

# State and Local Government

POS 2112 Section 01CE

University of Florida – Fall 2011

Instructor: Matthew T. Harrigan

Office: 305 Anderson Hall

Office Hours: T 1:00-2:30pm, R 2:00-3:30pm

Classroom: 101 Anderson Hall

Time: T 3:00-4:55pm, R 4:05-4:55pm

Email: matthewtharrigan@ufl.edu

## Course Description

While many casual observers of American politics are somewhat familiar with the issues, institutions, and actors that define our national government and politics, many are unaware of what goes on at the state and local level. It is at these lower tiers of the American federal system where the majority of decisions that most directly affect our daily lives are made. In POS 2112, students will learn how the state and local political framework is structured within the American federal system and how it functions as a pluralistic system comprised of various individual and group interests.

Key topics include federalism, voting and elections, direct democracy, political parties, interest groups, legislatures, governors, courts, and local governments. To augment our discussion of the facts and figures associated with state and local government in the United States, we will examine contemporary problems and issues, such as the impact of the current economic downturn on state and local governments, post 9-11 and post-Hurricane Katrina reforms at the state and local level, and questions about social issues, education, health care, and immigration. We will also discuss other topics such as citizen involvement in politics, state and local budgets, taxes, and wages, and upcoming elections and ballot measures. We will pay special attention to the government and politics of the State of Florida, Alachua County, and the City of Gainesville, using these more immediate entities as examples of the circumstances most common across America's varied states and communities.

## Goals

By the conclusion of this course, students will be able to

- Describe the structure and functions of the institutions of state and local government.
- Identify factors in the political environment that affect the public policy process.
- Describe the varying roles of the decision-makers at each level of government, including politicians, voters, and non-voters.
- Explain the impact of competing groups and interests on the public policy process.
- Identify key issues that consistently impact the activities of state and local governments.

## Textbook and Readings

Donovan, Todd, Christopher Z. Mooney, and Daniel A. Smith. 2011. *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform, Second Edition*. Boston: Wadsworth.

As an alternative to the hardcover textbook available in the UF bookstore, students may purchase an electronic copy, or copies of individual chapters, at the [publisher's website](#). Additionally, as this edition of the textbook has been in use for the past few semesters, several used copies should be available online or in local bookstores. If you are unable to purchase the textbook, a copy has

been made available via course reserve at Library West. This copy is available for 2-hour, in-library use and can be checked out at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor circulation desk. The call number is JK2408.D66 2011. Be aware that over 40 students are registered for this section, so the reserve copy may not be available at all times.

In addition to the textbook, some brief supplemental readings will be assigned throughout the semester. These readings include newspaper/website articles as well as scholarly journal articles and historical documents.

Students are also expected to be familiar with current events. This requires watching and reading the news. I suggest students consult the websites of the major national newspapers and news networks. Since this course focuses on state and local government and politics, students should also familiarize themselves with the major newspapers in their home states and communities. Check [my homepage](#) for links to news and research websites.

### **Responsibilities and Grading**

The first component of the semester grade is **attendance and participation**. Students are required to be in class for each of our meetings and prepared to discuss the material. Students will be permitted to miss a maximum of two meetings without penalty. Each subsequent absence will result in a loss of points from the attendance grade. Class lectures will be somewhat interactive, and students are expected to be ready to respond to questions about the course readings. This is especially true for discussions of the supplementary readings, and students who have written an essay for a particular week's question will be expected to drive the discussion of that topic.

The second component of the semester grade consists of **four short (approximately 1000 words) essays**. Each week, students will be given a question to consider and will be expected to make an argument drawing on that week's readings (citing both the textbook and at least one of the outside readings for that week). Essays will be graded on the student's clear statement of an argument, use of evidence from the readings, and organization and editing. Students are required to submit a total of 4 essays: 1 from the first third of the course, 1 from the second, 1 from the final third, and 1 other essay of their choosing. Each of the 12 possible essay topics has its own particular due date, and these can be found in the calendar section of this syllabus.

