

# Political Science 202: State and Local Government

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Welcome, students,

An online course is quite different from a face-to-face class in several important ways:

1. Students must be disciplined and responsible - you will have deadlines to meet every week, with no reminders from the professor.
2. Students must carefully read the syllabus and each Chapter intro page to determine what the assignments are and when they are due.
3. In a face-to-face class, professors and students interact verbally and in person. In an online class, professors and students interact through assigned exercises and threaded discussions. To encourage this interaction/participation, these exercises and discussions count for 30 % of your grade.
4. Most communication between students and professor takes place via email.
5. Access to chapter quizzes, threaded discussions, and exams will not be possible after due dates.
6. There will be frequent (10) chapter quizzes to ensure that students are keeping up with the reading. These quizzes are important and will count for 10% of your grade.

Course Format: Online lectures, exercises, threaded discussions, chapter quizzes, multi-chapter exams, and class lounge.

1. Online lectures: lectures will typically not repeat material that is available in the textbook, although they may simplify some material or point to important aspects of the material. They may also include reference to current events. Test questions will be drawn from lectures, as well as the textbook.
2. Participation: because there are no face-to-face class meetings, in addition to other requirements, this course will have a participation component based on student completion of assigned exercises and entries into the threaded discussions. Chats are informal discussions among students in the Class Lounge and are optional. Fifteen points are given for each successful participation and may be accumulated for a maximum of 300 points.
  - a. Exercises : There will typically be one exercise per chapter, and each must be completed within the assigned period.
  - b. Threaded discussions are responses to topics/questions posted by the instructor, and will usually be based on current events. Participation in each threaded discussion requires two separate posts: an initial response to the question/topic posted and one response to other students' posts. Threaded discussions must be posted within the assigned period in order to receive participation credit.
2. Quizzes: There will be a short quiz after most chapters. Chapter quizzes count for 10 points and may be accumulated up to 100 points.
- 3.Exams: There will be 2 multiple choice exams in this course, one of which will be the Final exam. Exams are not cumulative, and will cover multiple chapters. Each exam will count 200 points, for a possible total of 400 points
4. Short papers. Each student will be required to attend two meetings of a local government [preferably a city council or a township board meeting for reasons that will become clear] or two sessions of the same type of court hearing for at least two hours and write short papers based on their attendance. See discussion of papers below.
5. Q and A. Students may, of course, email Dr. Ivers at any time Monday through Sunday with their questions or comments and he will normally respond within 24 hours. See my email rules. If I haven't responded within 24 hours you have probably messed up. Try again.

Required Book: State and Local Government, by Bowman and Kearney

This book is available in any of the EMU bookstores.

### Grading:

. It is **IMPORTANT** to note that all assignments must be completed by the dates given in the course schedule to get credit for the assignment. The software for the course will kick students out of the quizzes/exams at the end of the allotted time – 15 minutes for quizzes and 50 minutes for Exams. Exercises/discussions/quizzes/and exams may be accessed **ONLY** on a specific schedule. Once the assignment is closed, it cannot be accessed again. Once a student opens an assignment, the clock starts to tick and it cannot be saved or accessed again once the allotted time is up.

Exams will cover all textbook readings, power point lectures, exercises, and any special topics or current events readings assigned. Chapter quizzes will be short – no more than ten questions. Topics for threaded discussions (participation grade) will be assigned periodically throughout the course, and will typically be “thought” questions, calling for informed opinion. Exercises (participation grade) will typically require an online search of a specific topic.

It is important to note that students should focus on how many points they have accumulated – the online grade book stating percentages is misleading.

2 Exams at 20% each: 40% (400points)

Participation (20 exercises and threaded discussions) 30% (300 points)

2 Short Papers [See below] at 10% each 20% (200 points)

Chapter Quizzes (10) 10% (100 points)

### Grading Scale:

A = 100-94% (940-1000 points)

A- = 93-90 (900-939 points)

B+ = 89-87 (870-899 points)

B = 86-84 (840-869 points)

B- = 83-80 (800-839 points)

C+ = 79-77 (770 - 799 points)

C = 76-74 (740 - 769 points)

C- = 73-70 (700 - 739 points)

D+ = 69-67 (670 - 699 points)

D = 66-64 (640 -669 points)

D- = 63-60 (600 -639 points)

F = below 60 (600 points)

## General Education Rationale

Political Science 202 meets the Social Science requirement under Knowledge of the Disciplines because it provides students critical exposure to the methods used by social scientists in creating knowledge. It provides a thorough grounding in sub-national governments in the American federal governmental system. It also provides a strong introduction to the discipline of political science. In this course, students gain exposure to how knowledge is generated in the social sciences through the lens of one content area, that of state and local government. Through material covered in the course, students gain practice in asking important questions about politics and government and answering them using the methods practiced in this social science discipline.

