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 three broad sections. The first part explores the institutions in which policy is created and implemented. The organization and structures of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches are examined in great depth. The second part of the course focuses on various political contexts in which state governments operate. Attention is given to variations in political party structures, interest group activities, media coverage, and election practices. The third 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.

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>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-Term Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100%</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: 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 prior to class 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.
Book Review and Policy Assignment

Students are required to write a review of *Inside the Statehouse* by answering a series of questions that will be provided one week prior to the review’s due date. There is also a policy assignment that requires you to identify and write a brief report on a policy innovation or change recently adopted at the state level. Further details on both the book review and policy assignment will be provided in separate handouts. Note the due dates for both are listed on the syllabus (the book review is due on Thursday, February 11 and the policy assignment is due on Thursday, April 22).

Exams

There are two exams – a mid-term and 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 Behavior

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 off cell phones and pagers. Most importantly, do not talk during class. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.

Late Assignments

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.

**Course Schedule**

_The Contexts of State Politics_

January 19       Introduction to the Course

January 21       *Why Study States?*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 1.

January 26       *Differing Cultures and Opinions in the States*

January 28       *Federalism: National and State Government Relations*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 2.

February 2       *Federalism in Practice*

_Institutions of Governing in State Politics_

February 4       *State Legislators: Who They Are and How They Got There*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 6.
February 9

**Representation in State Legislatures**

Reading #7: Jewell, Malcolm E. 1982. “Communicating with Constituents.”


February 11

**Legislative Institutions and Leadership**


*****Book Review Due at the Beginning of Class*****

February 16

**Mardi Gras Holiday**

February 18

**Legislative Processes and Decision Making**


February 23

**Governors**

Gray and Hanson, Chapter 7.


February 25

**Governors and Legislatures**


March 2

**Bureaucracies**


March 4

**State Courts**

Gray and Hanson, Chapter 8


March 9

**State Court Decision Making**


March 11

**MIDTERM EXAM**

**Linking Institutions and Citizens**

March 16

**Interest Groups**

Gray and Hanson, Chapter 4.

March 18

**Interest Groups in the Legislative Process**


March 23

**Interest Groups and Ethics**
March 25  
*Political Parties and Elections*
Gray and Hanson Chapter 3.

March 30  
*Political Party Organizations*

April 1  
*The Media*

April 6  
*Spring Break*

April 8  
*Spring Break*

April 13  
*Elements of Direct Democracy*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 5

April 15  
*Direct Democracy in Practice*

**Making and Evaluating Public Policies**

April 20  
*Elements of the Public Policy Process*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 9 and 12

April 22  
*Economic and Social Regulation*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 13

****Policy Assignment Due at the Beginning of Class****

April 27  
*Fiscal Policies*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 10.

April 29  
*Economic Development*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 14.

May 4  
*Policy Outcomes: Health and Welfare Programs*
Gray and Hanson, Chapter 11.

May 6  
*Summation and Review*

May 11  
**FINAL EXAM** in this Classroom on Tuesday, May 11 from 10:00 -12:00 am.