Finally, there will be **three exams** in this course, and these exams make up the majority of the final average. The first exam covers the first third of the course, the foundations of state and local government. The second exam covers the second third, the institutions of state and local government. The final exam covers the last third of the course, state and local issues and policies. Each exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice questions and short essay questions that will test your understanding of material presented in the textbook, supplementary readings, and class lectures.

Students may receive up to 10 points in **extra credit** toward one of the exam grades by attending and reporting on either a Gainesville City Commission or Alachua County Commission meeting. Reports should be approximately 800-1000 words and should include observations about the conduct of the meeting and the issues raised by the participants, with reflections on these

meetings in light of what we have covered in class. Gainesville meetings are typically held every Thursday at 1:00pm at City Hall (200 E. University Avenue); Alachua meetings are held at the County Administration Building (12 SE 1<sup>st</sup> Street). Schedules and agendas are linked on [my homepage](#).

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Value</u>
Attendance/Participation	10%
Essays (4)	30%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	<u>20%</u>
	100% total

#### Grading Scale

A (4.00)	90% to 100%
A- (3.67)	88% to 89.9%
B+ (3.33)	86% to 87.9%
B (3.00)	80% to 85.9%
B- (2.67)	78% to 79.9%
C+ (2.33)	76% to 77.9%
C (2.00)	70% to 75.9%
C- (1.67)	68% to 69.9%
D+ (1.33)	66% to 67.9%
D (1.00)	60% to 65.9%
D- (0.67)	58% to 59.9%
E (0.00)	0% to 57.9%

For more information on the University of Florida's Grades and Grading Policies, see the [2011-2012 Undergraduate Catalog](#).

#### **Due Dates**

The dates for essays and exams are final, unless modified by the instructor. Failure to complete assignments on time will result in a grade of zero. If you will not be in class to turn in an essay or to take an exam, arrangements must be made with the instructor prior to the original due date. If an absence is anticipated, turn in your essay early. Make-up exams will be permitted only in the most extreme circumstances and with proper notice and documentation.

#### **Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism**

As a UF student, you have agreed to abide by a [set of regulations](#), spelled out specifically in the University's [Student Honor Code](#). Any evidence of cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment, and an academic dishonesty case report will be filed with the administration. All essays will be checked online for evidence of plagiarism, so be sure to cite all quotations and paraphrasing. For further information, refer to the UF Library's [Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism](#).

## **Students with Disabilities**

In compliance with University of Florida policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability, and I will make whatever accommodations are necessary to assist you. You must be registered with [Disabilities Resource Center](#) in 0001 Reid Hall for disability verification and determination of reasonable academic accommodations.

## **Course Schedule**

This schedule may be altered by the instructor. Readings are listed under the date on which they will be discussed in class. Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are scholarly journal articles that you should read for key points (introduction, conclusion, look over the research section) but do not need to read in detail.

### **August 23**

Introduction to State and Local Government and Politics

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 1

Bryce, ["The Nature of the American State"](#)

### **August 25-30**

Federalism

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 2

Madison, ["Federalist #10"](#)

Hamilton, ["Federalist #17"](#)

\*Gamkhar and Pickerill, ["The State of American Federalism, 2010-2011"](#)

**Essay 1, Due September 1:** Who should be the primary driver of domestic policy: the national government or the states? How have recent developments altered the federal-state balance of power, if at all? In your opinion, are these developments good or bad for the future of American federalism?

