The Government and Politics of New York State
RPOS 325 (9128) and RPAD 325 (9129)
University at Albany, State University of New York
Spring 2016, Mondays and Wednesdays, 4:15 to 5:35 pm
Humanities Building, Room 128.
Instructor: Frank J. Mauro, Public Service Professor and adjunct Lecturer

If you have a question or if you want to schedule a time to meet, please e-mail me at fjmauro@albany.edu. If you do not receive a response in a reasonable amount of time, please call me at 518-346-3122. If I am not in, please leave a message.

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 the people of New York State govern themselves
   b. To be able to access and utilize the major sources of information available regarding those institutions and processes
   c. To be able to explain current developments involving those institutions and processes in theoretical, legal and historical context.

III. Examinations. There will be two mid-term exams, during the regular class periods on Wednesday, February 22; and Wednesday, April 5; and a final exam from 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm on Thursday, May 18. The final exam will be cumulative. The exams will cover material from class lectures and discussions as well as material from the assigned readings.

IV. Reading assignments are listed in the “Schedule of Assignments and Topics for Class Discussion” in Section IX of this syllabus. The main textbook for the course is the second edition of The Government and Politics of New York State by Professor Joseph F. Zimmerman (SUNY Press, 2008). This book is available for purchase at the on-campus University Bookstore. A small number of copies are also available at Mary Jane Books at 522 Washington Avenue near the downtown campus. 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
a. By Noon on Monday, February 6, 2017, submit a copy of a news article from sometime in 2017 that casts some light on the functioning of one or more of the institutions and/or processes covered by this course, together with a 1 to 2 page note in which you discuss (a) what can be learned from the article regarding those institutions and/or processes, and (b) what additional information regarding those institutions and/or processes would be useful in understanding the developments discussed in the article. 2 Points.

b. By Noon on Monday, March 27, 2017, prepare and submit a 4 to 5 page paper about the functioning of the New York State Legislature in which you compare and contrast the views of Jeffrey Stonecash & Amy Widestrom with the views of Eric Lane. See Attachment A to this syllabus for additional information regarding this assignment. 9 points

c. By Noon on Monday, April 24, 2017 prepare and submit a 4 to 5 page paper on the politics of the New York State budget process in the year you were assigned to research and write about, with an emphasis on the interaction of the Governor and the Legislature in that process in that year. See Attachment B to this syllabus for additional information regarding this assignment. 9 points

All three of these writing assignments should be submitted as MS Word documents using 12-point Times New Roman font with one inch margins on the top, bottom and both sides of each page. The papers due on March 27, 2017, and April 24, 2017, should each consist of 4 to 5 pages of text followed by (a) a page (or pages) with endnotes citing the sources for any material in the text which was quoted exactly or paraphrased from a source, and (b) a page (or pages) with a bibliography listing the sources you used in researching and writing the paper. The 4 to 5 pages of text should be double-spaced while the endnotes and the bibliography entries should be single-spaced with an additional space between entries. Material that is directly quoted from a source should be placed in quotation marks and the source of the material should be cited. Any material that is paraphrased from a source should not be placed in quotation marks but the source of the paraphrased material should be cited.

VI. Student presentations based on the papers due on April 24 will be scheduled for the May 1, 3 and 8 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 – 20 points (see Section V for breakdown)
   2. Exam #1 (February 22) – 20 points
   3. Exam #2 (April 5) – 20 points
   4. Final exam (May 18) – 20 points
   5. Attendance and Participation – 10 points
   6. Student Presentations – 10 points
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. 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 25: Distinctive Aspects of New York Government and Politics
- New York’s "strong executive" form of government
- New York’s multi-party electoral system
- New York’s “strong leader” legislative system
- Upstate/Downstate divisions in New York State politics
- New York's heavy reliance on local governments to deliver and finance public services.

