

Political Science 202: State and Local Government

Online Winter 2018

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If this is your first online course, or maybe you've taken them before, it is a **VERY** good idea to look through the files you and access for useful information. This is especially true of the file on using email and files and on my Paper Rules on how I want you to write for me.

If you email I will probably see it quickly since I tend to be online if I'm awake. If you don't get a response within 24 hours email again. Something may have gone wrong. I nearly always respond within 24 hours. Please use your my.emich account for emails and avoid going through Canvas. Emails via Canvas take longer to get to me and cause other problems on my end.

Please read everything in this syllabus carefully, especially the parts about the required papers. Be sure to check on the course homepage when directed there. Again, check the available files on Canvas for more information and help.

****The syllabus may be changed if events make that necessary. I will notify you by email and try to give at least one week's notice. You should check for email from me daily and check the syllabus and announcements often.****

Please note that the software for the online courses has a reputation for being troublesome. Sometimes I mess up, but many times the software itself leads to problems. Please notify me by email of any problems you incur as soon as possible. We are using Canvas and as with any software, as it is updated, I expect to encounter glitches. When something doesn't seem right or to work right notify me as soon as possible so I can fix it if it needs fixing.

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. **Generally, no work will be accepted after the deadline has passed.** In extraordinary cases, with evidence that satisfies the instructor work may be accepted but with a grade reduction. This will be a rare occurrence.
2. Students must carefully read the syllabus and each Chapter intro page to determine what the assignments are and when they are due. If in doubt, email me.
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 and via email. To encourage this interaction/participation, these exercises and discussions count for 40 % of your grade. Tests count for 40%, and the last 20% comes from the two required papers.
4. Most communication between individual 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/exams to ensure that students are keeping up with the reading. These quizzes are important and will count for 10% of your grade.

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

Overview of Course Presentation:

1. Online lecture material: 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 lecture notes, as well as the textbook. In other words, just because the answer to a question isn't in the text doesn't mean it's not a fair question if that material has been covered in the written lecture and notes. Read both.
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. I encourage you to join the chat lounge and discuss the material with one another. That seems to help grades.
 - a. Exercises: There will typically be only one on material in a chapter, and each must be completed within the assigned period. Not all chapters will have exercises. There will never be two exercises per chapter.
 - b. Threaded discussions are responses to topics/questions posted by the instructor, and will usually be based on relatively current events in state and local government. Participation in each threaded discussion requires at least 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. ***If a student doesn't post both an item of their own and a response to another student they will receive no credit for that discussion. One entry is not worth any points.*** Participants must be very civil with one another. Please do not try to 'correct' the views of others. Just say "I agree" or "I disagree" and explain why. And a short but acceptable entry will earn points worth a grade of C, or 11 points. Not all very short entries will be acceptable. I encourage you not to try to guess how short you can write and earn points. That is for meeting merely the minimum requirement you may, or may not, earn points. More extensive discussions, points, or answers will earn more points. It is not hard to get 15 points if you spend a little extra time giving some 'body' to your entries. And extended threads of multiple entries may also serve. If the 'conversation' gets interesting I have seen up to 100 total comments. Lots of awards of 15 points in those.
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. If I have more than 10 quizzes, your low score quiz will be discarded from the grading. Not all of the questions will necessarily be from the book, so be careful to read chapter notes. Some questions may require you to integrate material from the book.
3. Exams: There will be 4 multiple choice or True/False exams in this course, one of which will be the Final Exam. The first three exams are not cumulative, and will cover multiple chapters. The final will be somewhat cumulative and will cover the last three chapters as well. Each exam will count 100 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. If you attend a local government meeting you must go to the same government for the second paper. That means you need to plan. See discussion of papers below. **Also details of expected content will be posted online. Be very careful of this assignment.** The first and second papers are quite different in nature. You need to get feedback from the first paper in order to write a good second paper. You must allow several weeks between the meetings. Some elected groups do not meet very often, so trying to use, say, a park board may not work. **If you want to go to anything other than a city council/township board/county board meeting or a court please email me to make sure what you want to do will work.**

Most especially, read the file on writing the first paper. I most decidedly **DO NOT** want a news-style blow-by-blow description of the content of the meeting issues nor of court cases. This is not a journalism class.

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. **Follow the email rules.**

Required Book:

Ann O'M. Bowman and Richard C. Kearney: State and Local Government: The Essentials latest Ed. Wadsworth Publishing. New York. ISBN-13: 978-1285737485

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.

Also, a used 4th edition might [or might not] suffice for studying purposes.

This book is available in any of the EMU bookstores and online. Used copies are frequently available.

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 – 10 minutes for quizzes and the indicated time for Exams. The quizzes are much like the old “pop quizzes” hated and despised by generations of students. If you have read the chapter and understood it they will be relatively easy. If not, not.