### **Friday, August 26: Drop/Add Ends**

### **September 1**

Film: "The Storm" (PBS *Frontline* episode on the federal, state, and local response to Hurricane Katrina)

### **September 6-8**

Participation, Elections, and Representation

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 3

\*Larocca and Klemanski, ["U.S. State Election Reform and Turnout in Presidential Elections"](#)

Goodman, ["Early and Absentee Voting Erode Election Day Tradition"](#)

Gramlich, ["Angering Their Own Party, Rhode Island Democrats Approve Voter ID"](#)

Harris, ["Bloomberg Seeking Election Law Changes to Boost Voter Turnout"](#)

Greene, ["DC Hacking Raises Questions About Future of Online Voting"](#)

**Essay 2, Due September 8:** Should states be more concerned with making voting easier or with combatting potential voter fraud? Are the two mutually exclusive? What have some states done to address these concerns? What is the potential impact of such reforms?

### **September 13-15**

State and Local Direct Democracy

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 4

\*Smith and Tolbert, ["The Instrumental and Educative Effects of Ballot Measures"](#)

*The Economist*, ["Origin of the Species"](#)

*The Economist*, ["The People's Will"](#)

*The Economist*, ["Vox Populi or Hoi Poloi?"](#)

Ballotpedia, ["2012 Ballot Measures"](#)

**Essay 3, Due September 15:** Is direct democracy good or bad for policy in the American states? Weigh the pros and cons of having citizens, rather than elected representatives, vote on constitutional amendments or laws.

### **Friday, September 16: Last Day to Withdraw from All Courses With 25% Refund**

### **September 20-22**

Political Parties and Interest Groups

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapters 5 and 6

Kennedy, ["State Parties Positioning for Next Year's Campaigns"](#)

Gramlich, ["In an Era of One-Party Rule, Republicans Pass a Sweeping State Agenda"](#)

Smith, ["Low-profile Lobbyist has High-placed Political Friends"](#)

Peters, ["Industry Lobbying Turns Soda Taxes from Fizzy to Flat"](#)

**Essay 4, Due September 22:** Who does a better job representing and working for their members: political parties or interest groups? What are some key differences in the tactics used by each? Would you rather donate money to your political party or to an interest group?

### **September 27**

Exam 1: Foundations of State and Local Government and Politics (Chapters 1-6)

## September 29 - October 4

### State Legislatures

#### Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 7

Gramlich, ["Term Limits Will Create Rookie League in Some Legislatures"](#)

Vock, ["Can Politics Be Removed From Redistricting?"](#)

Goodman, ["'One Person, One Vote' Still An Unsettled Question for States"](#)

*The Economist*, ["No More Packing or Cracking"](#)

Goodman, ["States Hope to Win on New District Maps in Federal Courts"](#)

[The ReDistricting Game](#)

**Essay 5, Due October 4:** Should states take steps to reform the process of legislative redistricting? What effects could possible changes have on politics and policy? What types of reforms would you recommend, if any?

## October 6-11

### Governors and the State Executive Branch

#### Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 8

Maynard, ["New Governors Drive to Reorganize Agencies"](#)

Stateline Staff, ["Governors Set the Agenda for a Lean 2011"](#)

Caputo, ["Tony Fabrizio: Gov. Rick Scott's Unrelenting Engineer of Strategy"](#)

Mahling, ["How Many Governors Are Using Social Media?"](#)

**Essay 6, Due October 11:** Which of the formal powers possessed by governors are the most important? Are these more or less valuable than informal powers such as media attention, public opinion, and the partisan balance of the legislature?

## October 13-18

### The State Court System

#### Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 9

Bonneau, ["Why We Should Keep Judicial Elections"](#)

Gramlich, ["Judge Fights in Iowa, Illinois Signal New Era for Retention Elections"](#)

Gilbert, ["Should the State Supreme Court Be Appointed?"](#)

Chemerinsky and Sample, ["You Get the Judges You Pay For"](#)

**Essay 7, Due October 18:** Should state judges be elected or appointed? Consider the pros and cons of each method of judicial selection.

