**PLSC 481D STATE POLITICS and policy**

Fall 2017

Instructor: Shawn J. Donahue

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Office Location: LNG 279 (Library Tower Basement)

Office Hours: Thursday 3:15-5:15 PM and by appointment

Office Phone: N/A

Class Meeting: Thursdays from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Class Location: Student Wing 320

**Syllabus**

**Course Description**

States within this country play a critical role in many aspects of our lives given the setup of our federal system. While there are certain areas reserved for the federal government such as immigration, printing of money, and foreign policy, most governmental functions are shared between the federal government and states. In this course we will look at many of these policies as well as politics in those states.

Among the topics we will address will be the powers that states have and do not have vis a vis the federal government, as well as powers that localities have within those states. We will also discuss policies within states such as taxes, health care, education, transportation, corruption, social policy, discrimination, and the environment. We will pay a close eye on the politics of the State of New York

Since this is a year with two statewide elections in Virginia and New Jersey for Governor, we will discuss those races each week. I hope that as these elections unfold that we can try to draw parallels and contrasts with the materials that we read.

**Course Objectives**

The fundamental premise guiding this course is the idea that the Supreme Court and constitutional law are important topics in and of themselves and, furthermore, that they are inherently interesting and exciting topics. In other words, studying the Court and constitutional law should be both enjoyable and informative. That said, more specific goals for this course include:

1. To learn about how state and local politics differ from national politics.
2. To explore federalism- what powers are reserved, which are mixed, and what are the limits.
3. To learn about the unique nature of some states and their politics.
4. To learn basic research skills.
5. To strengthen the ability to evaluate and construct analytic arguments.
6. To enhance written communications skills.

**TextS**

The following texts is required and is available for purchase at the University bookstore or on Amazon.com or other booksellers, but just be sure to get the right edition:

* Cramer, Katherine J. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. 2016. University of Chicago Press.
* Erikson, Robert S., Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver. *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States*. 1994. Cambridge University Press.
* Ingle, Bob and Sandy McClure. *The Soprano State: New Jersey’s Culture of Corruption.* 2010. St. Martin’s Griffin Press.
* Maginnis, John. *Cross to Bear: America’s Most Dangerous Politics.* 1992. Darkhouse Press.
* Schneier, Edward V., John Brian Murtaugh, and Antoinette Pole. *New York Politics: A Tale of Two States, Second Edition.* 2010. M.E. Sharpe.

**Course Requirements & Grading**

Evaluation in this course is based on the following components:[[2]](#footnote-2)

* Class Participation, Attendance and Discussion Leader 15%
* Term Paper and Presentation 40%
* Take-home Midterm and Final Exams 30%
* Response Papers 15%

Final grades in this course are computed on the following basis:[[3]](#footnote-3)

* A: 94-100%
* A-: 90-93%
* B+: 88-89%
* B: 82-87%
* B-: 80-81%
* C+: 78-79%
* C: 72-77%
* C-: 70-71%
* D+: 68-69%
* D: 62-67%
* D-: 60-61%
* F: <59%

**Exams and term paper**

* There will be a take home mid-term exam and final exam. They are worth 30% (15% each) of your grade.
* There will also be a longer term paper. More details will follow, and it is worth (along with your presentation of it) 40% of your grade.
* Students will also write three (3) short response papers to the readings. They are worth 5% of your grade each. These will be on days that you are NOT the discussion leader.

**MYCOURSES**

We will use Mycourses for this course.

**LECTURES**

We will have both lectures and class discussions in this course. Three students will also serve as discussants for the materials each week. Students will do this three times, and will account for 15% of your grade.

**attendance policy**

All students should expect to come to class and be on time. So that I do not have to decide what is an excused absence versus one that is not excused, you will all get two free passes to be absent before it affects your grade. Absences after that will results in a 3% reduction in your grade for every absence beyond that.

However, if you are scheduled to be a discussion leader on a day that you are absent for whatever reason unless it is cleared through me to change your day to do so at least 48 hours ahead of time, you will lose credit for being a discussion leader.

**E-Mail**

All students registered for this course will automatically be subscribed to a class list serve via MyCourses. This list will be used to communicate reminders, updates, etc. to the class. Students are absolutely responsible for all information that is communicated in this manner. Those students who usually use an e-mail address other than their BU e-mail address should set their BU account to forward to their preferred e-mail address. Students should contact Computing Services if assistance with e-mail is required. You may find that there is a way to send messages on Blackboard. Don’t use, as I don’t check it. I won’t respond to it so don’t expect a response.

**Grade Disputes**

Grading should be an entirely transparent process and, accordingly, I will be as clear as I can be about my grading process and standards. Students wishing to dispute a grade for an assignment or exam must do so in writing within one (1) week of the return of the graded item. Students must also wait 24 hours before initiating an appeal. When doing so, students should provide a clear explanation as to why they feel a different grade is in order. Simply “wanting” or “needing” a higher grade is insufficient reasoning. When work is reviewed pursuant to a grade dispute, the entire item (assignment or exam) is reviewed, meaning that a grade dispute may result in the same grade, a higher grade, or a lower grade.

**Make Up Policy**

Each student is expected to complete all assignments by the due date and take all examinations at the scheduled times. Assignments will be distributed well in advance of their due dates. Students are strongly encouraged to begin work early since late work will generally not be accepted. In those exceedingly rare circumstances in which a late assignment is accepted, there will be a one letter-grade deduction for each 24-period the assignment is late.

**Special Needs**

I am committed to meeting any special needs students with learning disabilities might have. Students with special needs are advised to contact me immediately with documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities. Last minute accommodations are not feasible so students with special needs are obligated to contact me early in the semester.

**Religious Accommodation**

Students with a scheduling conflict related to the observance of a religious holiday are advised to contact me immediately. I will be very happy to make an appropriate accommodation. Students should note, however, that they must notify me within the first two (2) weeks of the start of the session to make any such accommodation.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is an important touchstone of academic life, for both students and faculty. As the instructor for this class and a member of the Binghamton University community, I have a responsibility to scrupulously abide by and vigorously promote the highest standards of academic integrity. Accordingly, no form of academic dishonesty (intended or accidental) will be tolerated. Anyone found guilty of cheating or plagiarism or of other violations of academic integrity will receive an automatic grade of 0.0 (F) for the course. Furthermore, all other available penalties within the University (e.g., proceedings before the Harpur College Academic Honesty Committee) will be pursued to the fullest extent. Students should bear in mind that there are severe consequences for violations of academic integrity, which may well extend beyond Binghamton University (e.g., it may complicate or prevent admission to law school). Discussant

Students are required to review the Student Academic Honesty Code, which can be found on-line in the Bulletin. I will assume that you have no objections to the code unless otherwise specified.

I will be very happy to answer any questions students in this class may have about the Code and provide any necessary clarifications. I will also provide guidance, both to the class as a whole and to individual students as needed, regarding academic integrity as it applies to the assignments and exams in this course. Students have an affirmative obligation to seek out additional assistance from me if they have any unanswered questions about academic integrity.

**I AM PUTTING THIS IN BOLD AND CAPS FOR A REASON.**

**DO NOT PLAGIARIZE!**

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**IT IS NOT WORTH IT!**

**IF YOU QUOTE SOMEONE, CITE IT! DON’T COPY STUFF OFF THE NET AND SAY IT IS YOUR OWN! TURNITIN WILL CATCH YOU! I WILL CATCH YOU! YOU MAY GET KICKED OUT OF THE SCHOOL AND NEVER GET TO GO TO LAW SCHOOL!**

I am very serious about plagiarism. I caught a student last year that person received an F for the class and the case was forwarded to the Director of Undergraduate Studies. It is very easy to try to copy and paste material from the internets, but it is surprisingly easy to catch on turn it in, especially since most undergraduates do not possess the legal writing skills of law professors, who write much of the material. If you do copy and paste something, give credit for where you got it from, that is not plagiarism, but it will make for you getting a low grade since it about your interpretation and analysis, not another person.

**Schedule**

**Week 1 (August 24):**

Course introductions, review syllabus

Presentation of Louisiana Precinct Paper

**week 2 (august 31**):

Due to the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, we will not formally meet for class.

