

Political Science 219: State and Local Politics

College of the Holy Cross
Department of Political Science

Fall 2019

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Office: Fenwick 332

Office Hours: MW 12:00 – 2:30pm and by appointment

Class Time: TR 12:30 – 1:45pm

Classroom: Stein 219

Course Description

State and local governments are the most visible and impactful forms of government for most Americans. This seminar course introduces students to the functions and politics of state and local governments. The course is divided into three sections:

- First, we learn about the powers of state governments, how they allocate spending and collect revenue, their relationship to the federal government, and how citizens participate in state politics.
- Next, we examine the roles of important institutions in state government, including legislatures, executive branches, courts and bureaucracies, as well as political parties, interest groups and local governments.
- Finally, we investigate how four important issues are handled at the state level: education, crime and law enforcement, health and welfare, and the environment.

Throughout the course, students will conduct research on an assigned state and share their findings with the class to better understand how state government policies and politics vary across states. Students will also engage in a Community Based Learning activity, providing hands-on opportunities for students to actively participate in the work of a state or local government or political organization.

Course Readings

The following text is required for the course; it is available at the Holy Cross Bookstore and through a variety of online retailers:

Smith and Greenblatt (2019). *Governing States and Localities*. 7th Edition. CQ Press, SAGE Publications.

All other assigned readings will be posted on Moodle.

Grading

Grades for all assignments in this course will be scored on a 100-point scale. Grades for this course will be based upon the following formula; each element is discussed below in greater detail:

Attendance and Participation	15%
State Research Activities	20%
Section 1 Take-Home Exam	15%
Section 2 Take-Home Exam	15%
Paper 1: Community Based Learning	20%
Paper 2: Issue in State Government	15%

Attendance and Participation

Regular attendance is a requirement of this course. Students who must be absent from a particular class are responsible for presenting a documented excuse no later than the next class period attended. In addition to physically attending scheduled classes, active participation in class discussions and activities is required for participation credit. Coming to class prepared is absolutely essential; students should always come to class having already reviewed assigned readings or other materials and prepared for any activities or presentations. Students are encouraged to attend office hours or schedule other meetings with the instructor to discuss their work and progress in the course.

State Research Activities

Each student in this course will be assigned a particular state to research throughout the semester. At the end of most weeks, students will complete research activities in class to learn more about their assigned states in the context of the week's material. After beginning each activity in class, students will share their initial findings with classmates. Students will then complete remaining research outside of class and submit written answers to research questions on Moodle. States will be assigned in class; further information about activities will be provided in class.

Paper 1: Community-Based Learning

Due: Sunday 12/1

5 to 8 pages

As part of our course, each student will participate in a Community-Based Learning project with a state or local government office or political organization. This is an amazing opportunity for students to experience politics firsthand and build their professional resumes and networks. In coordination with the Donelan Office of Community-Based Learning (Rooms 332 and 334 in Smith), each student will select a community partner to work with. On Tuesday 9/10, representatives of the Community-Based Learning program will come to our class to discuss several opportunities that we have prearranged; students who already have connections to a particular government or political organization may also arrange and propose their own plan of work, with approval from the professor.

Each student is required to complete a short work assignment with their chosen community partner, around six hours total over the course of the semester. Students will maintain an attendance log documenting their hours worked and work completed. Following completion of their work, students will write a paper documenting their experiences and assessing the role of their community partner in state or local politics. In the paper, students will use their work experiences, their own research, and interviews or conversations with their community partners to consider the following:

- **Functions.** What are the functions and activities of the community partner office or organization? What is their mission? Who do they serve?
- **Oversight and Funding.** What person or government oversees the office or organization? How is the office or organization funded? What resources do they have?
- **Coordination.** What other government offices or political organizations does the community partner coordinate or interact with?
- **Outreach.** How does the community partner keep citizens and those they serve informed of their work and services?
- **Your Work.** What work did you complete? How did this work help to advance the function or goals of the office or organization?
- **Your Challenges.** What challenges did you face in completing your work? How did you overcome them?

- Accomplishments. How successful do you believe the community partner is at fulfilling its role or mission? How might it improve?

