Political Science 4015  
American State Politics and Policy Making  
Fall 2011

Dr. Hogan  
238 Stubbs Hall  
Telephone: 578-3217  
rhogan1@lsu.edu

117 Turcaud, TTH 9:10-10:30  
Office Hours TTH 10:40-11:40 or by appt.

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>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Project</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL** 100%

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: Class Discussions, Quizzes, and Brief Writing Assignments

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.

Quizzes will be administered periodically along with brief in-class writing assignments. In addition, I will occasionally ask you to complete a short assignment that is due at the beginning of the next class meeting. These assignments typically involve writing a brief essay on a given topic. This work will be counted as part of your participation grade. All class assignments will be posted on Moodle soon after they are provided in class. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to check Moodle for any missed assignment prior to the next class meeting. Also, assignments not handed in on time will receive a grade penalty.

Policy Project

A policy project is required that counts for 15 percent of the course grade. In this assignment students identify and write a brief report on a policy innovation or change recently adopted at the state level. Further details on this assignment will be provided in a separate handout. The project is due on Tuesday, November 22 at the beginning of class.

Exams

There are three exams – two mid-terms and a final (dates are listed on the syllabus). These tests will consist of short-answer/essay style questions. Note that makeup exams are only administered when a student can produce a valid written excuse. 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

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious offense and is not taken lightly. Use of another’s words or ideas without giving proper credit will not be tolerated. Care should be made to properly cite sources where appropriate. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult me. I reserve the right to investigate when I suspect that you are not doing your own work. All violations of this policy 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 in class discussions. Please make every effort to be on time to class. Be seated and ready to begin at 9:10 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. You are free to use laptop computers for class purposes (e.g., taking notes, looking up relevant information on the internet, 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 other 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 and quizzes or for 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.
Course Schedule

The Contexts of State Politics

August 23  Introduction to the Course

August 25  Why Study States?

- Gray and Hanson, Chapter 1.
- Reading #3: “Appendix: A Brief Introduction to Regression.”

August 30  Culture, Public Opinion, and Constitutions


September 1  Federalism: National and State Government Relations

- Gray and Hanson, Chapter 2.

September 6  Federalism in Practice


Institutions of Governing in State Politics

September 8  Characteristics of Legislative Institutions

- Gray and Hanson, Chapter 6.

September 13  State Legislators: Who They Are and How They Get There

- Gray and Hanson, Re-read part of Chapter 6 (154-171).

September 15  One Legislator’s Perspective


September 20  Midterm Exam #1
September 22  
**Descriptive Representation**
- **Reading #16:** Sanbonmatsu, Kira, Susan J. Carroll, and Debbie Walsh. 2009. “Poised to Run: Women’s Pathways to the State Legislature,” Rutgers University, NJ: Center for American Women and Politics.

September 27  
**Other Elements of Representation**
- Gray and Hanson, Re-read part of Chapter 6 (171-173).

September 29  
**Term Limits**
- Gray and Hanson, Re-read part of Chapter 6 (173-191).

October 4  
**Legislation Decision Making**

October 6  
**Executive Branch**
- Gray and Hanson, Chapter 7.

October 11  
**Governors and Legislatures**

October 13  
**Fall Break**

October 18  
**State Courts**
- Gray and Hanson, Chapter 8.

October 20  
**State Court Decision Making**

October 25  
**Midterm Exam #2**
Linking Institutions and Citizens

October 27  Interest Groups
   • Gray and Hanson, Chapter 4.

November 1  Interest Group Influence

November 3  Political Parties and Elections
   • Gray and Hanson Chapter 3.

November 8  The Media in State Politics

November 10  Direct Democracy
   • Gray and Hanson, Chapter 5.

Making and Evaluating Public Policies

November 15  Elements of the Public Policy Process
   • Gray and Hanson, Chapter 9 and 12.

November 17  Economic and Social Regulation
   • Gray and Hanson, Chapter 13

November 22  Fiscal and Economic Development Policies
   • Gray and Hanson, Chapters 10 and 14.
   *****Policy Project Due at the beginning of Class*****

November 24  Thanksgiving

November 29  Policy Outcomes: Health and Welfare Programs
   • Gray and Hanson, Chapter 11.

December 1  Summation and Review

December 10  FINAL EXAM in this classroom on Saturday, December 10 from 12:30-2:30 p.m.