Your main assignment for this day is to (on your own) to watch the 1949 movie “All the King’s Men”. Please watch the 1949 version, which stars Broderick Crawford, not the remake with Sean Penn. You can rent this movie on Amazon.com. It is based on the book by Robert Penn Warren and is a fictionalized take on the life of Louisiana Governor Huey P. Long. Think about for the next class how this movie relates to Political Science in general, but in particular State Politics.

Readings: Maginnis Chapters 1-10

**week 3 (september 7)**

Federalism between the Federal and State Governments

Also, discussion of film and readings from last week

Readings: *South Dakota v. Dole* (1988)

*National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* (2012)

Selected parts available on Blackboard. For the NFIB, pay close attention to the portion on Medicaid expansion

Schneier Chapter 2

The Federalist Papers #15, 44, 45, and 46

**week 4 (september 14)**

The relationship between State and Local Governments; Local Government

Readings: Schneier Chapter 1, 9

Ingle Chapters 8-10

“Twinned Cities Now Following Different Paths,” New York Times

**week 5: (september 21)**

We do not meet this week due to it being Rosh Hashanah. Also, no office hours this week either, as I will be out of the country. I will not be available by email from September 16-22 (unless my plans change).

**week 6: (september 29)**

Urban Politics ; Tensions between Cities and other Areas

Readings: Cramer Chapters 1-4

Re-Read Schneier Chapter 1

Ingle Chapter 3

“Rural Legislators Dig In,” State Legislatures

I will also add some brief materials on *Baker v. Carr* and rural entrenchment

**week 7 (october 5)**

State and Local Political Parties; State Elections

Readings: Erikson Chapters 5, 8, 9

Schneier Chapter 3

**week 8: (october 12)**

State Legislatures

Readings: Schneier Chapter 4, 6-7

Ingle Chapter 4

“Newbies Infiltrate State Legislative Chambers,” Governing

Carey, John M., Richard G. Niemi, and Lynda W. Powell, 1998, “The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures,” Legislative Studies Quarterly

(Volume 23, Number 2): pp. 271-300

**week 9: (october 19)**

Governors

A take home mid-term exam will be due at the beginning of class

Readings: Ingle Chapters 1-2, 7

I will have a few additional articles online

**week 10: (october 26)**

Tax, Crime, and Education Policy; Corruption

Readings: Erikson Chapters 6, 7, 10

Cramer Chapter 5-6

Schneier Chapter 8

“Kentucky Pulls Tax Incentives,” Washington Post

“Lines Blur as Texas Gives Industries a Bonanza,” New York

Times, Dec. 2, 2012.

**week 11: (november 2)**

Racial Politics in States; Redistricting

Readings: Maginnis Chapters 11-22

McDonald, et. al. *Checking Gerrymanders Nationwide*

I will also add some voting rights materials online on voter ID and racial gerrymandering

**week 12: (november 9)**

Judicial Elections and Direct Democracy; Gay Rights, Abortion Policy

Readings: Schneier Chapter 5

Ingle Chapter 5

“Ouster of Iowa Judges Sends Signal to Bench,” *New York Times*

I am going to supplement with some case excerpts from *Casey v. Planned* *Parenthood* and *Lawrence v. Texas*

Lax, Jeffrey R., and Justin H. Phillips, 2009, “Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness,” American Political Science Review (Volume 103, Number 3): pp. 367-386

**week 13: (november 16)**

Political Culture of the States

Readings: Erikson Chapters 1-4

Cramer Chapters 7-8

Ingle Chapter 6

**week 14: (november 23)**

No class this week due to Thanksgiving Holiday.

**week 15: (november 30)**

Topics TBA.

**week 16: (december 7)**

Presentation of Course Papers to Class

**final exam TAKE HOME, details to follow.**

1. Though I try to be as prompt as possible in responding to student inquiries, it may take up to 24 hours for a response depending upon when an e-mail inquiry is received on weekday and 48 hours on weekends. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note that students must complete each of these components to be eligible to receive a passing grade in the class. Stated differently, failure to complete any one of these items will result in a failing grade for the class regardless of whether, from a numerical perspective, a student could earn a passing grade. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Students submit to the Academic Integrity rules of the University Student Code of Conduct. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)