

**Syllabus for PL SC 425, Section 101**  
**Government and Politics of the American States**  
**Summer 2013**  
**MTWTF 11:10am – 12:25pm, 370 Willard Building**

**Lecturer:** Mr. Daniel J. Mallinson, Ph.D. Candidate

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**Course Description** While our attention is most often drawn to the political happenings in Washington, DC, a great deal of the policymaking that impacts our daily lives occurs in statehouses across the 50 states. Indeed, state governments legislate on issues including welfare, healthcare, social policies (e.g., gambling), education, infrastructure, and many others. Understanding how state institutions and behavior shape policy outcomes is substantively interesting, but the states also provide political scientists with leverage over bigger questions including power, representations, and responsiveness by providing a comparative context for testing how variation in institutions and political behavior relate to these broader concepts. This course will address both how the states themselves are substantively interesting, as well as how they are used to understand broader issues in political science.

**Prerequisites:** PL SC 001 Introduction to American Government

**Learning Goals and Objectives:**

- Goal 1: Students will learn how to use the states to comparatively study broader topics in political science
  - Objective 1.A: Students will be able to read and interpret scholarly articles that use the states for comparative analysis
  - Objective 1.B: Students will be able to analyze, synthesize, and report differences in state policy and their causes and effects
  - Objective 1.C: Students will be able to research state policies and formulate a policy proposal memo in an area of interest
- Goal 2: Students will learn how and why state governments differ
  - Objective 2.A: Students will be able to identify basic differences in state institutions

- Goal 3: Students will learn how state politics affect the daily lives of citizens
  - Objective 3.A: Students will be able to find, read, and evaluate news articles about state politics
  - Objective 3.B: Students will be able to compare and contrast how state governments and the federal government interact with citizens

**Methods for Learning and Teaching:** This course will contain a mix of lecture, class discussion, and student presentations. It is vital for your own comprehension of the course material that you come to class prepared to discuss the readings and any relevant happenings in the news. Exams will test your comprehension of the course material and policy memo assignments will help you develop important writing skills that have practical “on the job” application.

## Expectations

**Attendance:** Your attendance in class is always expected. Attending class will allow you to keep up with the rapid pace of a summer session course and will provide for meaningful discussion as a class. I will be taking attendance, in order to grade participation, but also as a way to get to know you. Please contact me via e-mail if you are unable to attend class. I will follow the University’s attendance policy when it comes to excused absences. See <http://www.psu.edu/ufs/policies/42-00.html#42-27>.

**Preparation and Participation:** Being a 400-level course, I expect you to read the assigned material before class and be able to discuss what you read in class. Contributing to class discussion will make the course more interesting and will enhance your understanding of the material.

**Be Flexible:** While the syllabus represents an agreement between us, I reserve the right to revise and modify it throughout the course if it is necessary to achieve our goals. Situations beyond either of our control can also emerge that require changes to the course. I will notify you of any changes made throughout the course.

**Cell Phones and Laptops:** Please be respectful of your fellow students and me by silencing your cell phone during class and limiting laptop use to only class-related activity.

**Current Events:** Politics happens in real time and the material we cover in class relates to these events. This is a great time to become and remain informed about political happenings in Pennsylvania and nationally.

**E-mail Policy:** I will work to respond to e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.

## Readings

The following book is required for the course:

Donovan, Todd, Christopher Z. Mooney, and Daniel A. Smith. 2012. *State & Local Politics: Institutions and Reform*. 3rd ed. Boston, MA: Wadsworth. ISBN: 1-111-83310-9.

There are also other required readings listed during some of the weeks. I will make these available on ANGEL. Journal articles can also be found using LionSearch.

## Grading

In order for you to keep track of where you are at with grades, and to prevent miscalculation at the end of the semester, I encourage you to keep track of your grades. Each component of your final grade will receive the following weight:

Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Policy Memo 1	10%
Policy Memo 2	20%
Briefing	10%
Participation and Attendance	10%

We will use the following grade scale:

Letter	Percent
A	94 to 100
A-	90 to 93
B+	87 to 89
B	83 to 86
B-	80 to 82
C+	76 to 79
C	70 to 75
D	60 to 69
F	59 and below

**Exams:** There will be two exams in this course. Exam material will be drawn from class discussions and the readings. The exams are intended to assess your knowledge of class content and your ability to apply relevant concepts. Each exam will have multiple choice and short answer questions. The second exam is not cumulative.