## October 20-25

The Structure of Local Governments

Film: *Street Fight* (Documentary of Cory Booker's 2002 campaign for mayor of Newark, NJ)

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 11

[Gainesville Mayor and City Commission](#)

[Alachua County Board of Commissioners](#)

Maynard, ["New Michigan Law Increases State Role in Local Government"](#)

Kelly, ["Big Benefit of Prop 1: More Powerful City Council"](#)

*Union Tribune*, ["A Conversation With the Mayor"](#)

**Essay 8, Due October 25:** Should the City of Gainesville retain its council-manager form of government, or should it change to a strong mayor-council system? Consider the pros and cons of each.

## October 27

Exam 2: Institutions of State and Local Government

## November 1-3

Fiscal Policy

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 10

Prah, ["States Adjust to a More Frugal Washington"](#)

Gramlich, ["As State Budgets, Payrolls Shrink, So Do Ambitions"](#)

Vestal, ["Florida Hopes Its Future Looks Like the Past"](#)

Prah, ["States Balance Budgets With Cuts, Not Taxes"](#)

Goodman, ["Do States Control Their Fiscal Destiny?"](#)

Goodman, ["Rising Revenues Explained: Are States Really Getting a Windfall?"](#)

**Essay 9, Due November 3:** What are the biggest fiscal challenges facing state governments today? How should states approach their respective crises: tax increases, spending cuts, aid from Congress, or something else? What factors complicate those decisions?

## November 8

The Politics of Place

Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 12

*The Economist*, ["Business Paradise or Den of Thieves?"](#)

Rockwell, ["Lawmakers Approve Controversial Permitting Bill"](#)

## **November 10-15**

### Morality Policy

Film: "The Last Abortion Clinic" (PBS *Frontline* episode on state attempts to restrict abortions)

#### Readings

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 13

Prah, ["Key Abortion Laws Blocked"](#)

Prah, ["States Try New Tactics to Restrict Abortions"](#)

Altman, ["After New York: The \(Near\) Future of Gay Marriage"](#)

Garland, ["Five Myths About the Death Penalty"](#)

Vestal, ["States Applaud New Stem-Cell Funding"](#)

**Essay 10, Due November 15:** Where would you put the abortion and same-sex marriage debates in the sequence of issue evolution? Are we closer to the policy shock or to a new equilibrium on those issues?

## **November 17-22**

### Social Welfare and Health Care Policy

#### Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 14

\*Joondeph, ["Federalism and Health Care Reform"](#)

Vestal, ["Medicaid Explained: How Would Block Grants Work?"](#)

Prah, ["What Welfare Cutbacks Say About the Wisdom of Block Grants"](#)

Grovum, ["How Wisconsin Made Big Medicaid Cuts With Little Controversy"](#)

DeParle, ["Welfare Aid Isn't Growing as Economy Drops Off"](#)

**Essay 11, Due November 22:** Are block grant programs the right way to address health care and welfare in the American states? Should states be allowed more or less flexibility in crafting health care and welfare policy?

**Monday, November 21: Last Day to Withdraw from UF and Receive a "W"**

**November 24: NO CLASS – Thanksgiving**

## **November 29 – December 1**

### Education Policy

Film: *Where We Stand: America's Schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*

#### Readings:

Donovan, Mooney, & Smith: Chapter 15

\*Manna and Ryan, ["Competitive Grants and Educational Federalism"](#)

Hu, ["School Chiefs See a Path to Proposing Their Own Accountability Systems"](#)



Dillon, ["States Can Apply for Waivers on Testing Required by No Child Law"](#)  
Armario, ["More States Defying Federal Government on Education Law"](#)  
Goodman, ["The Year School Budget Cuts Went Straight to the Classroom"](#)

**Essay 12, Due December 1:** Should the United States adopt a set of national education standards, or is education policy best left up to the individual states? Has cooperation between the two levels of government worked in education policy? Should it be altered?

**December 6**

Review and Wrap-up

**December 12**

Exam 3: State and Local Issues and Policies  
AND 101, 12:30-2:30pm