Course Description

This course introduces students to governmental institutions, political behavior, and policy issues at the state level. Our goal is to understand how different institutions and political conditions interact and play a role in the public policy process. A comparative approach is used whereby the political contexts and policies of the various states are compared and contrasted. While Louisiana will be used as a prominent example in our study, this is not a course on Louisiana politics.

The topics to be covered are divided into four broad sections. The first part of the course focuses on various political contexts in which state governments operate. The second part explores the institutions in which policy is created and implemented (legislative, executive, and judicial). A third section gives attention to differences across states in political party structures, interest group activities, media coverage, and election practices. The fourth section of the course focuses on different policy areas. We will spend time covering problems or conditions that policies are intended to alter, the specific actions governments take in response to these conditions, and whether or not such efforts have their intended effects.

In addition to our focus on the substantive aspects of state politics, we will also spend time examining the methods used by scholars to answer questions on these topics. Part of our goal is to assess the evidence obtained by scholars and to consider alternative approaches. While this is not a course on political science methodology, issues involving research design and analysis will play prominently in our class discussions.

Reading Materials

The following books are available for purchase in the bookstore:


In addition, other required readings listed on the syllabus are accessible through the LSU Moodle system.

Course Requirements

The grade for the course is determined by a student’s performance in the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Letter grades will be determined as follows: A = 90 – 100 percent, B = 80 – 89 percent, C = 70 – 79 percent, D = 60 – 69 percent, and F = Below 60 percent.
Participation
Classes are generally conducted in a lecture-discussion format so it is important to keep up with the readings and to come to class prepared. Students are strongly encouraged to take part in class discussions. In order to do this, it is necessary to complete the readings in advance and to spend time thinking about them in a critical manner. Also, please keep up with current political developments at the state level since these will often be used as examples in our discussions. While participation is not a formal part of the grade, my willingness to review and discuss assigned readings is based on your level of participation. In other words, if no one answers basic questions about the readings, you are on your own to understand them. It is therefore important that you read the assignment before class.

Book Review and Policy Assignment
Students are required to write a review of The Best Job in Politics by answering a series of questions that will be provided at least one week prior to the review’s due date. There is also a policy project that requires you to identify and write a report on a policy innovation or change recently adopted at the state level. Further details on both the book review and policy project will be provided in separate handouts. Note the due dates for both are listed on the syllabus (the book review is due on Tuesday, March 12 and the policy assignment is due on Thursday, April 25).

Exams
There are three exams (dates are listed on the syllabus). These tests will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and brief essay questions. Note that a makeup exam is only administered when a student can produce a valid written excuse. Note also that makeup exams are all-essay exams. If you anticipate a problem, please let me know as soon as possible. Also, for anyone who has special needs or who requires accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation in advance of the exams so arrangements can be made.

General Policies

Academic Honesty
Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct (http://www.lsu.edu/judicialaffairs). Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: cheating on exams, plagiarizing, buying or selling assignments, altering grades, and collaborating with others without permission. I reserve the right to investigate when I suspect a violation of any of these policies. All violations of the university’s academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students for adjudication.

Classroom Etiquette
Please be considerate to those around you who are trying to listen, take notes, and participate. Please make every effort to be on time to class. Be seated and ready to begin at 10:30 and leave early only for emergencies. Turn cell phones and pagers to silent. Most importantly, do not talk during class. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.

Recording Devices and Computers
No audio or video recording devices are allowed unless special permission is granted by the instructor. Please do not take photographs of the overheads. Photography of any kind is forbidden. All violations of this policy are turned over to the Dean of Students. You are free to use laptop computers for class purposes (e.g., taking notes, looking up relevant information, etc.). But please do not simply play on the internet, check e-mail, or use social networking sites.

Late Assignments and Missed Work
All written assignments are due at the beginning of class. Penalties will be assessed based upon the circumstances, but will generally involve a substantial loss of points. In others words, be certain that I receive your written work at the beginning of class. Please note that for reasons of fairness to other students in the class, credit cannot be given at the end of the semester for missed exams or papers not handed in. In other words, when you experience a significant problem that prevents you from meeting a deadline or taking a test, it is your responsibility to let me know about it in a timely manner and to make arrangements to make up the missed work. Excuses must be provided within one week of your return, NOT at the end of the semester.

Special Needs
For students who have special needs or require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation so arrangements can be made.
## Course Schedule

### The Contexts of State Politics

**January 15**  
*Introduction to the Course*

**January 17**  
*Why Study State Politics*  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser Chapter 1.  

**January 22**  
*Methods and Approaches Used in Studying State Politics*  
- **Reading #6**: “Appendix: A Brief Introduction to Regression.”  

**January 24**  
*Political Cultures and Public Opinions*  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, re-read part of Chapter 1 (20-25).  

**January 29**  
*Federalism: National and State Government Relations*  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 2.  

**January 31**  
*State Constitutions*  

### Institutions of Governing in State Politics

**February 5**  
*Characteristics of Legislative Institutions*  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 6.  
February 7  
**State Legislators: Who They Are and How They Got There**
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Re-read part of Chapter 6 (173-183).

February 12  
**Mardi Gras Holiday**

February 14  
**Exam #1**

February 19  
**What Legislators Do**

February 21  
**Representation in the Legislature**
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Re-read part of Chapter 6 (183-185).

February 26  
**Term Limits**

February 28  
**Legislative Decision Making**

March 5  
**Executive Branch**
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 7.
March 7  
**Governors and Legislatures**

March 12  
**Governors as Policy Leaders**

March 14  
**State Courts**
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 8.

**Linking Institutions and Citizens**

March 19  
**Political Parties**
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser Chapter 3.

March 21  
**Exam #2**

March 26  
**Interest Groups**
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 4.

March 28  
**Interest Group Influence**

April 2  
**Spring Break**

April 4  
**Spring Break**

April 9  
**News Media in State Politics**
April 11  
*Direct Democracy*
  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 5.

**Making and Evaluating Public Policies**

April 16  
*Elements of the Public Policy Process*
  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 14 and 15.

April 18  
*Social Regulation*
  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 9.

April 23  
*Education and Fiscal Policies*
  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapters 10, 12, and 13.

April 25  
*Economic Development Policies*
  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 16.

****Policy Project Due at the beginning of Class****

April 30  
*Policy Outcomes: Health and Welfare Programs*
  
- Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, Chapter 11.

May 2  
*Summation and Review*

May 9  
**FINAL EXAM** in this classroom on Thursday, May 9 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.