Exam	Date
Exam 1	May 24
Exam 2	June 11

**Policy Memos:** Many of your upper-level courses provide training for writing long research papers, but much professional writing is far shorter. Indeed, condensing research into short memos is a completely different, yet vitally important, skill for your future career. To this end, you will be required to write two policy memos for this class. Everyone in the class will be given a topic and material for the first memo to model how to write succinctly. You will then have your choice of topics for the second memo and will be expected to craft a well-written and researched final product. You, along with the other students studying your topic area, will brief the class on your policy recommendations. See a description of these assignments on page 12 and grading rubrics on pages 13 and 14.

**Participation:** Attending class is certainly a must regardless of the semester, but with the intense nature of a summer class, it becomes even more important to not fall behind. Also, being a 400-level course, class discussion is very important. Thus, attendance and participation will represent 10 percent of your final score. See page 11 for a description of participation grading. See page X for participation grading guidelines.

**Make-Up Grades:** You are allowed to make-up academic work only in the case of excused absences. These absences may include missing class for a University-sanctioned activity (with proper documentation), illness, religious observance, or family emergency. If you know in advance that you are going to miss class, please contact me before the absence to make arrangements for completing the work. If you are absent for an unexpected reason, please check in with me as soon as possible. You will have one week from the day of your return to class to make up a missed assignment.

## Academic Dishonesty

The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in class or take home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at [http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Academic\\_Integrity/integrity.shtml](http://www.la.psu.edu/CLA-Academic_Integrity/integrity.shtml).

## Disabilities

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services. For further information regarding policies, rights and responsibilities please visit the Office for Disability Services (ODS) Web site at: [www.equity.psu.edu/ods/](http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/). Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.

## Course Schedule

We will attempt to follow this schedule as closely as possible, but we may take more time on some concepts and less time on others. All changes to the schedule will be announced in class or via e-mail. Required course readings and due dates for exams and policy memos are listed below. Note that all class readings that cannot be found via Google Scholar or LionSearch are posted on ANGEL. They are also designated below. Knowing where to find the information you need is an important skill, so I expect you to find the journal articles for class on your own. If you have trouble, please do not hesitate to e-mail me.

The abbreviation DMS refers to the Donovan, Mooney, and Smith textbook.

### Week 1:

- May 13: Introduction to the class and each other
- May 14: Doing Political Science and Memo Writing
  - Pennings, Paul, Hans Kemen, and Jan Kleinnijenhuis. 2006. *Doing Research in Political Science*. Second Edition. Chapter 1. (**ANGEL**)
  - Reading Critically (**ANGEL**)
  - Questions to Ask When Critiquing a Study (**ANGEL**)
  - Writing a Successful Policy Memo (**ANGEL**)
- May 15: Comparing the States
  - DMS, Chapter 1
  - Gimple, James G. and Jason E. Schuknecht. 2003. “Going Inside States: The Geography of Local Political Behavior” in *Patchwork Nation: Sectionalism and Political Change in American Politics*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Pp. 15-32. (**ANGEL**)
- May 16: Federalism
  - DMS Chapter 2
- May 17: Federalism
  - Nathan, Richard P. 2006. “There Will Always Be a New Federalism.” *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 16(4): 499-510.

## Week 2:

- May 20: Participation and Elections
  - DMS, Chapter 3
  - Berinsky, Adam. 2005. “The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the United States.” *American Politics Research* 33: 471-491.
- May 21: Representation and Responsiveness
  - Erikson, Robert S., Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver. 1993. *Statehouse Democracy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4. (**ANGEL**)
  - Berkman, Michael B. and Eric Plutzer. 2005. *The Thousand Democracies*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press. Chapter 4. (**ANGEL**)
- May 22: Direct Democracy
  - DMS, Chapter 4
  - Lascher Jr., Edward L., Michael G. Hagen, and Steven A. Rochlin. 1996. “Gun Behind the Door? Ballot Initiatives, State Policies and Public Opinion.” *Journal of Politics* 58(3): 760-775.
- May 23: Wrap up, exam review, flex day
  - **Pick topic for final memo**
- May 24: **Exam 1**

