

**State Politics**  
Florida State University  
Department of Political Science

**Course information:**

POS 3122.01

Fall, 2013

HCB 212, Tuesday and Thursday: 3:35- 4:50

Course Website: Blackboard

**Contact Information for Instructor:**

Instructor: Ms. Jaclyn Bunch

Office: Bellamy 216

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00- 3:00pm or by appointment

Email: [JBunch@fsu.edu](mailto:JBunch@fsu.edu) (Best Form of Contact)

Department Phone: 850-644-5721

**Course Objective:**

This course is designed to introduce students to the operation, structure, and policy-relevance of American state government. States play an integral role in the lives of American citizens: financing education, providing transportation and health services, overseeing elections and the workings of state parties, establishing and overseeing local governments, regulating business activities, occupations and health practices, and otherwise assuring the health, safety and equal protection of their citizens. States work closely with federal and local officials to implement national policies and in recent years have taken on more and more responsibilities once primarily the domain of the federal government. Understanding state politics and policy is key to being an engaged and informed citizen.

Students who successfully complete this course will: 1) be able to explain the ways states are organized and the key institutional actors and processes they employ, 2) be able to demonstrate general knowledge of the role of political parties, direct democracy, interest groups, federalism and intergovernmental relations in the American states and how Florida compares to other states in those areas, 3) have the skills to interpret data on state institutions and processes and fiscal conditions, 4) have developed the analytical and critical skills to understand primary literature in state politics and policy.

**Required Texts:**

We will primarily be utilizing one text throughout the duration of the course. The text, as stated, **required**. This work, in addition to the required posting readings on blackboard throughout the course, represent the different approaches and emerging areas of research regarding state politics within the political approach. Thus, it is highly recommended that you have access to all documents and text to prepare for and participate within class appropriately. As stated, there will also be additional materials, such as scholarly articles, which will either be posted on the Blackboard site or are available through the library.

**Text:**

Ann Bowman and Richard Kearney. 2014. **State and Local Government 9th** ed. Wadsworth Cengage Publishers. A printed version is available from the FSU bookstore. The remaining readings are available on Blackboard.

ISBN: 978-1-4354-6268-7

Alternate ISBN: 1-4354-6268-8

**Assignments and Grading:**

Components:

Attendance and Participation: 10%

Issue Analysis: 20%

Midterm Exam: 30%

Final Exam: 40%

Grading Scale:

Letter	Range
A	94.0-100
A-	90.0-93
B+	87.0-89
B	84.0-86
B-	80.0-83
C+	77.0-79
C	74.0-76
C-	70.0-73
D+	67.0-69
D	64.0-66
D-	61.0-63
F	0-60

\*Note that there will be no rounding. The grade earned is the grade received.

**Exams:**

There will be a total of two formal exams for this course. The **midterm exam** which will be held on **October 23rd**, will be worth 30% of your grade. The cumulative **final exam** which will be held on **December 13th**, will be worth 40% of your grade. The exams will be comprised of multiple choice, short answer, as well as essay questions and designed to test your mastery of topic terminology, concepts, and contemporary issues in government. The format and dates are subject to change at my discretion. There is a strict no make-up exam policy, which can be found in further detail below, in this document.

**Participation and Attendance:**

All students are expected to be present and engaged in course discussion. Attendance and participation accounts for 10% of your total grade. Five percent of this amount will be allocated to attendance while the other 5% will be derived from activity in class and any Blackboard

participation activities. Thus, the vast majority of this grade will be rewarded due to your active and beneficial contribution to class discussion and demonstration in class that you have read the required materials and can reflect upon them.

**Issue Analysis:**

While the course ultimately aims to educate about state politics, governance, and procedures, it is also important that each student be able to analyze and understand the current struggles and various programs and policies in each state. In accordance with this goal an analysis will be performed on one state policy or program of your choice. The paper must take an issue facing the state of Florida, and analyze it fully using the knowledge you have gained in the course and your personal research on the topic. The report should be at least three to five pages in length and demonstrate your knowledge of state politics and state processes. The report is due by **December 3rd** and should include political theory, approaches, and terms that we have learned to analyze the problem and answer all the prompts below. Further clarification regarding this project will be discussed in class later in the semester.

Example topic: State Corrections and Prisons (spending for corrections is climbing while rehabilitation is lagging in both evidence and support).

1. What is the area in which the issue occurs and what is the problem specifically?
2. What are other states doing in this area (50 state analysis and/or highlights of 'model' innovative states)?
  - 2a. What success have they had
  - 2b. What failures have they had
  - 2c. What, if any, problems arise from the Federal structure
3. What are the issues/problems in Florida?
4. What solutions have been offered or proposed in Florida, and how have they been proposed (legislation, direct democracy, etc)?
5. In your view, what should Florida be doing to improve this area?

