Syllabus for RPOS321/RPAD321: State and Local Government

Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, University at Albany, SUNY

RPOS 321 (10494) and RPAD 321 (10495): State & Local Government, Spring 2015, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:15 pm to 5:35 pm, Room HU 132 (Humanities Building)

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Office hours are by appointment at the Political Science Department Contact Office in Room 016 of the Humanities Building. To schedule an appointment, please send me an e-mail message with possible dates and times and I will get back to you to confirm a specific time. Also feel free to contact me by e-mail with any questions you may have regarding course administrative matters or the material being covered.

If you do not receive a response to an e-mail message in a reasonable amount of time, call me at home at 518-346-3122. If no one answers, leave a message on the voice mail and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

I. Course Description. This course will cover the role of state and local governments in the American federal system with an emphasis on

• The constitutional division of powers between the federal government and the state governments, and the evolution of that relationship over time;
• The systems of local government established by each of the 50 states and the evolution of those systems over time;
• The variations that exist among the 50 states in terms of the degrees of home rule authority granted by the states to their different types of local governments;
• The main state government institutions and their roles in (a) the making and implementation of public policy, and (b) the reconciliation of conflicts and demands among and between competing interests;
• The role of the states (and local governments in some states) in the operation of major federally-defined but jointly-financed and state-administered programs such as Medicaid and more recently the Affordable Care Act.

This is a course in state and local government in the United States generally but we will use issues, concerns and proposals that have arisen in New York State as the basis for comparative analysis. Each student will be assigned a state, other than New York, to monitor and to periodically report on during class discussions. Each student will also be responsible for completing a term paper that deals with one or more questions related to state and/or local governments in one or more states. Topics for the term papers must be worked out with the instructor on or before February 17. See section VII of this syllabus for more information on the term paper and related assignments.
II. Course Objectives. The instructor's objectives are for each participating student to

1. Develop a good understanding of the political and governmental institutions and processes through which the residents of the 50 states govern themselves,
2. Become familiar with the major sources of information that are available regarding the workings of state and local governmental institutions and processes, and
3. Be able to understand and explain current developments involving state and local governmental institutions and processes in their proper theoretical and historical context.

III. Class Meetings and Examinations. From Tuesday, January 22, 2015, through Tuesday, May 5, 2015, this class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 4:15 pm to 5:35 pm EXCEPT there will be no class meetings during the week of March 15, 2005. There will be three exams:

• An in-class exam on Thursday, February 19, 2015
• An in-class exam on Thursday, April 1, 2015
• A final exam which, pursuant to the final exam schedule prepared by the Registrar http://www.albany.edu/registrar/registrar_assets/Spring_2015_Final_Examination_Schedule.pdf will be held on Tuesday, May 12, 2015 from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm

IV. Course Requirements

A. Completion of all assignments on a timely basis INCLUDING completion of all assigned readings prior to the class at which those readings are scheduled for discussion. Please check the course Blackboard site on a regular basis for course readings.

B. Monitoring on a regular basis
   1. A newspaper (or comparable news service) available online that covers state and local government developments in New York on a regular basis
   2. A newspaper (or a comparable news service) available online that covers state and local government developments in your assigned state on a regular basis

C. Participation in class discussions on the basis of your reading about your assigned state, your research related to your term paper, and items A and B above.

V. Prerequisites. An understanding of the basic elements of American democracy (including the concepts of separation of powers and checks and balances) is critical to success in this class.

VI. Academic Integrity. Every student is responsible for becoming familiar with and following the University at Albany’s “Standards of Academic Integrity.” These standards are available for review at http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html. Ignorance of the standards, unintentional error, or personal or academic pressures are not acceptable reasons for violation of the University’s academic integrity standards.

VII. Medical Excuse Policy. See http://www.albany.edu/health_center/medicalexcuse.shtml
VIII. Grading

| Term Paper | 2% for selection of topic on time; 4% for submission of a reasonably detailed outline and a useful preliminary bibliography on time; and 14% for the quality and timeliness of final paper. | 20% |
| Attendance, class participation and weekly assignments | 20% |
| Exam #1 (Thursday, February 19 in class) | 20% |
| Exam #2 (Thursday, April 2 in class) | 20% |
| Final Exam (Tuesday, May 12, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm) | 20% |

IX. Reading Materials. Three books (listed below) have been ordered for purchase at either (a) the University Bookstore on the uptown campus, or (b) Mary Jane Books (215 Western Avenue at the corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street) near the downtown campus. In addition to the three books listed above, copies of other readings (or links to electronic versions of other readings) will be distributed in class and/or via e-mail and/or via the Blackboard site for this course.


