The Government and Politics of New York State  
RPOS 325 (10233) and RPAD 325 (10234)  
University at Albany, State University of New York  
Spring 2016, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:15 to 5:35 pm  
Humanities Building, Room 133.  
Instructor: Frank J. Mauro, Public Service Professor and adjunct Lecturer  

If you have any questions or want to schedule a time to talk at the Political Science Department Contact Office (Humanities 016), please e-mail me at fjmauro@albany.edu. If you do not receive a response to your e-mail in a reasonable amount of time, please contact me by telephone at 518-346-3122.

I. Course Overview. This course provides an introduction to the institutions and processes through which the people of New York State govern themselves. The major topics to be covered include:
   a. The federal and state constitutional frameworks within which New York's governmental and political institutions operate
   b. The types of local governments that exist in New York State and the powers and duties that have been assigned to them.
   c. The structure, roles and functions of the executive, legislative and judicial branches of the New York State government and their major component institutions
   d. The workings of New York's unusual multi-party system.

II. Course Objectives. The instructor's objectives are for each student
   a. To demonstrate a thorough understanding of the political and governmental institutions and processes through which New Yorkers govern themselves
   b. To be able to access and utilize the major sources of information available regarding those institutions and processes
   c. To demonstrate the ability to explain current developments involving those institutions and processes in theoretical, legal and historical context.

III. Examinations. There will be two exams: (a) a mid-term exam during the regular class period on Thursday, March 10; and (b) a 2-hour final exam in our regular classroom from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm on Friday, May 6. The final exam will be cumulative but with an emphasis on the material covered after the mid-term exam.

IV. Reading assignments for each week are listed in the “Schedule of Assignments and Topics for Class Discussion” in Section IX of this syllabus.
a. The main textbook for the course (Zimmerman, Joseph F., *The Government and Politics of New York State*, Second Edition, State University of New York Press, 2008, ISBN: 978-0-7914-7436-5) is available for purchase at (a) the on-campus University Bookstore and (b) Mary Jane Books (215 Western Avenue at the corner of Western Avenue and Quail Street) near the downtown campus.

b. A daily newspaper (such as the New York Times or the Albany Times Union) that covers New York State government and politics or an online news service (such as POLITICO New York at [www.capitalnewyork.com/](http://www.capitalnewyork.com/)) that provides similar daily coverage.

c. Copies and/or links to copies, of all other assigned readings will be available via the Blackboard site for this course. Please check the course Blackboard site on a regular basis for updates.

V. **Writing Assignments** include three comment/question sheets on the course readings and three short papers as follows:

a. Prior to at least one of the Tuesdays in February, prepare and submit a comment/question sheet on the readings for that week. Instructions for preparing comment/question sheets will be distributed. 2 Points

b. Prior to at least one of the Tuesdays in March (other than March 15), prepare and submit a comment/question sheet on the readings for that week. 2 points

c. Prior to at least one of the Tuesdays in April (other than April 26), prepare and submit a comment/question sheet on the readings for that week. 2 points

d. By February 29, prepare and submit a 3 to 5 page paper on the politics of the New York State budget process in a selected year. Years will be assigned (and instructions for these papers will be distributed) at or before the January 28 class. 8 points

e. By March 31, prepare and submit a 3 to 5 page paper comparing the views of Jeffrey Stonecash and Amy Widestrom with the views of Eric Lane regarding New York State’s “strong leader” legislative system. 8 points

f. By April 28, prepare and submit a 3 to 5 page paper on a selected New York State Governor, Legislative Leader or Court of Appeals Judge. Assignments for this paper (and instructions for this paper) will be distributed at or before the February 16 class. 8 points

VI. **Presentations.** Time will be reserved at each class meeting for the presentation of comments and questions on news articles about developments relating to New York State government and politics. Presentations on student papers will be made during the March 1 and 2, and April 26 and 28 classes.
VII. **Grading** for this course will be on an A through E grading scale including pluses and minuses with A for Excellent, B for Good, C for Fair, D for Poor, and E for Failure. The grade of E is a failing grade and cannot be used to fulfill graduation requirements.

   a. The relative weight of the various course requirements is
      1. Writing Assignments – 30 points (see Section V for breakdown)
      2. Mid-term exam (March 10) – 25 points
      3. Final exam (May 6) – 25 points
      4. Current Development Presentations – 10 points
      5. Student Paper Presentations – 10 points

   b. For the writing assignments, the maximum number of points that can be awarded for assignments submitted after they are due will be reduced by five percent per day.

VIII. **Academic Integrity.** Every student is responsible for following the University’s standards of academic integrity which are posted at: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html). Ignorance of the standards, unintentional error, and/or personal or academic pressures are not acceptable reasons for violation of these standards. Please take the time to review the standards.