### Week 3:

- May 27 — Memorial Day — No Class
- May 28: Parties
  - DMS, Chapter 5
  - Wright, Gerald C. and Brian F. Schaffner. 2002. “The Influence of Party: Evidence from the State Legislatures.” *American Political Science Review* 96 (2): 367-379.
- May 29: Interest Groups
  - **Memo 1 due in class**
  - DMS, Chapter 6
  - Rosenthal, Alan, Burdett A. Loomis, John R. Hibbing, and Karl Kurtz. 2003. “How Special are the Special Interests?” In *Republic on Trial: The Case for Representative Democracy*. Washington DC: CQ Press. Pp. 117-136. (**ANGEL**)
- May 30: State Legislatures: Chamber Characteristics and Professionalization
  - DMS, Chapter 7, Pp. 229-233, 245-253
  - Squire, Peverill. 2007. “Measuring State Legislative Professionalism: The Squire Index Revisited.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 7(2): 211-227.
- May 31: State Legislatures: Elections and Redistricting
  - DMS, Chapter 7. Pp. 233-244
  - Forgette, Richard, Andrew Garner, and John Winkle. 2009. “Do Redistricting Principles and Practices Affect U.S. State Legislative Electoral Competition?” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 9(2): 151-175.



## Week 4:

- June 3: State Legislatures: Policy Making
  - DMS, Chapter 7, Pp. 253-271
  - Jenkins, Shannon. 2008. “Party Influence on Roll Call Voting: A View from the U.S. States.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 8(3): 239-262.
- June 4: Policy Diffusion
  - Walker, Jack L. 1969. “The Diffusion of Innovations among the American States.” *The American Political Science Review* 63(3): 880-899.
  - Gray, Virginia. 1994. “Competition, Emulation, and Policy Innovation.” In *New Perspectives on American Politics*. Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson eds. Washington, DC: CQ Press. Pp. 231-248. (**ANGEL**)
  - Nicholson-Crotty, Sean P. 2009. “The Politics of Diffusion: Public Policy in the American States.” *The Journal of Politics* 71(1): 192-205.
- June 5: Governors and Bureaucracy
  - DMS, Chapter 8
  - Barrilleaux, Charles and Michael Berkman. 2003. “Do Governors Matter? Budgeting Rules and the Politics of State Policymaking.” *Political Research Quarterly* 56(4): 409-417.
- June 6: Courts
  - DMS, Chapter 9
  - Brace, Paul, Melinda Gann Hall, and Laura Langer. 2001. “Placing State Supreme Courts in State Politics.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 1(1): 81-108.
- June 7: Local Government
  - DMS, Chapters 11 and 12

## Week 5:

- June 10: Wrap up, exam review, flex day
- June 11: **Exam 2**
- June 12: Preparation Day for Group Presentations
- June 13: Education Policy
  - Group Presentation
  - DMS, Chapter 15
- June 14: Morality Policy
  - Group Presentation
  - DMS, Chapter 13

## Week 6:

- June 17: Health and Welfare Policy
  - Group Presentation
  - DMS, Chapter 14
- June 18: Environmental and Energy Policy
  - Group Presentation
  - Hays, Scott P., Michael Esler, and Carol E. Hays. 1996. “Environmental Commitment among the States: Integrating Alternative Approaches to State Environmental Policy.” *Publius* 26(2): 41-58.
- June 19: Immigration Policy
  - Group Presentation
  - Su, Rick. 2010. “The Overlooked Significance of Arizona’s New Immigration Law.” *Michigan Law Review First Impressions* 76.
- June 20: Voter Reform Policy
  - Group Presentation
  - Hershey, Marjorie Randon. 2009. “What We Know about Voter-ID Laws, Registration, and Turnout.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42(1): 87-91.
  - Barreto, Matt A., Stephen A. Nuno, and Gabriel R. Sanchez. 2009. “The Disproportionate Impact of Voter-ID Requirements on the Electorate — New Evidence from Indiana.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42(1): 111-116.
  - Hood III, M.V. and Charles S. Bullock III. 2012. “Much Ado About Nothing?: An Empirical Assessment of the Georgia Voter Identification Statute.” *State Politics & Policy Quarterly* 12(4): 394-414.
- June 21: Wrap Up
  - **Final policy memo due in class**

## Policy Memo<sup>1</sup>

The memo is the most basic means of communication within complex organizations. Writing clear, brief, accurate memos is an essential skill of any successful professional in the political and business realms. A skillfully crafted memo has many advantages, including (1) improving the readers understanding of the topic, (2) saving time by making the information available to many people at once, (3) providing the basis for securing an agreement among contending people, and (4) providing a written record that may become important in reviewing the history of decisions made within the organization.

