

**PLSC 565: Studies in State and Local Government  
Fall 2013, Mondays, 7:30-9:20pm, 419 Pray-Harrold**

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Office Hours: Before/after class or by appointment

- Note 1: I reserve the right to change dates, revise assignments, etc.  
Note 2: Students should keep all graded documents upon return. Students MUST present graded documents if any disputes arise regarding grades.

**FOCUS AND ORGANIZATION**

The course's purpose is to equip students, as follows: (a) enhanced knowledge and understanding of the nomenclature, structures, functions, and inter-relations of state and local government, (b) opportunity to conduct and apply research related to significant issues in state and local government, (c) opportunity to work with other students in a small group to prepare and present a group oral presentation on a research topic.

The combined lectures/class discussions are divided into four parts. The first part focuses on fundamental principles of state and local government: constitutionalism, democracy, federalism and bureaucracy. The second part focuses on state government: state politics and political participation, political parties and campaigns, the role of the legislature/legislators, the role of state governors and executive authority, and the role of state judiciary. The third part focuses on local government and communities: what constitutes local government, community politics and political participation, issues in metro-politics, and community and economic development. The fourth part focuses on specific political issues related to state and local government: taxation and finance, civil rights, education, and poverty welfare and health.

**ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

All grading is on a 100 point scale. Late and poorly written work may be penalized. Grades will be based on the following:

|                     |     |
|---------------------|-----|
| Essays              | 20% |
| Term Research Paper | 20% |
| Group Presentation  | 20% |
| Class Participation | 20% |
| Final Exam          | 20% |

Grade Scale: 95-100=A, 90-94=A-, 86-89=B+, 83-85=B, 80-82=B-, 76-79=C+, 73-75=C, 70-72=C-, 66-69=D+, 63-65=D, 60-62= D-, 59 and below = E

Essays. These essays, based on the textbook reading assignments are preparatory for the weekly lecture/class discussions. Each essay should be 2-3 single-spaced pages and must be submitted by the end of each class session (if absent from class, the essay may be submitted via email by the end of the class session.) Essays are not merely summaries, good essays will provide an analysis of the assigned readings.

Term Research Paper. Each student will write an original research paper (not a re-write of any prior paper). Suggestions for topics are listed below. Other topics are possible, but require the instructor's approval.

Should the Michigan Legislature Mandate and/or Incentivize Consolidation (mergers) of Local Governments?

Should Public Act 312 Arbitration be Amended/Repealed?

Should Eminent Domain be Permissible for Economic Development?

Should Public Finance of Local Government be Changed?

Each student must write about various aspects (pro-con, for-against, advantages-disadvantages) of the subject and include a comprehensive recommendation that explains the student's rationale for their positions, proposals and recommendation.

Paper should be a minimum of five pages in length (font size equivalent to Arial 12 used on this syllabus), plus (not including) citations/references cited. The research paper must cite a minimum of five *academic references* (NOT Wikipedia).

Each student's paper should:

- Demonstrate the ability to develop a clearly stated position and defend it in a cogent and logical manner.
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct current research.
- Demonstrate the ability to analyze, synthesize and organize information about the topic.

Group Presentation. Groups of 4 (or 5) students must prepare and present a combined/coordinated group presentation based on their individual research papers. Each group must recommend/advocate adoption of specific proposal(s)/position(s).

Each group presentation should:

- Be presented in approximately 15 minutes (not less than 10, nor more than 20).
- Demonstrate the ability to work cooperatively with others.
- Demonstrate the ability to collaborate and obtain consensus on a public policy issue.
- Demonstrate the ability to present an informative and persuasive presentation.

Each group is responsible for preparing and distributing to the entire class a one to two page abstract/executive summary of the group's presentation.

Each group member will receive the same score for the presentation.

Class Participation. Please note the grade emphasis on class participation. As stated above the purpose of the essays is preparatory for the lecture/class discussions. Substantial class participation is expected from every student each session. If class participation does not meet the instructor's expectations, I reserve the right to conduct "pop" quizzes instead of class discussions.

Final Exam. The final exam will be a take-home type examination. The questions will be provided well in advance of the final exam due date (perhaps as early as one of the first few weeks of class). My intention is to allow the students to work on the final exam throughout the semester, thus avoiding an end-of-the-semester convergence of work due (research paper, group presentation, final exam study).

## READING

Textbook: Politics in States and Communities, 14th Edition by Dye and McManus, Pearson Education, Inc., 2012, ISBN-13: 978-0-205-10996-8, ISBN-10: 0-205-10996-9

Other required reading:

1. Governing Magazine -- monthly (subscribe at [Governing.com/mag](http://Governing.com/mag))
2. Detroit Free Press, Sunday edition, "Points of View" page(s) -- weekly
3. Other readings as assigned

Supplemental reading (not required):

1. Governmental Analytics for Dummies (free with subscription from [Governing.com](http://Governing.com))

## LECTURE/CLASS DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

### **Part 1: State and Local Government Fundamentals**

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|---------|--|
| Sept 9  | Introductions, Syllabus, Textbook, Readings, Expectations, Grades, etc.<br>Ice Breaker Activity: Nine Dots<br>American Government "Fundamentals" Pre-test<br>Structured Experiences: (1) Win As Much As You Can<br>(2) Crash Landing on the Moon |
| Sept 16 | Text Chapters 1 and 2, and other readings as assigned  |
| Sept 23 | Text Chapters 3 and 8, and other readings as assigned  |

## **Part 2: State Government**

- Sept 30 Text Chapters 4 and 5, and other readings as assigned
- Oct 7 Text Chapters 6 and 7, and other readings as assigned
- Oct 14 Text Chapter 9, and other readings as assigned

## **Part 3: Local Government**

- Oct 21 Chapters 10 and 11, and other readings as assigned
- Oct 28 Chapters 12 and 13, and other readings as assigned

## **Part 4: Specific Issues in State and Local Government**

- Nov 4 Chapter 14, Guest Lecturer
- Nov 11 Chapter 15, and other readings as assigned
- Nov 18 Chapter 16, and other readings as assigned
- Nov 25 Chapter 17, and other readings as assigned
- Dec 2 Term Research Papers Due
- Dec 9 Group Presentations
- Dec 16 Final Exam Due

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Extra Credit** Extra credit opportunities MAY be available by offer of the instructor or upon request of the student. These are due no later than the due date of the term research papers.

**Research/Writing Expectations** Almost all MPA courses require extensive research and writing requirements, and it is the policy of the MPA program to utilize the Chicago Manual of Style. A particularly useful resource is the Chicago Manual of Style Outline at: [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

**Academic Dishonesty** Includes all forms of cheating, falsification, and/or plagiarism, and will not be tolerated. Penalties range from a failing grade for a particular assignment to a failing grade for the course. Offenders may be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Services for discipline that can result in suspension or permanent dismissal. Detailed definitions of academic dishonesty are located in the Student Conduct Code.