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, written lecture notes, 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. The percentages sometimes include material I have

decided not to use. If you want to figure your own percentage at any time, figure how many points are available for work you COULD have done [if you didn't do it, you get zero points]. Then add up how many points you earned for that work. Divide your points earned by the total available and that is the correct percentage. Still, it's easier to just count the points.

4 Exams at 10% 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)

Unfortunately some students do fail to acquire the minimum 600 points. The moment you think you may be in trouble this way, notify me. Sometimes there are options.

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" through Obama's "Hope and Change" and now Trump's "Make America Great Again", 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 Viet Nam 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. However, in a

few areas it appears that power may be moving back toward the national government, as departments like Homeland Security increasingly extend their reach. The balance is always changing. Today the #Resist movement is attempting to return more power to states and "sanctuary cities". Who wants to return the power typically depends on who is upset with the national government.

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 still challenging the Programs known as "DACA" and have declared themselves "sanctuary states) as some cities have declared themselves "sanctuary cities", and some border states like Arizona and Texas are attempting to impose stronger efforts to curb "illegal immigration." Others are legislating on public bathroom use. Just how much power do states have, and how should they use it? These are the sorts of questions that always occur in a federal 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. A recovery from all of this has been slow at many levels. All of these have made it harder for local governments to continue to provide the services that they traditionally have. Locally we can observe the Detroit bankruptcy firsthand. It will likely not be the last city in the US to go bankrupt.

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 four exams.

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.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICAL REALITIES OF POLITICS AT THE STATE LEVEL, AND HOW 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.

2. 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 – Read this very carefully.

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. You **may not** use other meetings of government bodies without clearing it with me first. Make **SURE** that the meeting you choose to attend is a general business meeting and not something else. Your attendance at the second meeting **MUST** wait until you have received my feedback on your first paper.

Following your first session, hand in a minimum 4-page report [minimum 1200 words] of your experience (what you saw, your impression of what was happening, whether or not you were surprised by what you saw, and how what you saw matches up with what you thought you knew about the system you observed). Most of the paper should be observation and not explanation. This paper is due at the designated due date found in Unit 7!!! **Be sure to read the file on writing this paper.**

The second paper will be at least 4 pages and 1200 words in length and should describe in more detail and with some explanation of why what you observed happened after I have indicated what is interesting in your first paper. 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! There is more information on writing each paper online on the course homepage under Course Home. 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 local government unit meeting. (Should be a taxing body. If you're not absolutely sure it meets my specification email and ask.)
 - County court, city court, traffic court, or other court session (1 hour minimum attendance 1st meeting, 2 hour minimum attendance 2nd 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.) The second session MUST be the exact same type of court as the first.
 - 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.) If you want to do this, email me for more information.
 - Other activity that is cleared with me.

There will be a set of deeper instructions posted online on how to write the first paper. For instance, I most particularly do not want a news-style narrative of first this was discussed, then that was discussed. I want to know what you saw, not what happened. These are different.

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. All exams will allow four days in which to be taken. Check the dates. If you have a good reason for not being able to take the test then [you're going to have major surgery, for instance] notify me about taking it early. The time frame for that will be much more limited.

Makeup 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 prevents the student from usefully accessing the website during the days 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 check the website routinely, probably more than once a week 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 doing all the assigned work. It requires cogent remarks, thoughtful questions, or shared insights in the conversation threads or the student lounge 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 three 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

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

The exact dates can be found online. Quizzes, exercises, and discussions will normally be open for four full days over the weekend. Grades will be posted as soon as I am able to grade everything. Tests will be open for four days on Monday through Thursday.

Weeks 1 Introduction to course, syllabus, Ch. 1, Bowman and Kearney (B&K)

Week 2 Ch. 2, (B&K)

Week 3 Ch. 3 (B&K) followed by Test 1

Week 4 Ch. 4, (B&K)

Weeks 5 Ch. 5, (B&K)

Week 6 Ch. 6 (B&K) followed by Test 2

Week 7 Ch. 7, (B&K) Paper 1 due

Week 8 Ch. 8, (B&K)

Weeks 9 Ch. 9, (B&K) followed by Test 3

Week 10 Ch. 10, (B&K)

Week 11 Ch. 11, (B&K)

Week 12 Ch. 12 (B&K)

Weeks 13 Paper 2

Week 14 Review and then Final

FINAL EXAM

PAPERS

The two papers will have online announced due dates, so you should plan on making your first visit before week 4 and the second at around week 8-10 but before Week 11. Check meeting schedules early, as your chosen venue may not meet when you think.

Again, the syllabus may be altered as needed by the instructor. Every effort will be made to announce any alterations well in advance.