X. Schedule of Class Discussion Topics and Reading and Research Assignments (Check Blackboard site weekly for revisions)

**January 22**: Introduction
- Course Requirements
- Assignment of states for monitoring
- Overview of federal-state relations and state-local relations, and the differences between the two
- Overview of the concepts of “separation of powers” and “checks and balances”
- Discussion of bicameralism in America vs. bicameralism elsewhere
- Overview of regional variations in local government in America
January 27 and 29: Federal-State Relations
Be prepared to discuss Chapters 1 through 4 of Zimmerman, Contemporary American Federalism; and the U. S. Constitution.

- The role of the states in the federal system
- Dual sovereignty but federal supremacy
- The Tenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution and the “Police Power”
- The expansion of the federal role and federal power over time
- The direct election of US Senators
- The Voting Rights Act and its interpretation
- The states in national politics (party nominations of presidential candidates; the Electoral College; the National Popular Vote (NPV) movement)
- The process for amending the US Constitution with a focus on the role of the states in this process

February 3 and 5: State Constitutions
Be prepared to discuss Chapter 9 of Zimmerman, Contemporary American Federalism. Read or review, and be prepared to discuss in class, “State Constitutions and the Federal System” and the other materials in the “State Constitutions” folder on the Blackboard site for other materials to read or review. During the February 3rd class, I will compare the processes for amending the U.S. and New York State constitutions. For the February 5th class, you should be ready to discuss how the process for amending the constitution of your assigned state compares to the processes for amending U.S. and New York State constitutions

- The nature of state constitutions
- How state constitutions are like the U.S. constitution
- How state constitutions are unlike the U.S. constitution
- Amending and revising state constitutions, including the roles of conventions, commissions and the legislatures
- Selecting delegates to state constitutional conventions
- The role of the electorate in calling state constitutional conventions and in adopting (and rejecting) constitutional amendments.

February 10 and 12: Governors, Gubernatorial Elections, and the States’ Executive Branches
Read or review, and be prepared to discuss in class, “2014 Gubernatorial Election Analysis,” "Gubernatorial Elections, Campaigns and Winning Governors," and the other materials in the folder on “The Governor and the Executive Branch” on the Blackboard site. For the February 12 class, be prepared to discuss the 2015 “state of the state” message (or similar post-election statements) by the governor of your assigned state.

- Gubernatorial powers and gubernatorial roles (e. g., the Governor as political leader, chief executive, chief legislator, etc.)
- Gubernatorial elections
- The state agency structure and the work of state agencies
  - The reform model: A relatively small number of functionally-defined departments with all or virtually all department heads appointed by the Governor
  - The unreformed model: A relatively large number of executive branch departments and agencies with some department and agency heads independently elected or appointed by boards rather than being appointed by the Governor
**February 17:** Review for Exam #1

**February 19:** Exam #1

**February 24 and 26:** The State Legislatures, Legislative Elections and Parties in the Legislature
Read or review, and be prepared to discuss in class, "75 Years of Institutional Change in State Legislatures," “Legislatures’ Adaptation to Term Limits,” and the other materials in the folder on “The State Legislatures” on the Blackboard site.

- Terms
- Incumbency advantages and re-election rates
- Term limits
- The increasing importance of legislative party campaign committees
- Trends in the party make-up of legislative chambers
- The relative power of legislative leaders
- Committee systems
- Redistricting
- Bicameralism in operation
- Legislative oversight

**March 3 and 5:** State Judicial Systems
Be prepared to discuss Chapter 5 of Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism*. Read or review, and be prepared to discuss in class, "The Roles and Structures of State Courts,” “Role of Home State Senators in the Selection of Lower Federal Court Judges,” and the other materials in the “State Judicial Systems” folder on the Blackboard site.

- The structure and role of the state court system
- Judicial selection – appointment, election, hybrid systems (e.g., the Missouri Plan)
- Trial courts and appellate courts
- Criminal courts and civil courts

**March 10 and 12:** Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations
Be prepared to discuss Chapter 6 of Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism*, Chapters 3, 4 and 6 of Zimmerman, *State-Local Governmental Interactions*, and Chapter 4 of Frug and Barron, *City Bound: How States Stifle Urban Innovation*. Check the “Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations” folder on the Blackboard site for other materials to read or review for these classes.

