are highly recommended, but walk-ins are welcome. BUWC consultants are also available to conduct sessions online. Please visit: <http://bloomu.edu/writingcenter> for more information.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Students with Disabilities Center will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Students with Disabilities Center is located in Warren Student Services Center 043 and reachable by telephone at 570-389-4491.

An additional note to **student athletes** and **students certified with SDC**: Multiple class absences can significantly lower your grade. I hold all students to the same standard. If you are on a university sports team or have a disability that impacts your attendance, you must talk to me in the first week of class, regardless of when your athletic season starts or if you believe you will not be impacted by your disability this term. It is much more difficult for me to make fair arrangements in the middle of the term when I had no knowledge of the potential for your absences.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Adjustments to this schedule will definitely occur as I confirm special speakers and events. I will communicate changes clearly in class.

Week of Jan 23

Chapter 1 Introduction

Week of Jan 30

Chapter 2 Federalism

Week of Feb 6

Chapter 3 Constitutions

Week of Feb 13

Chapter 4 Finance

PA Budget: Kyle Grybos, Revenue Forecasting Analyst, Wed Feb 15

Week of Feb 20

*Exam 1 on Monday, Feb 20

Environment Discussion: Peterson Toscano, Citizen's Climate Lobby, Wed, Feb 22

Read Chapter 16 and complete quiz for Wednesday

Week of Feb 27

Chapter 7 Legislatures

Class held in Andrus 243 on Wed, Mar 1

Week of March 6

Chapter 8 Governors

Week of March 13: Spring Break**Week of March 20**

State Policy Comparison Paper Topics Due to BOLT

Chapter 5 Attitudes and Participation

Columbia County Elections: Matthew Repasky, Elections Director, Wed Mar 22

Week of March 27

*Exam 2 on Mon, March 27

*Harrisburg Class Trip to PA General Assembly with State Senator John Gordner, Wed Mar 29

Week of April 3

Policy Discussion: Chapter 13 Education

Complete quiz for Monday

Week of April 10

Chapter 11 Local Government

*Local Government Paper: Wed, April 12

Bloomsburg Town Council: Mayor Sandy Davis, Wed April 12

Week of April 17

Chapter 12 Metropolitcs on Mon

Columbia County Drug Courts: Barbara Warunek, Wed April 19

Read Chapter 14 and complete quiz for Wed

Week of April 24

Chapter 12 Metropolitcs Cont'd

*Student Presentations on Wed April 26

Week of May 1

*Student Presentations on Mon May 1 and Wed May 3

Finals Week

*Exam 3 on Tues, May 9 @ 3:30