## Overview of the Class

From the “Reagan revolution” through Clinton’s “New Democrats” to Bush’s “Compassionate Conservatism” and now Obama’s “Hope and Change”, power and attention has been devolving back to the states, and, through them, to the local governments. As suspicion and distrust of Washington, D.C. and its politicians has increased since the VietNam War and Watergate, liberals, conservatives, and those of other ideologies have shifted greater amounts of their attention to states and localities to attempt to solve the problems that each sees as most troubling our country. This is not new. The Founders envisaged a nation of states, where much of the important day-to-day activities of government were conducted at the state and local, not the national, level.

In this context, we will begin our study of state and local government. Despite the newly increased attention and added focus on state and local law-making, policy-making, and taxing, these levels arguably remain

the most obscure and poorly understood by the average American citizen. Perhaps this is because media, both national and local focus first on national level government activity and only secondarily, if at all, on state and local activity, and then only for those activities seen by the media as "important." Not the everyday functioning of state and local government. Despite the impact of state and local government on the lives of average citizens, the fact remains that knowledge of representatives, voting participation, and general levels of interest of the average citizen is much higher at the national than the state and local level.

Currently, some states are challenging the Programs known as "ObamaCare" and Arizona is attempting to impose stronger efforts to curb "illegal immigration." Just how much power do states have, and how should they use it? These are the sorts of questions that always occur in a federalist system.

Local governments are concurrently facing "fiscal stress" related to the "mortgage meltdown", the Great Recession, widespread budget structural imbalance problems, and underfunded pension funds. All of these have made it harder for local governments to continue to provide the services that they traditionally have.

This course will introduce students to the foundations, structures, functions, processes, and behaviors of our 50 state governments and their nearly 100,000 local governments. Throughout, the approach will focus on the role of citizens in state government and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. We will examine the states as "laboratories of democracy" with varying innovative approaches to governmental problem solving through policy making functions. The course will rely on lectures, textbook readings, and the student's own research. Students will have two short writing assignments and three exams.

### **COURSE TEXTBOOK**

Required:

Ann O'M. Bowman and Richard C. Kearney: *State and Local Government*: 9<sup>th</sup> Ed. Wadsworth Publishing, New York. ISBN-13: 978-1435462687

Each student is to find and copy **Federalist 10**, by James Madison.

Students who do not wish to keep the book may find it cheaper to rent the ebook for 6 months.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The overall objective of this course is to enable the students to become more effective citizens at the state and local level, including:

- Developing your own ideas about the proper role, function, size, and scope of state/local governments in the U.S.
- Understanding the capabilities and limitations of political involvement in state and local government
- Becoming informed about the means of influencing government and political decisions at the state/local level.
- Developing an understanding of the structures and functions of American state government and the reasons why political actors at the state and local behave as they do.

The course has three general sections, with the following particular objectives, which will be reflected in the readings, lectures, exams, and course assignments.

#### **I. UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF POLITICS AT THE STATE LEVEL, ANDHOW IT DIFFERS FROM POLITICS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL:**

- Political, economic, social, and demographic diversity among the 50 states;
- States and their place in the federal structure;
- Foundations and structural differences between state constitutions and the American Constitution;
- The nature of citizen involvement at the state and local level.

#### **II. LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION OF STATE GOVERNMENTS:**

- Governors and the basis of their political power;
- The role and function of state legislatures;
- Differences among the structures of state bureaucracies;

- The role and policy-making function of state courts.

### III. DEVELOPING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

- Differences among local government structures;
- How power is exercised among communities;
- How local governments interact with state government;
- Fiscal problems and political realities among the states and localities.

### SHORT WRITINGS

Two short writings will be required, are an integral part of the course, and, quite probably, are essential to both your understanding of local government and your ability to participate as a citizen in local government activities. You are **required** to attend at least two (2) sessions, **at least three (3) weeks apart**, of one of the listed examples of state and local government in action. Following your first session, hand in a minimum 3-page report of your experience (what you saw, your impression of what was happening, how you felt about what you saw and was happening, whether or not you were surprised by what you saw and why, and how what you saw contributed to your understanding of state/local government). This paper is **due at the beginning of class** during the last class period of week 5!!! The second paper will be at least five (5) pages in length, and should describe in more detail and with some explanation of why what you observed happened. This is an observation a second time of **the exactly the same governmental unit and activity**. You should now demonstrate an understanding of what you observe (i.e. what part structure, function, and behavior play in what you observe). Don't just describe it this time, explain it! Again, you must attend the same activity both times (e.g. city council meeting of Ypsilanti). The governmental activities you may choose from include:

- City Council, County Board, Township, or other government unit meeting. (Should be a taxing body.)
- County court, city court, traffic court, or other court session (1 hour minimum attendance 1<sup>st</sup> meeting, 2 hour minimum attendance 2<sup>nd</sup> session, must observe something worth writing about). (Hint, if you want to go to a particular court, call in advance to the clerk and ask for an interesting day to attend.)
- Visit any elected official or any top-level appointed official for observation purposes. See how they function in their official capacities. (Call and arrange two meetings, explain what you're doing and why. You may give them my phone number so they can check if they want.)
- Other activity that is cleared with me.

***IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS ASSIGNMENT CONTACT ME IMMEDIATELY***

This is an introductory course in political science and presumes no previous college level course work in government. Students who have had the American Government course will have a point of reference and comparison for much of the class discussion. As the course title suggests, however, the focus here is on state and local governmental units in our federal system. Given the number and diversity of such units, we will be emphasizing general patterns and common characteristics. Equally important, we will look to our own state and local units as examples, becoming more familiar with Michigan along the way.

The course is structured to enable students to achieve several learning objectives:

- Understand the role of state and local government institutions in American society;
- Understand the nature, function and consequences of federal arrangements in governmental systems;
- Understand how political scientists systematically study politics and governmental institutions and processes;
- Distinguish between national, state and local political systems, employing a comparative perspective of both formal authority and power among key actors;

- Understand the function of and patterns in state constitutions and local charters and explore the societal forces that shaped such documents over time;
- Describe the role of parties and interest groups in state and local political systems;
- Identify nomination and election procedures in the various states and consider the impact or consequences of the alternatives;
- Explain the role and powers of state and local executives and consider the consequences of varying authority and influence on decision-making;
- Describe the structure, functions, and procedures of state and local legislative bodies;
- Outline a typical state judicial system and examine the impact of differing means for selection of judges;
- Distinguish between the various types and forms of local governments in the several states and consider the consequences of such differences;
- Develop an appreciation for different ways of viewing contentious political issues and the use of social science evidence in developing your own individual views of such issues.

## **Course Requirements, Assignments, Grading, and Other Issues**

### **EXAMINATIONS**

Examinations may include short answer, multiple-choice, definition, and true/false questions. Exams will be given on the date indicated

Make up exams will be given only upon presentation of adequate documentation sufficient to convince the instructor that a true emergency occurred. This is relatively unlikely to happen. Traffic tickets don't count, sick dogs or cousins don't count, minor illnesses treatable on an outpatient basis don't count, etc. Verifiable death of immediate family does count, as do accidents or illness requiring immediate hospital or emergency room treatment that prevent the student from attending class on the day of the exam. All excuses are accepted at the sole discretion of the instructor. **Make-up exams will not be the same as the missed exam!!** The instructor must be notified either prior to or immediately after the missed exam. No make-up exam will be given other than under the criteria listed. Since the tests will be online for a relatively long period I anticipate very few if any useful excuses for missing one.

### **GRADING**

See above discussion.

No individual extra credit will be available under any circumstances. Should the occasion arise, extra points will be available to the entire class. Since these opportunities will usually take place in a very short time frame, it is essential to attend class every day if one wishes to get any extra credit that may be available. The instructor reserves the right to award up to 10 points (equal to 1/3 of a letter grade) for exceptional class participation. This emphatically does not mean just attending every class or generalized chattering. It requires cogent remarks, thoughtful questions, or shared insights that further the understanding of the entire class.

**Expectations:** The course will follow an online access/discussion [threads, etc] format generally reflecting the outline of topics and readings below. Readings should be completed prior to the opening of a threaded discussion, and regular participation is expected. . Reading topics and assignments listed are subject to change as the instructor warrants, but are unlikely.

Note: the following items are included at the request of the administration to head-off problems. In almost two decades of teaching I have only confronted conduct problems on one or two occasions.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty, including all forms of cheating and/or plagiarism, will not be tolerated in this class. Penalties for an act of academic dishonesty may range from receiving a failing grade for a particular assignment to receiving a failing grade for the entire course. In addition, you may be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Services for discipline that can result in either a suspension or permanent dismissal. The *Student Conduct Code* contains detailed definitions of what constitutes academic dishonesty, and it can be accessed online at [www.emich.edu/sjs](http://www.emich.edu/sjs)

**Classroom Management Issues:** Students are expected to abide by the *Student Conduct Code* and assist in creating an environment that is conducive to learning and protects the rights of all members of the University community. Lack of civility and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and may result in a request to leave class and referral to the *Office of Student Services (SJS)* for discipline. In this case, since there is little or no physical presence, I will be watching for cyber-courtesy and cyber-bullying. The first is encouraged, while the second will not be tolerated.

**Students With Disabilities:** If you wish to be accommodated for your disability, EMU Board of Regents policy #8.3 requires that you first register with the Access Services Office (ASO) in room 203 King Hall. You may contact ASO by telephone at (734) 487-2470. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with ASO promptly as you will only be accommodated from the date you register with them forward. No retroactive accommodations are possible.

#### COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks 1-3	Introduction to course, syllabus, Ch. 1, Bowman and Kearney (B&K), Ch. 2, (B&K), Ch. 3 (B&K), review
Week 4	Ch. 4, (B&K)
Weeks 5-7	Ch. 4, (B&K), Ch. 5, (B&K), Ch. 6 (B&K) review Exam 1 on Wed of week 7
Weeks 8-11	Ch. 7 (B&K), Ch. 8, (B&K), Ch. 9, (B&K),
Weeks 12-14	Ch. 10 (B&K), Ch.11 (B&K), Ch. 12 (B&K) review

#### FINAL EXAM

The two papers will have announced due dates, but you should plan on making your first visit before week 4 and the second at least three weeks after that but before Week 11. Check schedules early, as your chosen venue may not meet when you think.

More detailed timing can be found online.