- The growth in the number of federal grant-in-aid programs
- Categorical Grants, Block Grants, and Revenue Sharing
- Policy linkages (e.g., 55 MPH speed limit; Drinking age)
- The State role in the management and partial financing of major federal initiatives
- Income Maintenance programs (from AFDC, OAA, AB, and AD to TANF and SSI)
- Health Care programs (from Medicare and Medicaid to the Affordable Care Act)

**March 17 and 19:** No classes
March 24 and 26: State-Local Relations
Be prepared to discuss Chapter 8 of Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism*, Chapters 1, 2, 5 and 7 of Zimmerman, *State-Local Governmental Interactions*, and Part 1 and Chapter 3 of Frug and Barron, *City Bound: How States Stifle Urban Innovation*. Check the “State-Local Relations” folder on the Blackboard site for other materials to read or review for these classes. For the March 26 class, be prepared to discuss the “discretionary authority” granted to local governments of different types in your assigned state.

- Dillon’s Rule
- The “Home Rule” movement
- State mandates
- State “control boards” and other state responses to local fiscal crises

March 31: Review for Exam #2

April 2: Exam #2

April 7, 9 and 14: The 50 States’ Local Government Systems
Read or review, and be prepared to discuss in class, the materials in the “Local Governments” folder on the Blackboard site. For the April 14 class, be prepared to discuss the types of local governments that have been created in your assigned state and the roles and responsibilities of those different types of local governments.

- Regional variations in the states’ local government systems
  - Importance of counties in the South, Southwest and the West
  - Role of townships (called towns in New England and New York) in the Northeast and Mid-West
- Special cases: City-County Consolidation (NYC, Indianapolis, Louisville); City-County Separation (Virginia, Baltimore, St. Louis)
- Municipalities: cities, towns (as small concentrations of population unlike the entities called towns in New York and New England which are the equivalent of the townships in New Jersey and the Midwest), villages, and boroughs
- Special districts and other special-purpose governments
- Forms of local government (e.g., mayor-council; council-manager; township and county governments without executives, etc.)

April 16, 21 and 23: The States and the Cities
Be prepared to discuss Frug and Barron, *City Bound: How States Stifle Urban Innovation*

April 28 and 30: Governing Public Education
Be prepared to discuss Chapter 6 of Frug and Barron, *City Bound: How States Stifle Urban Innovation*. Check the “Public Education” folder on the Blackboard site for other materials to read and/or review. For the April 30th class, be ready to discuss how education is governed at the state and local level in your assigned state.

- Governing elementary and secondary education at the state and local level
- Governing higher education at the state level

May 5: Review for Final Exam

May 12: Final Exam
XI. Term Papers

This assignment involves the preparation and submission of three deliverables (as discussed in the timeline below) related to the completion of a well-researched, well-organized, well-written, and well-edited term paper dealing with one or more issues or questions related to some aspect of state and/or local government in one or more states.

Topics for the term papers must be worked out with the instructor as part of the timeline discussed below.

The three deliverables together are worth 20 percent of the grade for the course: 2% for the submission and finalization of a topic for the paper; 4% for the submission of a reasonably detailed outline and a useful preliminary bibliography on time; and 14% for the quality and timeliness of final paper.

Timeline

1. On or before Friday, February 6, 2015, send me (by e-mail) a suggested topic that you would like to research for your term paper. You should also feel free to talk with me about your proposed topic both before and after submitting this e-mail message. Please correspond with me by e-mail as soon as possible if you have questions regarding any particular topic or topics that you are considering for this research project.
2. By or before the end of the day on Tuesday, February 17, 2015, we should have a final agreement of the topic for your term paper.
3. The second deliverable for this assignment involves the submission, by e-mail, by the end of the day on Friday, March 5, 2015, of an outline and a preliminary bibliography for your paper. You can also submit (for my comments and suggestions) revisions of the outline and/or of your preliminary bibliography as you work on the paper during March and April.
4. The third and final deliverable for this assignment involves the submission, by e-mail, by the end of the day on Friday, May 15, 2015, of your completed term paper with your final bibliography. This paper (not counting the bibliography) should be in the range of 6 to 12 pages, double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman font.

All of the deliverables submitted for this assignment should be saved as Word documents (or as documents that can be opened in Word) with a .doc suffix (or as Rich Text Format documents with an .rtf suffix). Those documents should each be saved with a name that includes your last name, and should be submitted on or before their respective due dates as attachments to e-mail messages. The pages in your second and fourth deliverables should be numbered. The fourth deliverable (the completed term paper) should have sources cited using an established system of footnotes or endnotes or in-text citations. All material quoted exactly from a source should be in quotation marks with the source cited. Material that is paraphrased from a source or sources and which is not part of your own knowledge should not be in quotation marks but the source or sources that you relied on for the information being presented should be cited.