

POLS 30107: State Government and Politics

Spring 2020

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Meeting time: M/W 12:30 –1:45 pm; B052 Jenkins Nanovic Hall

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Office hours: M/W 2 – 3 PM & By appointment

Course website: <https://sakailogin.nd.edu/portal/site/SP20-POLS-30107-CX-01>

1 Course Description

Although the majority of American policymaking happens at the subnational level, most of us know very little about what happens in our state capitals. This is concerning given the size and scope of state governments in the U.S., which tax and spend in the billions of dollars and create policies that affect our lives in very tangible ways. For example: California, if it were a country, would have the 5th largest economy in the world, with its \$3 trillion GDP exceeding that of the UK, India, France, and Italy. Still, our schools, media, and popular political discourse focus overwhelmingly on national and international politics, minimizing the importance of subnational government.

Although we might all live in the same country, people across the U.S. experience and understand politics in very different ways! This class is structured to familiarize students with the unique governmental challenges and features of the American states, as well as to provide them with the analytical insight and methodological capabilities to critically engage with political questions in the future. We will do this by focusing on interactions among citizens, offices – such as governors and legislators – and intervening institutions (e.g. campaigns & elections, interest groups, and direct democracy) at the state level. Due by the day of our final exam, **Wednesday, May 6th**, students will complete a research project addressing a question in political science using at least one state-level case. There are no exams or quizzes in this class and there is no required text.

2 Online Class

We will be making several changes to the structure of our class to accommodate an unexpected transition to remote learning. Below, you will find details on two potential models for how this will work along with relevant amendments to the evaluative criteria for the course and office hours.

2.1 Plan A

Both Notre Dame and the Department of Political Science have recommended that we conduct classes “synchronously” whenever possible – that is, hold them live via video conference during

our normal class time. In this model, our class meetings would take place via Zoom at the regularly scheduled meeting time (Mondays & Wednesdays from 12:30-1:45 EST – this corresponds to 11:30-12:45 CST, 10:30-11:45 MT, and 9:30-11:45 PST). You can download the necessary software here: <https://zoom.us/>. All classes would be recorded, posted to Sakai, and made accessible to those who cannot attend or miss any portion of class. See the online participation section for more information.

2.2 Plan B

If campus wide implementation of plan A is not feasible, then all classes will be recorded in lecture format and posted to Sakai. In this case, all students should fulfill their participation requirement using the response model outlined below.

2.3 Participation

Participation is still worth 20% of your grade and remains vital to successful completion of this course. In the event that you are unable to attend live meetings on Zoom for *any reason*, you should 1) watch the recording of class which will be posted on Sakai and 2) send me via email a 250 – 500 word response to the topic of the missed class within 1 week. **You are not required to submit documentation or “proof” in order to receive an excused absence.** However, anyone who plans to use this option regularly due to a time zone or other systematic conflict should let me know ASAP.

3 Evaluation

This class is a university seminar. This means that evaluation will be heavily focused on your ability to demonstrate critical thinking skills through discussion and writing. However, there are no exams or quizzes in this course. Your final grade will be based on four components representing 100 possible points. At the end of the semester, you will be responsible for turning in a final paper (35 points) and presenting your work to the class (15 points). Along the way, you will turn in a proposal of your paper topic (5 points), an annotated bibliography (10 points), and a rough draft (15 points). The remaining 20 points will come from your preparedness and participation in class. A more detailed breakdown of these items can be found below.

3.1 Final Paper (35 points)

By **Wednesday, May 6th**, you must turn in a research paper evaluating a topic or problem in American politics using at least one state-level case. Papers can include a short overview of the issue to be addressed, but the bulk of the assignment must be analytic. To do this, you should address three major questions: (1) What is the relevance of your topic and its implications for the case you selected?, (2) What policy resolution(s) have been undertaken to address it?, and (3) What are the strengths and weaknesses of your state’s approach to the topic; are there potential alternatives?. Finally, you should consider how your state helps us better understand issues in federal politics and what further research might be done to better understand the topic you selected. Successful papers will use the theoretical arguments discussed in class in addition to reputable outside sources. Empirical hypothesis testing is not required. Completed drafts should be approximately 12–15 pages long with a minimum length of 10 pages.

Each finished paper must adhere to the following requirements:

- Each paper must be written individually by the author and no one else.
- You must cite at least 10 sources *not* assigned in class, 7 of which must be academic (published in a peer-reviewed journal or university press book).
- Papers should be at least 10 full pages with a maximum length of 15, written in double spaced Times New Roman font with 1 inch margins.
- Completed papers must be submitted to Sakai by 5:00 pm on **Wednesday, May 6th** (the day of our final exam) in Word or PDF format. **Late submissions will receive a zero.**

3.2 Paper topic proposal (5 points)

By **Wednesday, February 26th**, you must turn in a short overview (about 1 paragraph) of the general topic you'll consider in your final paper as well as the case or cases you plan to use with brief justification.