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 1

January 30 and February 1: New York 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

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 2; and the United States Constitution

February 6 and 8: 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; the New York State Local Government Handbook, Chapters 4 through 9; and New York State Constitution, Articles 8 through 11

February 13 and 15: The New York State Constitution
- The structure and substance of the New York State Constitution
- The processes for amending and revising the New York State constitution, including conventions, commissions and the legislative referral method
- The role of the electorate in the amendment process

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 4; the New York State Constitution; the “Compendium of Provisions (Over Time) for Amending and Revising the New York State Constitution” and “Comparing the Processes for Amending the US and NYS Constitutions”

February 20: Review and Catch-Up

February 22: Mid-Term Exam #1
February 27 and March 1: Financing the State
- State and local revenues, expenditures, and borrowing
- The financial management functions: budgeting, accounting, financial reporting, auditing
- The mechanics and the politics of the budgetary process
- The budget powers of the governor and the legislature
READ Zimmerman, Chapter 10 and pages 138 through 145 in Chapter 7; New York State Constitution, Articles 7 and 16 and Section 7 of Article 4; and “Breaking Down the State Budget” by Senator James Seward; and the “Financial Plan At-A-Glance” as proposed by Governor Cuomo as part of his proposed 2017-18 budget.

March 6 and 8: 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 3 and Section 4 of Article 7; Eric Lane, “Albany’s Travesty of Democracy” and Jeffrey Stonecash and Amy Widestrom, “The Legislature, Parties and Resolving Conflict”

March 20 and 22: The Governor and the Executive Branch – Part 1
- New York State's "strong executive" form of government
- The Governor as political leader, chief executive, chief legislator, etc.
- Gubernatorial elections.
READ Zimmerman, Chapter 7; New York State Constitution, Article 4; and other materials to be provided via Blackboard

March 27 and 29: The Governor and the Executive Branch – Part 2
- Executive branch, Executive Department, 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 5 and 13; and other materials to be provided via Blackboard

April 3: Review and Catch-Up

April 5: Mid-Term Exam #2

April 12 and 17: The Courts
- The structure of the state and federal court systems in New York State
- The roles of the courts
- Judicial selection, retention, removal, etc.
READ Zimmerman, Chapter 9; New York State Constitution, Article 6; and other materials to be provided via Blackboard
April 19, 24 and 26: Political Parties, Elections and Interest Groups
- 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
- Interest groups, lobbying, etc.

READ Zimmerman, Chapter 5; New York State Constitution, Article 2, Section 1 of Article 1, and Section 1 of Article 13; "New York State and the Rise of Modern Conservatism - Redrawing Party Lines" and other materials to be provided via Blackboard.

May 1, 3 and 8: Student Presentations

May 10: Review for Final Exam (and continuation of presentations if necessary)

Thursday, May 18, 3:30 am to 5:30 pm – Final Exam (In Regular Class Room But Not At Regular Class Meeting Time)

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Attachment A: By Noon on Monday, March 27, 2017, prepare and submit a 4 to 5 page paper about the functioning of the New York State Legislature in which you compare the views of the New York State Legislature’s “strong leader” system that are presented in:

Copies of the article by Eric Lane and the book chapter by Jeffrey Stonecash and Amy Widestrom are both posted in “The New York State Legislature and the Legislative Process” folder on the Blackboard site for this course.

Both the article by Eric Lane and the chapter by Jeffrey Stonecash and Amy Widestrom deal with the workings of the New York State Legislature and both devote significant attention to the New York State Legislature’s “strong leader” system. Eric Lane in his article, “Albany’s Travesty of Democracy,” presents a critical or negative view of the New York State Legislature’s “strong leader” system while Jeffrey Stonecash and Amy Widestrom, on the other hand, identify and discuss the benefits of the New York State Legislature’s “strong leader” system.

Your assignment is to prepare an essay that explains and compares these negative and positive views of the New York State Legislature’s "strong leader" system. In your essay you should be sure to (a) identify those aspects of the New York State Legislature's “strong leader” system that the Lane article and Stonecash & Widestrom chapter both recognize but which Sonecash & Widestrom see as benefits or strengths and which Lane sees as disadvantages or weaknesses; and then (b) discuss the
arguments that Stonecash & Widestrom make as to why these aspects of the Legislature’s organization and operations should be seen as strengths and the arguments that Lane makes as to why these aspects of the Legislature’s organization and operations should be seen as weaknesses.

