

State & Local Government – Spring 2021

PS 2130, Section 102

Contact Information

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Office Hours: 2–4, Monday & Wednesday
Make appointment here: [Google Calendar](#)
Meet here: [Zoom Link](#)

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course introduces students to the politics, institutions, and policy processes of sub-national governments in the United States. Beyond simply levying taxes, these governments play pivotal policy roles in health care, education, corrections, economic development, environmental protection, and welfare, to name a few. State and local governments are a permanent fixture in the lives of all people living in the United States, and their programmatic and fiscal roles have increased substantially relative to that of the federal government over the past 25 years. For this reason alone, it is useful for students to gain an intimate understanding of state and local government.

However, state and local governments are also an important venue for students to learn something about politics and policymaking that applies to governments in other places and times. By comparing the similarities and differences between state and local governments, we are better able to understand how (and if) citizens' attitudes shape the policies and political institutions that governments adopt. At the same time, we are also better able to understand how (and if) different policies and political institutions shape citizens' attitudes. This course, therefore, also teaches students how political scientists uncover and explain general principles and patterns of politics and government.

Required Texts and Materials

Smith, Kevin B. and Alan Greenblatt. 2019. Governing States and Localities. 7th Edition. Sage/CQ Press. ISBN: 9781544325422

Course Content

Each week, I will post on AsU Learn a video slideshow or two of course material. In addition to each video slideshow, I will also post a short quiz or two, each consisting of three to four short answer questions. The questions will be easy to answer provided you have watched the video lectures. These quizzes will constitute your participation grade. You will also be expected to read roughly a chapter of the course textbook each week - these chapters will provide additional coverage, clarity, and examples of concepts I cover in the video lectures. My goal is that every question on the exams will be something I have discussed in the video lectures.

Exams & Graded Activities

Exams: 60% of each student's grade is based on his or her performance on three non-cumulative exams. These exams are comprised of multiple choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank questions.

Quizzes: 30% of each student's grade is based on his or her performance and participation on weekly short answer questions on AsU Learn.

Short Essay: 10% of each student's grade is based on his or her performance on a short essay assignment. I will provide students with 3 maps detailing political, social, and/or economic characteristics of the 50 states. Each student will pick 3 states, and, from the vantage point of a party strategist, write a 1–2 page essay explaining how his or her electoral strategy for 2022 will change depending on those states and the information provided in the maps.

Course Grades

<i>Grading Scale</i>			<i>Grade Requirements</i>		
A	94-100	C	74-76	Exam 1	20%
A-	90-93	C-	70-73	Exam 2	20%
B+	87-89	D+	67-69	Exam 3	20%
B	84-86	D	64-66	Quizzes	30%
B-	80-83	D-	60-63	Short Essay	10%
C+	77-79	F	0-59		

Absence Policies

If you miss a scheduled exam, you have 24 hours after the start of the exam to provide me with documentation excusing the absence (if you would like to schedule a makeup). Failure to do this within 24 hours will result in a 0 for the exam.

Student Conduct

As a community of learners at Appalachian State University, we must create an atmosphere of honesty, fairness, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of each other. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of an Appalachian degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form and will oppose any instance of academic dishonesty. This course will follow the provisions of the Academic Integrity Code, which can be found on the Office of Student Conduct Web Site:

www.studentconduct.appstate.edu.

Statement on Student Engagement with Courses

In its mission statement, Appalachian State University aims at “providing undergraduate students a rigorous liberal education that emphasizes transferable skills and preparation for professional careers” as well as “maintaining a faculty whose members serve as excellent teachers and scholarly mentors for their students.” Such rigor means that the foremost activity of Appalachian students is an intense engagement with their courses. In practical terms, students should expect to spend two to three hours of studying for every hour of class time. Hence, a fifteen-hour academic load might reasonably require between 30 and 45 hours per week of out-of-class work.

Disability Support Services

Appalachian State University is committed to making reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Those seeking accommodations based on a substantially limiting disability must contact and register with The Office of Disability Services (ODS) at <http://www.ods.appstate.edu/> or 828-262-3056. Once registration is complete, individuals will meet with ODS staff to discuss eligibility and appropriate accommodations.

Religious Observances Policy

Faculty members are required to make reasonable accommodations for students requesting to miss class due to the observance of religious holidays. All ASU students are allowed a minimum of two absences per year for religious observances. Up to two absences for such observances will be excused, without penalty to the student, provided that the student has informed the instructor in the manner specified in the syllabus. Notice must be given by the student to the instructor before the absence occurs and no later than three weeks after the start of the semester in which the absence(s) will occur. Arrangements will be made to make up work missed by these religious observances, without penalty to the student. For the purposes of this policy, ASU defines the term “religious observance” to include religious holidays, holy days, or similar observances associated with a student’s faith that require absence from class. Faculty, at their discretion, may

include class attendance as a criterion in determining a student's final grade in the course. On the first day of class, faculty must inform students of their class attendance policy and the effect of that policy on their final grade; both policies must be clearly stated in the class syllabus.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is only a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice.

Course Schedule

Week 1. January 19 – January 22

Course Introduction: Why States?

Week 2. January 25 – January 29

Federalism: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 2

Week 3. February 1 – February 5

Elections: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 5

Week 4. February 8 – February 12

Direct Democracy: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 5

Week 5. February 15 – February 19

Political Parties: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 6

Political Parties II: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 6

Week 6. February 22 – February 26

Exam 1

Week 7. March 1 – March 5

Legislatures: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 7

Week 8. March 8 – March 12

Legislatures II: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 7

Short Essay Due March 12

Week 9. March 15 – March 19

Governors: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 8

Week 10. March 22 – March 26

Courts: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 9

Week 11. March 29 – April 2

Exam 2

Week 12. April 5 – April 9

Groups: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 6, review

Groups II: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 6, review

Week 13. April 12 – April 16

Fiscal Policy: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 4

Week 14. April 19 – April 23

Crime & Punishment: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 14

Week 15. April 26 – April 27

Health & Welfare Policy: Smith & Greenblatt., Ch. 15

Final Exams. April 30 – May 6

Final Exam