In this course, you will write two memos. Each memo must be less than two pages, single-spaced. Exceeding this limit will result in a one letter grade deduction for the assignment.

You must submit a hard copy of each memo in class on the day that it is due. The memo should have one inch margins and 12 point font. Each policy memo must have the following information: (1) the date sent; (2) my name as the recipient; (3) your name as the person sending the memo; and (4) a subject heading that describes the main topic discussed.

You will be provided a topic for your first memo during our second class meeting and some starter research materials on the topic. You will then select the topic for your second memo and need to inform me of your selection by May 23. Finally, you will be required to brief the class on your policy recommendations during the last two weeks of class. More instructions on this will be given later.

There are three parts to each memo: a definition of the problem; a review of at least two options for dealing with the problem; and your specific recommendation (as well as the rationale supporting your recommendation). Accurately use material assigned in this course and other sources to inform and support your ideas.

Your grades will be based on meeting the requirements of each memo and upon the evaluation of content, form, and grammar. Remember that polished, persuasive writing is expected. Please attach to each memo the list of references you use to support your ideas. Feel free to use quotations, examples and data as well; just be sure to stay within the two-page limit.

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Dr. Christine Kelleher Palus

Memo Grading Rubric

Component Dimensions	Levels of Achievement			
	Inadequate	Adequate	Satisfactory	Superior
Definition of the Problem (15%)	Problem not well defined	Problem suggested, but not clear	Problem identified, but not magnitude	Magnitude of problem clearly presented
Solutions Presented (20%)	Solutions poorly defined or missing	Weak definition of solutions	Solutions simply defined	Clear presentation of contrasting solutions
Supporting Evidence (20%)	No evidence	Limited evidence	Evidence from a few sources	Evidence from multiple sources
Recommendation (30%)	No recommendation	Simple recommendation	Thorough recommendation	Recommendation that is clearly linked to evidence presented
Grammar and Readability (5%)	Poorly written	Many writing errors	Some writing errors	Few writing errors
Formatting (10%)	Two pages, single spaced, proper header			

Briefing Grading Rubric

Component Dimensions	Levels of Achievement			
	Inadequate	Adequate	Satisfactory	Superior
Solutions Presented (40%)	Unclear	Somewhat clear	Fairly clear	Very clear
Recommendations (40%)	Unsupported	Somewhat supported	Fairly supported	Clearly supported
Visual (10%)	Sloppy display	Basic display	Clear display	Sharp display
Speaking Clarity (5%)	Unclear speaking	Somewhat clear	Fairly clear	Very clear

## Participation Grading Guidelines

**A** = A student earning an A comes to nearly all classes prepared and can demonstrate superior comprehension of the material. They contribute to the class conversation, but don't dominate it. They make thoughtful contributions that advance conversation, showing interest in and respect for others views. They are demonstrably engaged in course material and content.

**B** = A student earning a B misses only a few classes, but attends having completed the readings and is able to demonstrate comprehension of the readings, perhaps lacking fully integrated views toward the material. They make thoughtful comments when called upon, show respect and interest in other students views, and occasionally contribute without prompting. This student is making a good-faith effort to participate in class, but may not have the integration of ideas of an A student or may not participate as often.

**C** = A student earning a C misses several classes, but arrives having completed the readings and able to discuss their most basic tenets. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class and gives only minimal answers when called upon. They are putting forward some effort, but appear to be uninterested in the material and do not participate much without prompting.

**D** = A student earning a D misses close to half of the classes, and when present has difficulty positively contributing. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class, and when prompted, gives responses that may be off-topic and demonstrate a lack of knowledge or preparedness. They are putting forth less than average effort in the course and may be having a negative impact on others.

**F** = A student earning an F misses over half of the classes, and when present, cannot demonstrate they have read the material or thought about the concepts. This student does not voluntarily contribute to class and does not give answers related to the question being asked when prompted. They do not appear to be interested in the content of the class and are putting forth a very minimal level of effort.