The essay must be your own work based on your careful reading of the Lane article and the Stonecash & Widestrom chapter. Any material that you quote verbatim from the Lane article or from the Stonecash & Widestrom chapter or from anyone else’s writings should be placed in quotation marks and the source of the material should be cited. Any material that is paraphrased from the Lane article or the Stonecash & Widestrom chapter or from anyone else’s writings should not be placed in quotation marks but the source of the paraphrased information should be cited.

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Attachment B: By Noon on Monday, April 24, 2017 prepare and submit a 4 to 5 page paper on the politics of the New York State budget process in the year you were assigned to research and write about, with an emphasis on the interaction of the Governor and the Legislature in that process in that year.

To fully appreciate the politics of the policymaking process in the New York State, it is necessary to understand the budget powers of the Governor and the Legislature, particularly as they relate to each other, and the ways in which those powers have been utilized by different Governors and different legislative leaders over the years. This assignment is intended to familiarize students with these interactions by having each student research the process as it played out in a particular year and by then having all the students share the results of their research with their fellow students through in-class presentations. In assigning a particular year to each student, an effort will be made to assign each student one of his or her top five choices of years.

The budget process is an ongoing year-round process with the upcoming fiscal year’s budget being formulated, proposed and negotiated at the same time that the current year’s budget is being implemented (sometimes with choices and mid-year adjustments being made that generate significant tension between the executive and legislative branches) and that the prior year’s budget is being closed out and audited. To make this assignment manageable, these papers should focus primarily on the interactions between the Governor and the Legislature during the period (a) beginning with the Governor’s submission of the State of the State message and the Executive Budget at the beginning of the calendar year and (b) ending with the enactment of the budget bills for the new fiscal year but they should cover relevant events occurring before January 1 and/or after enactment that are particularly relevant to the politics of the budget process. For example, for budgets adopted between 1929 and the late 1970s, the dynamics related to the adoption of a Supplemental Budget at the end of the legislative session was particularly important.

This paper should focus on 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. Among the aspects of a particular year’s budget process that should be considered for coverage are:

- The political configuration of the government at the time (e.g., the Governor’s political party and the party divisions in the two houses of the Legislature)
- The length of time that the Governor and each of the Legislative Leaders have held their offices (i.e., the extent of each of these primary actors relative experience)
- Recent state and national electoral results, and the preparation for upcoming state and national election, to the extent that these developments shape the environment for the budget process in the year being studied
- The economic situation in which the state budget is developed, negotiated and enacted
- The substance and timing of the Governor’s proposals (i.e., proposals leaked to the press by the executive prior to the State of the State message and prior to the submission of the Executive Budget)
- The reaction to the substance of the Governor’s proposals by the majority and minority parties in both houses of the legislature
- Budget proposals initiated by the Legislative parties and other actors in the process.
- The Legislature’s analyses, hearings, and town hall meetings on the Governor’s budget
- The issues that emerge as the major points of contention between and among the Governor, the Senate and the Assembly. For example, disagreements over revenue estimates; disagreements over policy decisions such as the distribution of school aid; non-budget issues that one or another of the parties links to an agreement on the budget; arguments about aspects of the budget process
- Law suits over budget-related issues that have recently been decided and/or law suits over budget-related issues in which decisions are imminent
- How the parties come to a negotiated agreement (or fail to come to a negotiated agreement) by the beginning of the new fiscal year
- In years when a budget agreement is not reached by the beginning of the new fiscal year, how do the parties react, how long an impasse prevails, when and how an agreement is finally reached

For 2013 and earlier years, the budget process parts of this assignment can be completed on the basis of the New York Times’ coverage of the budget process as retrieved using the ProQuest Historical newspapers database available via the website of the University Library. Other sources can also be used. All sources should be cited. Material that is directly quoted form a New York Times article or another source should be placed in quotation marks and the source of the material should be cited. Any material that is paraphrased should not be placed in quotation marks but the source of the paraphrased information should be cited.