Paper 2: Issue in State Government

Due: Friday 12/20

7 to 10 pages

For this research paper, students will examine the politics and policies surrounding a particular law or issue in their assigned states. Students should use assigned readings and their own research and insights to address the following:

- Issue: What problems did the state confront? Who does this issue affect most directly?
- Policies: How has the state government confronted this issue? What current policies are in place? How have policies changed over time? What other policies have been proposed?
- Other Levels of Government: In what ways have the federal government or local governments been involved in this issue and the policies implemented?
- Government Officials: Which government officials have supported or opposed state policies on this issue?
- Political Influence: What interest groups or other nongovernmental organizations have sought to influence policy on this issue? How has the public contributed and reacted?
- Outcome: What have been the results of policies implemented on this issue? What have been the costs to the state or the public? Do you believe that the state government has handled this issue well?

Paper Assignments Information

Both papers should be uploaded to the course Moodle website. Papers should include a properly formatted bibliography of all sources cited and used in your research and analysis. Please also use parenthetical citations in the text of the papers (Last Name Year). It is recommended that you thoroughly review your finished work and edit for correct grammar and professional language; proper writing will be considered in determining paper grades. In addition, written assignments containing more than 15 grammatical, spelling, language or organizational errors may not be accepted for grading, at the professor's discretion. Please contact the professor if you have any questions about conducting research or paper content and formatting.

All work should be submitted on time; late papers will be discounted up to 5 points for each day late at the professor's discretion. If you anticipate that you will need extra time to complete an assignment, please contact the professor as soon as possible, no later than the assignment due date.

The Center for Writing, located on the second floor of Dinand Library, is a great resource and students are encouraged to take advantage of its services. The center offers free assistance to students at any stage in the writing process; this is a great way to get additional feedback and support as you work on and edit our course papers. Students may need to make appointments; visit the center's website or stop in for more information.

Take-Home Exams

Section 1 Exam Due: Sunday 10/20

Section 2 Exam Due: Sunday 11/24

Exams will assess students' understandings of the information covered in the first two sections of the course. The first exam will cover course material from Weeks 1 through 5; the second exam will focus on course material from Weeks 6 through 10. Exams consist of short answer questions, to be completed outside of class. Exams will be submitted through Moodle; exam questions will be posted on Moodle no later than one week prior to the due dates. Further details will be provided in class. There is no final exam in this course.

Technology in the Classroom

This is a seminar course, and we will be using computers to conduct and present research in class. To accommodate these activities, students are encouraged bring laptops to class; however, use of laptops during class is restricted to reviewing assigned readings, participating in class activities and notetaking. Other forms of technology are prohibited in class, including smartphones and headphones. Students who use prohibited technology during class will not be given attendance credit for that day; students who repeatedly use prohibited technology may be asked to leave the classroom.

Academic Honesty and Courtesy

Please note that failing to properly cite sources in submitted written work will be considered plagiarism. Students are expected to familiar with all aspects of the College's Community Standards Process and Procedures.

Students in this course will engage with many controversial and sensitive topics. During class discussions, please maintain a positive tone in all questions and comments. Be respectful of others and their backgrounds, opinions, and abilities at all times, and enjoy our interactions as a class.

Statement on Disabilities

Holy Cross is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity to all students. Students with physical, psychological or learning disabilities who are registered with the Office of Accessibility Services are entitled to reasonable academic accommodations, possibly including extended time on class exams or extensions on written assignments. If you have a documented disability that requires an accommodation, please notify the professor early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Course Schedule

Section 1: The Powers of State Governments

Week 1: Introduction

Thursday 9/5

Week 2: Federalism and State Constitutions

Tuesday 9/10

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 1 and 2

Read: Werthman, "Democrats are Becoming the Party of States' Rights"

Read: Polimedio and Souris, "Why Federalism Is Hard"

Thursday 9/12

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 3

Read: Greenblatt, "Lawmakers Eye Changes to Ballot Measures -- Passed and Future"

Explore: Initiative and Referendum Institute, "Ballotwatch: November 2018 Election Results"

Explore: Ballotpedia, "Ballot Measure Signature Costs, 2018"

Week 3: Taxes and Finances

Tuesday 9/17

Explore: StatisticalAtlas.com

Activity: Getting to Know Your State

Thursday 9/19

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 4

Read: Goosen, "Tax Plan's Backdoor Success"

Read: Bridges, "Inside Look at 'Tax Exclusions,' How They Create Loophole-filled System Costing Louisiana Hundreds of Millions"

Read: Gleckman, "Supreme Court Gives States Wide Authority to Collect Taxes on Remote Sales"

Week 4: Taxes and Finances, cont.

