State and Local Politics  
RPOS 321/RPAD 321  
University at Albany, SUNY  
Political Science Department  

Spring 2019  
Professor Timothy Weaver  

Building & Room: HU 020  
Meeting day and time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:45am-1:05pm  

NOTE: This is a preliminary syllabus and is subject to change  

Contact Details: tweaver@albany.edu  

Office Hours: Thursdays 2pm-4pm  

Course Description  
This course focuses on the role of state and local governments in the American federal system; the roles and responsibilities of governors, legislatures, and courts in policy-making and implementation; the organization, functions, and jurisdiction of local governments; and the interaction of political parties and interest groups with formal institutions and processes. Special attention will be paid to state-level variation in: mass incarceration, economic policy, and approaches to the legalization of marijuana. We will also consider how cities and states can pursue alternatives to the path set by the federal government on environmental and social policy.  

Course Objectives  
• To enable students to develop a clear understanding of the distribution of power through the federal system.  
• To familiarize students with the ways federalism works both to limit states’ powers and to enable states to experiment with policy and citizenship rights.  
• To provide students with a wide variety of examples of state and local variation across a range of policy domains.  
• To give students concrete case studies of urban-level efforts to confront some of the most pressing challenges of our time—economic inequality, mass incarceration, and climate change.  
• To encourage students to develop their expertise in regarding specific political challenges in particular states and their presentational skills.
**Academic dishonesty**

The University at Albany takes academic dishonesty extremely seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the University’s policies in this regard. I recommend you watch this video on plagiarism that will help you avoid it: [http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1](http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1)

Often students leave themselves open to the charge of academic dishonesty because they fail to provide proper citations in their written work. Please be sure to always remember the following: if they are not your words, you must use quotation marks and citations; if it is not your idea, you must cite the source from which the idea came.

**Course requirements**

**Attendance:** In order to do well in this class regular attendance is crucial. If you must miss class you will be expected to provide a doctor’s note or do so for exceptional circumstances.

Absence due to religious observance. New York State Education Law (Section 224-a) – Campuses are required to excuse, without penalty, individual students absent because of religious beliefs, and to provide equivalent opportunities for make-up examinations, study, or work requirements missed because of such absences. Faculty should work directly with students to accommodate religious observances. Students should notify the instructor of record in a timely manner.

This course will combine lectures and in-class discussion. Therefore, it is essential that you participate meaningfully in class discussion. This means that you will come to class having read and thought carefully about the reading material assigned. You will be assessed according to the quality of your participation in class, in a presentation, in a mid-term exam, and in a final exam.

**Class presentation:** In the second week of classes, students will be assigned a state to monitor and a week in which they will make an in-class presentation relating to the theme of the week. The presentations are to be 10 minutes long and should draw on research from news sources or relevant magazines, such as [governing.com](http://governing.com). The goal is to connect the week’s theme with a recent state- (or city-) level development.

Your grade breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions for the final exam will be distributed on May 7.

Students will be expected to meet all deadlines. Extensions will only be granted in cases of medical or personal emergency.

**Grading**
The grading scale will be as follows:

A= 93-100, A- = 90-92, B+ = 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82, C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72,

If you feel you have been awarded an unfair grade, you may contest it. However, if you want to do so, it must be done in writing and no sooner than 48 hours after you have received the grade. In your written complaint you need to provide a specific account of what in particular you are concerned about.

**Accommodations**

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of the Disability Resource Center (Campus Center 130, 518-442-5490, DRC@albany.edu). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.

**Readings**

The following required books are available for purchase at university bookstore:


The other readings will be on Blackboard.

**Course schedule & reading assignments**

**Week 1: Introduction**

Thursday, January 24

Introduction to the course.

**Week 2: & National-State Relations & The Historical Development of the Federal System**
Tuesday, January 29: National-State Relations

Reading: Zimmerman, Contemporary American Federalism, Chapter 1
- What is federalism?
- What are its key advantages and disadvantages?
- Dual Federalism vs Cooperative Federalism
- How has federalism evolved?