**Tentative Class and Assignment Schedule:**

**Overview of the course:** The course will cover a wide range of topics, touching upon the many facets of State Government, Institutions, Structures, and Policies. It will begin by discussing the structure of government within the United States and the formal institutions. This includes their roles, powers, and how they relate to one another. Prior to the midterm exam students will be exposed to roles and responsibilities of individual branches as well as institutions such as elections and political party activity. Following the midterm the class will shift its focus towards local governance in its various forms as an in depth exploration of special topics.

**Week 1: Introduction and The American Condition**

August 27 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction
August 29 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 1: New Direction</i>

**Week 2: Federalism**

September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>Due: Volden: Blackboard: Federalism Vs IGR</i>
September 5 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 2: Federalism and the State</i>

**Week 3: Structure**

September 10 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 3: State Constitutions</i>
September 12 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 12: State-Local Relations</i>

**Week 4: Elections**

September 17 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 4: Citizen Participation and Elections</i>
September 19 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 5: Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Campaigns</i>

**Week 5: State Legislatures**

September 24 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 6: State Legislatures</i>
September 26 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: State and Local Direct Democracy</i>

**Week 6: State Executives: Governors**

October 1 <sup>st</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 7: Governors</i>
October 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 7 continued: Governors</i>

**Week 7: The Judiciary**

October 8 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 9: Judiciary</i>
October 10 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 9 continued: Judiciary</i>

**Week 8: Public Administration**

October 15 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 8: Budgeting and Service Delivery</i>
October 17 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Review</i>

**Week 9: Midterm and Local Government**

October 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
October 24 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 10: Types and Functions</i>

**Week 10: Local Government Continues**

October 29 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 11: Local Leadership and Governance</i>
October 31 <sup>st</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 13: Taxing and Spending</i>

**Week 11: Special Topics: Economics and Education**

November 5 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 14: Economic Development</i>
November 7 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 15: Education Policy</i>

**Week 12: Special Topics: Criminal Justice and Environment**

November 12 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 16: Criminal Justice</i>
November 14 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 18: Environmental Policy</i>

**Week 13: Special Topics: Welfare and Health Care and Morality Policy**

November 19 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Chapter 17: Social Welfare and Health Care Policy</i>
November 21 <sup>st</sup>	<i>Due: Blackboard Readings: Morality Policy</i>

**Week 14: Paper Finalization and Self-Review Week**

November 26 <sup>th</sup>	<i>No Class</i>
November 28 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Thanksgiving</i>

**Week 15: Reflection: Democracy and the States**

December 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<i>Due: Papers Due</i>
December 5 <sup>th</sup>	<i>Due: Class Synopsis and Review</i>

**Week 16: Finals Week**

December 10 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Final Exam Week</b>
December 12 <sup>th</sup>	Cumulative Final Exam

**Absences and Tardiness**

Attendance is required and expected of all students. Attendance may be taken at random at any point throughout the semester and during the class period. Any missed classes without documented excuse or prior acceptable arrangements with me will count against your final grade. Excessive tardiness will result in a reduction in your final grade as it is considered disruptive and disrespectful of your peers and me (for further clarification see classroom decorum).

**Classroom Decorum**

All students are expected to hold themselves to the utmost degree of decorum in the classroom. This means that each student is expected to be respectful and tolerant of other students and the professor. Any behavior that results in a loss of mutual respect, as determined by me, will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade. Some examples of unacceptable forms of behavior are: not respecting the speaker whether it is me or a fellow student and causing loud or noisy interruptions such as entering the classroom late or speaking in a non-productive manner.

The use of any **cellular device**, for any form of communication including texting is **prohibited**. Permission to use a laptop for the purpose of note taking must be obtained from me. If at any time the student is found or suspected of utilizing the laptop for any purposes other than note-taking the permission will be revoked and may result in the **reduction of one's final course grade**.

### **Extra-Credit Work**

Under no circumstances will extra credit work be permitted.

### **Late Work**

All assignments are to be turned in on the announced due date. Late assignments will not be accepted without legitimate or documented excuses. I retain the right to determine legitimate excuses.

### **Missed Exams**

All students are expected to be present and take an exam at the time it has been scheduled. There will not be make-up exams provided for any student who has not supplied me with a documented excuse, which I deem as acceptable, at least 24 hours prior to the exam. Failure to be present for an exam, without making the proper arrangements with me, will result in an **F** for that unit exam.

### **Breach of the Academic Honor Code**

Every student is expected to educate themselves in regards to the Academic Honor Code, published in the *Florida State University Bulletin* and *The Graduate Handbook*. Any and all suspected violations of this code, including but not limited to plagiarism, cheating, and academic misrepresentation, may be reported to the Graduate Director for university sanctions and the **offending student will receive an F** for the course.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should:

(1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact:

#### **Student Disability Resource Center**

97 Woodward Avenue, South  
108 Student Services Building  
Florida State University  
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167  
(850) 644-9566 (voice)  
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)  
[sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu)

### **Syllabus Change Policy**

The syllabus provided should be considered a guideline for the course and is subject to change at any time, for any reason, as deemed necessary by the instructor.