3.3 Annotated Bibliography (10 points)

By **Friday, March 27th**, you must turn in an annotated bibliography of the sources you plan to cite in your final paper. This bibliography should be about 5 pages in length. It should have at least 10 sources (7 academic) and each entry should summarize the source and discuss how it relates to your topic.

3.4 Rough draft (15 points)

By **Wednesday, April 15th**, you must turn in a rough draft of your paper. This submission does not need to be finished, but should show evidence of sufficient progress toward a high-quality completed draft (i.e. 5-6+ pages). I will provide comments for you to use as you work toward a final version.

3.5 Presentation (15 points)

At the end of the semester, you will present your paper to the class. Your presentation should be about **10 minutes long**, and will be followed by a short class discussion. Given that our class will now take place online, you are **not required to use a slideshow or other visual aid**. However, Zoom does have screensharing functionality, so consider using that if you would like. The presentation itself is worth 10 points of your grade, with the remaining 5 points based on your participation in asking questions of your classmates.

3.6 Class Participation (20 points)

Consistent participation in discussions and group activities is imperative to success in this course. To earn full credit, you should regularly attend class, pay attention, and actively engage in our discussions. I do not keep track of who participates in each class meeting, and you do not always have to be “right” in order to receive full points. You should, however, come to class prepared, ask questions when material is unclear, and feel comfortable initiating discussion with me and with your peers.

3.7 Grading

The grading scale is as follows:

93-100	A
90-92	A–
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B–
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C–
60-69	D
≤ 59	F

4 Readings

There is no textbook for this class. All required readings will be posted to Sakai and should be completed prior to Monday class meetings.

5 Course Schedule

The plan for the course is listed below.

5.1 The States in Context

Week 1: 1/15. Introduction to the course

Week 2: 1/22. A crash course in research design and statistics; Federalism
No class Monday, 1/20 in accordance with the Walk the Walk event.

Week 3: 1/27, 1/29. Federalism; Political behavior
Readings: Gerber et al. (2008); Gronke & Miller (2012); Lyons & Jaeger (2014)

Week 4: 2/3, 2/5. Direct democracy
Readings: Hajnal et al. (2002); Dyck & Seabrook (2010); Childers & Binder (2012)

Week 5: 2/10, 2/12. Library instruction session; Parties and Campaigns I: Elections
Readings: Wright & Schaffner (2002); Schaffner et al. (2001)

Week 6: 2/17, 2/19. Parties and Campaigns II: Finance; Interest Groups
Readings: Rigby & Wright (2013); Grumbach & Sahn (2020); Fournaeis & Hall (2014)
Optional: Windett (2014)

5.2 State Institutions

Week 7: 2/24, 2/26. State legislatures
Readings: Kousser et al. (2007); Gamm & Kousser (2010); Harden & Kirkland (2016)
Paper topic proposal due 2/26 by 5 pm to Sakai (≈ 1 paragraph)

Week 8: 3/2, 3/4. Governors and bureaucracy
Readings: Klarner & Karch (2008); Burnett & Parry (2014)

Week 9: 3/9, 3/11. No class (spring break)

Week 10: 3/16, 3/18. No class (spring break 2)!

Optional: Watch *State Legislatures* (2007) and *Monrovia* (2018) on [Kanopy](#)

Week 11: 3/23, 3/25. State responses to COVID-19; State courts

Readings: Huber & Gordon (2004); Gibson (2008); Caldarone et al. (2009)

Annotated bibliography due Friday, 3/27 by 5 pm to Sakai (≈ 5 pages)

5.3 Leveraging State-Level Variation

Week 12: 3/30, 4/1. Interinstitutional interaction; Representation I

Readings: Broockman (2013); Broockman & Skovron (2018); Broockman (2016)

Week 13: 4/6, 4/8. Representation II; Redistricting

Readings: Butler & Harden (2013); Kirkland (2012); Tam Cho & Cain (2020)

Optional: Gay (2007)

Week 14: 4/13, 4/15. Policy Innovation & Diffusion

Readings: Pacheco (2012); Desmarais et al. (2015)

Rough draft due Wednesday, 4/15 by 5 pm to Sakai

Week 15: 4/20, 4/22. Taxing & Spending; Presentations

Readings: Garrett & Jansa (2015); Boushey (2016)

Week 16: 4/27, 4/29. Presentations

Final paper due 5/6 (final exam) by 5 pm to Sakai

6 Academic Integrity

Entering Notre Dame you were required to study the on-line edition of the Academic Code of Honor, to pass a quiz on it, and to sign a pledge to abide by it. The full Code and a Student Guide to the Academic Code of Honor are available at: <http://honorcode.nd.edu>. Perhaps the most fundamental sentence is the beginning of section IV-B: *The pledge to uphold the Academic Code of Honor includes an understanding that a student's submitted work, graded or ungraded—examinations, draft copies, papers, homework assignments, extra credit work, etc.—must be his or her own.* In this class it primarily means all of the writing you turn in comes from you and you alone. I encourage you to discuss the readings with classmates, but all students should write their own papers. I reserve the right to sanction Honor Code violations on an individual basis.

7 Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, political affiliation, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationality. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.