Thursday, January 31—Articles of Confederation, the Constitutional Convention & Ratification

Reading: Zimmerman, Contemporary American Federalism, Chapter 2
- What were the parallels between the early US system and British political institutions?
- What was new?
- What were the limitations of the Articles of Confederation that the Constitutional Convention sought to remedy?
- Who opposed the Constitution and why?

Presentations: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas

Week 3: The Constitution & Positive Rights in the States

Tuesday, February 5— The Constitution

Reading: Zimmerman, Contemporary American Federalism, Chapter 3
- What powers does the U.S. constitution grant to the states?
- How has this shifted over time?
- Whose interests have been served/harmed by the expansion of federal authority?

Presentations: California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware

Thursday, February 7—Positive Rights in the states


Week 4: Congressional Preemption & the Judiciary

Tuesday, February 12—Congressional Preemption

Reading: Zimmerman, Contemporary American Federalism, Chapter 4
- What is “Congressional preemption”?
• How has the incidence of preemption changed in the last few decades?
• So what?

Thursday, February 14—Federalism and the Judiciary

Reading: Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism*, Chapter 5

• What is dual federalism? And what is its history?
• How did the “Warren Court’s” transformation in constitutional interpretation affect the states? How did states respond?
• What effect did the Voting Rights Act have on the states?

Presentations: Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho

**Week 5: Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations & Interstate Relations**

Tuesday, February 19—Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations

Reading: Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism*, Chapter 6

• What is the federal grants-in-aid system?
• Why has it proved controversial?
• In what sense does the federal government use fiscal policy to “coerce” the states?

Thursday, February 21—Interstate Relations

Reading: Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism*, Chapter 7

• What are the key controversies that have emerged among the states?
• What compacts have states forged?
• What is the history of interstate rendition?

Presentations: Massachusetts, Michigan, and Minnesota

**Week 6: the Centralization of Power & Federal Urban Policy**

Tuesday, February 26—Power Centralization

Reading: Zimmerman, *Contemporary American Federalism*, Chapter 9

• What are the advantage and disadvantages of the American federal system?
• What is Zimmerman’s theory of US federalism?

Thursday February 28—Federal Urban Policy

- In what ways has federal urban policy changed over time?
- How have these shifts reflected ideological developments at the national level?

Presentations: Mississippi, Missouri, and Illinois

**Week 7: City Bound I**

Tuesday, March 5—City Structures


Thursday, March 7—Seven Cities (Home Rule & Revenue and Expenditures)


Presentations—Indiana, Iowa, Kansas

**Week 8: City Bound II**

Tuesday, March 12—Seven Cities (Land Use & Education)


Thursday, March 14  MID-TERM EXAM

******SPRING BREAK*******

**Week 9: City Power I**

Tuesday, March 26—What is the City? What can it do?


Thursday, March 28—Decentralization and Development


Presentations: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa
**Week 10: City Power II**

Tuesday, April 2—Redistribution in the City.


Thursday, April 4—Urban Resurgence/Urban Crisis


Presentations: Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana

**Week 11: Pot Politics**

Tuesday, April 9—Legalization in the states


Presentations: Montana, Nebraska, Maine

Thursday, April 11—Backlash under Trump


Presentations: New Jersey, New Mexico, Maryland

**Week 12: From Enterprise Zones to Opportunity Zones**

Tuesday, April 16—Enterprise Zones and Empowerment Zones


Thursday, April 18—Opportunity Zones


Presentations: Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina

**Week 13: The Minimum Wage**

Tuesday, April 23—Experiments and Challenges


Thursday, April 25—Social Movements

Tilly, Chris. “Living wage laws in the United States: The dynamics of a growing movement.” In Economic and Political Contention in Comparative
Week 14: Climate Change & Mass Incarceration

Tuesday, April 30—Reducing Emissions in Cities


Presentations: Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island

Thursday, May 2—Mass Incarceration


Presentations: Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia

Week 15: Sanctuary Cities and the Trump Administration

Tuesday, May 7—Sanctuary Cities


Presentations: Final Washington. West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming