University at Albany, State University of New York

RPOS 325 (3733) and RPAD 325 (9070): The Government and Politics of New York State. Fall 2013, Thursday, 5:45 - 8:35 pm, Humanities Building, Room 129.

Frank J. Mauro, Public Service Professor and adjunct Lecturer. If you have any questions or want to schedule a time to talk, contact me by e-mail at fjmauro@albany.edu or by phone at 518-346-3122.

I. Course Overview. This course is designed to provide an introduction to the institutions and processes through which the people of New York State govern themselves. The major topics to be covered include:

-- New York State's role in the American federal system and in national politics; the constitutional (both federal and state) framework within which New York governmental and political institutions operate

-- the types of local governmental institutions that exist in New York State, their historical evolution, and the responsibilities and powers that have been delegated to them by constitution and statute

-- the evolution and current workings of New York’s unusual multi-party; the roles of the state’s major and minor political parties; and, the voting behavior and political preferences of the people of New York State's major regions

-- the structure and roles of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the New York State government, and the relationships that exist among these branches and their major component institutions.

II. Course Objectives. The instructor’s objectives are for each student to (1) develop a thorough understanding of the political and governmental institutions and processes through which New Yorkers govern themselves, (2) become familiar with the major sources of information available regarding those institutions and processes, and (3) increase his or her ability to place current developments involving those institutions and processes in theoretical, legal and historical context.

III. Course Meetings. RPOS 325/RPAD 325 will meet from 5:45 pm to 8:35 pm each Thursday evening during the Fall 2013 semester except for September 5, 2013, and November 28, 2013.
IV. Readings


C. **New York State Constitution.** The complete text of the New York Constitution is available via the website of the NYS Department of State at [http://www.dos.ny.gov/info/constitution.htm](http://www.dos.ny.gov/info/constitution.htm). UAlbany students also have access to annotated versions of the State Constitution via the “LexisNexis Academic” and “Westlaw Campus” databases available in the databases section of the University Library’s website.


E. **The United States Constitution.**


G. The website of the NYS Board of Elections [http://www.elections.ny.gov/](http://www.elections.ny.gov/) has New York State’s official “Political Calendar” and other useful and relevant information. Please become familiar with the information available on this website as early in the semester as possible.


I. A daily newspaper (of your choice) that covers New York State government and politics. For example, [www.timesunion.com](http://www.timesunion.com) or [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com).

J. Other materials distributed by the instructor in class or via e-mail.
V. Course Requirements

A. Timely completion of all weekly assignments including the completion of all required readings prior to the class at which those materials are scheduled for discussion.

B. Regular monitoring of a daily newspaper (of your choice) that covers New York State government and politics.

C. Attendance at all class meetings and active participation in class discussions on the basis of the required readings and weekly assignments.

D. Completion of the examinations to be given during the October 10th and November 21st class periods. Each of these exams will cover the reading assignments for the five class meetings preceding the date of the exam, as well as the information, concepts and materials presented in class by the instructor during those five class meetings.

E. Completion and presentation of a case study of “separation of powers” and “checks and balances” in New York State with a focus on the state budget process for a particular year.

VI. Grading

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| Attendance, class participation | 25 points
| and weekly assignments         |       |
| Exam #1 – October 10th         | 25 points |
| Exam #2 – November 21st        | 25 points |
| Case study project            | 25 points |
VII. Schedule of Topics for Reading and Class Discussion

**August 29.** Overview of the course including information related to the weekly assignments and the case study project. Overview of New York’s political system including discussion of distinctive aspects of that system: (1) New York's "strong executive" form of government; (2) New York's unusual multi-party electoral system; (3) New York’s strong leader and strong party discipline legislative system; (4) Upstate/Downstate divisions in New York State politics; and (5) New York’s heavy reliance on local governments to deliver and finance public services.

**September 12. Topics to be discussed in class:** What is the role of the states in the American federal system? The nature and roles of the federal and state constitutions. Dual sovereignty. Federal supremacy. The “Police Power.” Dillon's rule. The impact of the U.S. Constitution and federal statutes on the government and politics of New York State (e.g., the impact of the federal voting rights act on the electoral process in New York State). New York's role in national politics and the federal policy process. Relationships between New York and federal officials and institutions. The impact of federal policies on New Yorkers and their state and local governments. **Assignments for completion by the September 12th class meeting:** Read Zimmerman, Chapters 1 and 2. Read the US Constitution taking particular note of the provisions of the Constitution that deal with the powers or responsibilities of the states in the federal system; limitations on the independence of the states; and federal-state relations. Be prepared to discuss those provisions in class. Be prepared to make a brief presentation on the primary election that you were assigned to monitor.

**September 19. Topics to be discussed in class:** State-local relations in New York State. The emergence and evolution of home rule in New York State. The state aid /state mandates trade-off. Providing and financing constitutionally required public services (such as elementary and secondary education) through local governments. The local government system in New York State. The special case of New York City. Counties, cities, towns, villages and special districts outside New York City. **Assignments for completion by the September 19th class meeting:** Read Zimmerman, Chapter 3. Read Article IX of the New York State Constitution. Read chapters IV through IX of the Local Government Handbook.
September 26. Topics to be discussed in class: The structure and content of the New York State Constitution. New York's state constitution in comparative context. Amending and revising the New York State constitution, including the roles of conventions, commissions and the legislature in this process. Selecting delegates to a constitutional convention. The role of the electorate in calling conventions and in adopting (and rejecting) constitutional amendments. 

Assignments for completion by the September 26th class meeting: Read Zimmerman, Chapter 4. Skim the entire New York State Constitution and carefully read Article XIX of the New York State Constitution. Be prepared to make a brief presentation on the aspect of the proposed constitutional amendment that you were assigned to cover.

October 3. Topics to be discussed in class: Political parties, elections and interest groups. New York's multi-party electoral system. New York State's party system in action: the nomination process including the circulation of party designating petitions and New York's system of "closed" primary elections; the Wilson-Pakula law; the "opportunity to ballot" concept; types of minor parties and cross-endorsements. The structure and roles of political parties in New York State. Elections and election administration in New York State including the constitutional and statutory framework, and recent practice. 

Assignments for completion by the October 3rd class meeting: Read Zimmerman, Chapter 5. Read Article II of the New York State Constitution. Read the NYS Board of Elections' 2012 and 2013 Political Calendars. Read the US Supreme Court's decision in the Timmons case.

October 10. EXAM #1. Review class notes and assignments for the August 26th through October 3rd classes in preparation for this exam.

October 17. Topics to be discussed in class: The New York State Legislature and the legislative process. The structure and politics of the NYS legislature; The party caucuses as the backbone of the New York legislative system; an unevenly developed committee system; New York legislators as generalists compared to Congress' specialists; Redistricting as a key link between the political and governmental processes; legislative oversight of, and interaction with, executive branch agencies. Discussion of the upcoming (November 3rd) general election. Assignments for completion by the October 17th class meeting: Read Zimmerman, Chapter 6, Article III of the New York State Constitution, and Lane, “Albany’s Travesty of Democracy.”
October 24. Topics to be discussed in class: The Governor. New York State's "strong executive" form of government. The Governor as political leader, chief executive officer and chief legislator. Gubernatorial elections. **Assignments for completion by the October 24**th **class meeting:** Read Zimmerman, Chapter 7, Read Article IV of the New York State Constitution.

October 31. **Topics to be discussed in class:** The executive branch, the Executive Department and the Executive Chamber. The state agency structure and the work of state agencies. The civil service system. The rulemaking process and the State Administrative Procedures Act. The organization and operations of public authorities. **Assignments for completion by the October 31**st **class meeting:** Prior to this class, read Zimmerman Chapter 8; and Articles 5 and 13 of the State Constitution. Submit short paper on the executive branch agency you were assigned to cover and be prepared to discuss in class.