Tuesday 9/24

Read: Bishop-Henchman, “Gasoline Taxes and User Fees Pay for Only Half of State & Local Road Spending”

Read: Farmer, “As Retiree Health-Care Costs Soar, Public Employers Turn to Private Insurers”

Thursday 9/26

Explore: Governing, “Bankrupt Cities, Municipalities List and Map”

Activity: State Revenues and Budgets

Week 5: Participating in State Politics

Tuesday 10/1

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 5

Read: Nilsen, “Maine Voters Blew Up Their Voting System and Started from Scratch”

Read: Roberts, “Voting by Mail Is Fair, Safe, and Easy. Why Don’t More States Use It?”

Read: Norwood, “Automatic Voter Registration Gains Bipartisan Momentum”

Read: Kornacki, “Nightmare in Florida II: The Odd Ballot that Could Cost Sen. Nelson the Race”

Thursday 10/3

Read: National Conference of State Legislatures, “Election Security: State Policies”

Read: Blake, “Republicans Keep Admitting that Voter ID Helps Them Win, for Some Reason”

Read: Brater et al., “Purges: A Growing Threat to the Right to Vote”

Read: North, “Why Long Lines at Polling Places Are a Voting Rights Issue”

Explore: United States Election Project, “2018 November General Election Turnout Rates”

Activity: State Voting Laws

Section 2: Institutions in State Government

Week 6: Parties and Interest Groups

Tuesday 10/8

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 6

Read: Greenblatt, “All or Nothing”

Read: La Raja et al., “The State of State Parties – And How Strengthening Them Can Improve Our Politics”

Thursday 10/10

Read: Whyte and Wieder, “Amid Federal Gridlock, Lobbying Rises in the States”

Read: Kusnetz, “How Big Tobacco Lobbies to Safeguard E-Cigarettes”

Read: Stepleton, “Darkness on the Edge of Town: National Dark Money Targets States”

Explore: National Conference of State Legislatures, “Legislator Gift Restrictions”

Explore: National Institute on Money in State Politics

Activity: State Politics and Influence

Monday 10/14 to Friday 10/18 – No Class, Fall Break

Assignment Due Sunday 10/20 – Take-Home Exam, Section 1

Week 7: State Legislatures

Tuesday 10/22

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 7

Read: Sego, “Ex-Lobbyist Reveals How the House Really Works”

Read: Gilpin, “How Progressives Are Taking a Page from ALEC’s Playbook”

Read: Chokshi, “A State Guide to Political Corruption, According to the Reporters Who Cover It”

Thursday 10/24

Read: Greenblatt, “‘Not Exactly a Blowout’: Democrats Score Modest Gains in State Legislatures”

Read: Wiltz, “Why State Legislatures Are Still Pretty White”

Read: Ehrenhalt, “The Evolution of State Legislatures Has Driven Some to Flee”

Explore: National Conference of State Legislatures, “Full and Part-time Legislatures”

Explore: National Conference of State Legislatures, “Legislative Compensation Overview”

Activity: State Legislatures

Week 8: State Executives

Tuesday 10/29

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 8

Read: Steinhauer, “Republican Governors in Blue States Find a Way to Get Along”

Read: Greenblatt, “In Emergencies, Politicians Are Expected to Master Disaster”

Read: Rottinghaus, “Here Are 6 Key Lessons from 40 Years of Political Scandals”

Thursday 10/31

Read: Provost, “Are American States Still Laboratories of Democracy?”

Read: Greenblatt, “Not Just Georgia’s Brian Kemp: Other Secretaries of State Are Accused of Abusing Elections Power”

Read: Office of the Attorney General, “Attorney General Maura Healey’s 2019 Labor Day Report”

Activity: Governors

Week 9: State Courts and Bureaucracies

Tuesday 11/5

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 10

Read: Goldstein, “So You Think You Can Be a Hair Braider?”