IX. **Schedule of Assignments and Topics for Class Discussion**

   **January 21: Course Overview and Introduction to NYS Government & Politics**
   
   • Distinctive Aspects of New York Government and Politics
     o New York's "strong executive" form of government
     o New York's multi-party electoral system
     o New York’s “strong leader” legislative system
     o Upstate/Downstate divisions in New York State politics
     o New York’s heavy reliance on local governments to deliver and finance public services.
   
   • New York in National Politics

   **January 26 and 28: New York State in the American Federal System**
   
   • The nature and roles of the federal and state constitutions
   • Dual sovereignty with federal supremacy; The “Police Power”
   • New York’s place in national politics
   • Relationships between New York and federal officials and institutions

   READ Zimmerman, Chapter 2; and the United States Constitution
February 2 and 4: The New York State Constitution
- The structure and substance of the New York State Constitution
- The processes available for amending and revising the New York State constitution, including the roles of conventions, commissions and the legislature
- Selecting delegates to a constitutional convention
- The role of the electorate in calling conventions and in adopting (and rejecting) constitutional amendments.

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 4; New York State Constitution, Articles I and XIX; and Compendium of Compendium of Provisions (Over Time) for Amending and Revising the New York State Constitution; and SKIM the entire New York State Constitution.

February 9 and 11: The Fiscal Context and Financing the State
- 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

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 10; New York State Constitution, Articles VII and XVI, and selected excerpts from New York State’s 2016-17 Executive Budget documents

February 16 and 18: The Social and Economic Context
- Demographic Trends
- Economic Trends – Employment, Unemployment, Income Levels and Income Distribution, Poverty
- State Government and the Economy

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 1; Poverty in Upstate New York Cities - Social and Educational Impacts; New York State Employment Trends; and selected excerpts from New York State’s 2016-17 Executive Budget documents

February 23 and 25: The Legislature and the Legislative Process
- The structure and politics of the NYS legislature
- The party conferences as the backbone of the New York legislative system
- The New York Legislature’s “strong leader” system
- Legislative oversight of the executive branch agencies.

READ: Zimmerman, Chapter 6; New York State Constitution, Article III and Section 4 of Article XIII; Eric Lane, “Albany’s Travesty of Democracy;” Jeffrey Stonecash and Amy Widestrom, “The Legislature, Parties and Resolving Conflict;" and other materials in the Blackboard folder on this topic
March 1 and 2: Student presentations on the politics of the New York State budget process in a selected year

March 8: Review for Mid-Term Exam (and continuation of presentations if needed)

March 10: Mid-Term Exam

March 22 and 24: Political Parties and Elections in New York State
- New York’s multi-party electoral system (types of minor parties; securing and maintaining “official” party status; fusion a/k/a cross endorsement)
- The nomination process including the circulation of party designating petitions and New York’s system of "closed" primary elections
- The Wilson-Pakula law; and the "opportunity to ballot" concept
- Election administration

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 5; New York State Constitution, Article II, Section 1 of Article I and Section 1 of Article XIII; the Introduction to “New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism - Redrawing Party Lines;” and other materials in the Blackboard folder on this topic

March 29 and 31: The Governor and the Executive Brach – Part 1
- New York State's "strong executive" form of government
- The Governor as political leader, chief executive officer and chief legislator
- Gubernatorial elections.

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 7; New York State Constitution, Article IV; “The Executive and the Environment: A Look at the Last Five Governors in New York;” and other materials to be distributed

April 5 and 7: The Governor and the Executive Branch – Part 2
- 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.

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 8; New York State Constitution, Articles V and XIII; and other materials to be distributed

April 12 and 14: The Courts
- The structure and role of the state and federal courts in New York State
- Judicial selection

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 9; New York State Constitution, Article VI and selected sections of Article I; and other materials in the Blackboard folder on this topic
April 19 and 21: Local Government and State-Local Relations
- New York’s heavy reliance on local governments to deliver and finance public services
- New York’s General Purpose Local Governments (counties, cities, towns, villages) and its Special Purpose Local Governments (school districts, etc.)
- The emergence and evolution of home rule in New York State
- The state aid /state mandates trade-off
READ Zimmerman, Chapter 3; New York State Local Government Handbook, Chapters 4 through 9; and New York State Constitution, Articles IX and XI

April 26 and 28: Student Presentations on New York State Governors, Legislative Leaders and Court of Appeals Judges

May 3: Review for Final Exam (and continuation of presentations if necessary)

Friday, May 6, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm – Final Exam (In Regular Class Room But Not At Regular Class Meeting Time)