November 7. **Topics to be discussed in class:** The structure and role of the state and federal courts in New York State. Judicial selection in New York State. **Assignments for completion by the November 7**th **class meeting:** Prior to this class, read Zimmerman Chapter 9; and, Article 6 of the State Constitution.

November 14. **Topics to be discussed in class:** Financing the State. The substance: state and local revenues, expenditures, and borrowing. The financial management functions: budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, auditing. The politics of the budgetary process. The relative powers of the governor and the legislature in the budgetary process. What "separation of powers issues" are settled and which are not? How are the formal powers of the NYS Governor relative to the NYS Legislature greater than the powers of the U. S. President relative to the U. S. Congress? **Assignments for completion by the November 14**th **class meeting:** Prior to this class, read Zimmerman Chapter 10; the first eight sections of Article 7 of the State Constitution.

November 21. EXAM #2. Review class notes and assignments for the October 17**th through November 14**th classes in preparation for this exam

December 5 and December 12: Presentations of case study projects
Case Study Assignment

Separation of Powers, Checks and Balances, and Executive-Legislative Relations in the New York State Budget Process

For this case study assignment you will examine the interactions between the Governor and the Legislature in the preparation, negotiation, adoption and implementation of a state budget for a particular state fiscal year. The budget powers of New York’s Governor and of the state’s Legislature, relative to each other, and the ways in which those powers are utilized by different officials and in different years, are essential to understanding the nature of executive-legislative relations in the Empire State.

Step 1. By September 19 class. Make two (2) photocopies (one to mark up and one to submit) of the entry for "New York State - Finances - Budgets and Budgeting" in the bound volume of the New York Times Index for the first year of the fiscal year that you are examining (e.g., if you are examining the interactions between the Governor and the Legislature in regard to the 1995-96 state budget, you would start with the New York Times Index for 1995). The bound volumes of the Times Index are available in the reference section of the University at Albany's Main Library. The "Call Number" for the bound volumes is Al 21 N453.

Step 2. Read, re-read and mark-up the Index entry for "New York State - Finances - Budgets and Budgeting" for the year you are studying. This should give you a good feel for the dynamics, issues and actors in that year's budget process.

Step 3. By the October 3 class. From the Index entry for "New York State - Finances – Budgets and Budgeting," prepare a preliminary chronological time line of the key developments in that year's budget process. This will help you in organizing and writing up your case study. It will also help you in deciding which articles to read. Keep a copy for yourself.

Step 4. By the October 17 class. From the Index entry for "New York State - Finances - Budgets and Budgeting," make a list of the government officials who played key roles in that year's budget process. This will also help you in organizing and writing up your case study. Keep a copy for yourself.

Step 5. By the October 24 Make lists of the major differences (substantive, technical, political, legal) that emerged during that year's
budget process between and the Governor and one or more of the legislative leaders and/or conferences. Also identify any positions taken by the State Comptroller (an independently elected official in New York State), as they support or refute positions taken by the Governor and one or more of the legislative leaders and/or conferences. Keep a copy for yourself.

Step 6. As soon as possible but no later than the October 24 class. Decide which articles cited in the Index entry are worth reading in their entirety and using in writing up your case study. Obtain copies of those articles. Read them carefully. (Full text articles for June 1, 1980 and thereafter can be obtained through the “Lexis/Nexis Academic” database available through the University Library website. Full text articles for earlier years can be obtained through the “Proquest Historical Newspapers - The New York Times” database also available through the University Library website.)

Step 7. By the November 14 class, prepare a draft of your case study based on the information that you have collected, analyzed and organized in accordance with steps 1 through 6. If you provide me with a copy of your draft by the November 7th class, I will return it to you with comments at the November 21st class. If you provide me with a copy of your draft by an earlier class, I will return it to you with comments at the subsequent class.

Step 8. By the December 5th class, be prepared to present your case study in class on either December 5 or December 12.

Step 9. By December 19, submit you're a final copy of your case study with the Index entry for your year and with a complete list of the articles that you utilized in writing your case study.