Read: Will, “Surely Chicago Has Bigger Things to Worry about than a Cupcake Truck”

Read: Edelen, “The Night Kim Davis Spent in Jail”

Read: Nichols, “The Pros and Cons of Privatizing Government Functions”

Thursday 11/7

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 9

Read: Bonneau, “Why We Should Keep Judicial Elections”

Read: Zeder, “Elected vs. Appointed?”

Read: Greenblatt, “State Supreme Courts Increasingly Face Partisan Impeachment Threats”

Week 10: Local Government

Tuesday 11/12

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 11

Read: Bosman and Davey, “Anger in Michigan over Appointing Emergency Managers”

Read: Crawford, “For the People, by the People”

Read: Greenblatt, “What’s the Best Way to Elect a City Council?”

Thursday 11/14

Read: Maciag, “Millennials Let Their Grandparents Decide Local Elections”

Read: The Daily Hampshire Gazette, “Editorial: Lower the Voting Age in Northampton”

Activity: Local Government

Section 3: Issues in State Government

Week 11: Public Education

Tuesday 11/19

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 13

Read: Brown, “In 23 States, Richer School Districts Get More Local Funding than Poorer Districts”

Read: Maciag, “White Communities, Black Students: Counties with the Biggest School Race Gap”

Read: Ravitch, “The Common Core Costs Billions and Hurts Students”

Read: Wexler, “What to Do about Standardized Tests”

Thursday 11/21

Read: Greenblatt, “Do School Vouchers Only Benefit the Wealthy?”

Read: Strauss, “What and Who Are Fueling the Movement to Privatize Public Education — And Why You Should Care”

Read: Wong, “America’s Teachers Are Furious”

Explore: National Education Association, “Rankings of States 2017”

Explore: The Nation’s Report Card, “State Profiles”

Activity: Public Education

Assignment Due Sunday 11/24 – Take-Home Exam, Section 2

Week 12: Crime and Law Enforcement

Tuesday 11/26

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 14

Read: Norwood, “Are Cops 'Off the Hook'? How Police Reform Has Changed under Trump”

Read: Semuels, “How to Fix a Broken Police Department”

Read: Harvard Law Review, “Policing and Profit”

Read: Maciag, “Addicted to Fines”

Explore: Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics”

Explore: Governing, “Police Employment, Officers per Capita Rates for U.S. Cities”

Explore: Area Vibes, “Crime”

Explore: The Sentencing Project, “State-by-State Data”

Activity: Crime Rates

Wednesday 11/27 to Friday 11/29 – No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Assignment Due Sunday 12/1 - Paper 1: Community-Based Learning

Week 13: Health and Welfare

Tuesday 12/3

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 15

Read: Ku et al., “Medicaid Work Requirements: Will They Help the Unemployed Gain Jobs or Improve Health?”

Read: Quinn, “Medicaid Work Requirements Struck Down in a 3rd State”

Read: Hiltzik, “New Data Show that Failing to Expand Medicaid Has Led to 16,000 Unnecessary Deaths”

Read: Covert, “What 7 States Discovered after Spending More than \$1 Million Drug Testing Welfare Recipients”

Thursday 12/5

Read: Arumugam, “Why Soda Ban Will Work in Fight against Obesity; Food Regulations Have Proven Record”

Read: Seelye, “In Heroin Crisis, White Families Seek Gentler War on Drugs”

Read: Quinn, “Feds Threaten Jail for Opening a Supervised Injection Site in America”

Explore: United Health Foundation, “America’s Health Rankings”

Activity: State Health and Welfare Policy

Week 14: Environment

Tuesday 12/10

Read: Smith and Greenblatt, Ch. 16

Read: Alexander, “Gov. Brown Orders Permanent Water Restrictions for California”

Read: Korten, “In Florida, Officials Ban Term “Climate Change”

Read: Cross et al., “Blocking the Sun”

Read: Kelly, “Maryland Passes Ban Bill, Will Become Third State to Block Fracking”

Read: Friedman, “States Sue Trump over Rollback of Obama-Era Climate Rule”

Thursday 12/12

Read: Hellerstein et al., “Renewable Communities”

Assignment Due Friday 12/20 – Paper 2: Issue in State Government