

PS 105 State Politics Spring 2011

Dr. Bohte
Mitchell 225
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Required Texts

Dresang, Dennis and James Gosling. 2010. *Politics and Policy in American States and Communities*, 7th edition. Pearson Longman.

Holbrook, Thomas ed. 2008. *Crane and Hagensick's Wisconsin Government and Politics*, 9th edition. McGraw Hill.

Course Description

This course provides an overview of state and local political institutions. Emphasis will be placed on learning why political institutions and political cultures differ across the American states and how politics in Wisconsin is similar to/different from politics in other states. Topic coverage includes three broad areas: political institutions, political behavior, and public policy.

The institutional coverage will focus on the basic players involved in state government, such as governors, legislatures, and courts. Since local units of government are very influential in state politics, we will also examine the key institutions involved in local politics.

The behavior component of the course focuses on the forces in society that try to influence government, including political parties, interest groups, and citizens (through voting and grass-roots efforts).

The public policy section of the course will focus primarily on how state and local governments make social welfare, criminal justice, and educational policies. We will also focus on how budgetary issues affect the policymaking climate in states and communities.

This course satisfies the Social Science General Education Requirement by providing a broad overview of how state/local political institutions work and the ways citizens can influence political processes.

Grading and Course Policies

There will be three (3) exams. The questions will be multiple choice and true/false in format.

The exams will be 100 percent of your course grade. Specifically,

Highest scoring exam =	35 percent of course grade
Second highest scoring exam =	35 percent of course grade
Lowest scoring exam =	30 percent of course grade

The third exam is NOT a cumulative final. It will only cover the course material presented after the second exam.

Exam grades will be posted on D2L. If you think there is an error in your grade or you do not see a grade for an exam, you must notify me within a week after the grades have been posted.

Extra Credit Paper Assignment

There will be an optional writing assignment for the course.

Directions for this assignment will be posted on D2L. This will be a 5 page analysis of a controversial policy issue in state politics. I have already selected the articles to be summarized, and I will provide detailed instructions on how to complete the assignment by the third week of the semester.

The decision on whether to do this assignment is up to you. The paper will be due toward the end of the semester, so you may want to base your decision on how well you performed on the first two exams.

If you complete this assignment, a score ranging from 1 to 5 additional points will be added to your final grade. In order to maximize the points you receive, you must turn in a quality paper. Simply turning in a paper does not mean you will get the full 5 points (that's why there's a range of 1 to 5 points for the assignment). You need to follow the directions to earn these points.

As an example, let's say that you end up with a final grade of 76 (based on exam grade). If you hand in the extra credit assignment and earn the full 5 points, your final grade would rise to an 81. In letter grade terms, that moves you from a "C" to a "B" minus.

The full directions for this assignment will be posted on D2L, but I want to mention a couple of points here:

1. The due date for the paper will be April 28th.

2. No late work will be accepted. You cannot hand in the extra credit assignment after the due date or after the third exam.

Grading Scale used to determine final course grade

A 93-100	A- 90-92.9		
B+ 87-89.9	B 83-86.6	B- 80-82.9	
C+ 77-79.9	C 73-76.9	C-70-72.9	
D+ 67-69.9	D 63-66.9	D-60-62.9	F 0-59.5

Attendance

Please keep in mind that some of the material on the exams will be presented only in lecture and not in the textbooks. I do not give out my lecture notes for any reason, so if you miss a class, you should make arrangements to obtain the notes from another student.

While I generally expect to stick to the topic outline on the syllabus, the order in which we cover topics may change slightly throughout the semester. For example, this means that a topic that's scheduled for the first exam might be put off until the second exam, or vice versa.

Chronic absenteeism does not excuse you from being familiar with course policies and changes in exam dates.

Exams

While I will try to stick to the exam schedule listed below, the exam dates on the syllabus are subject to change. It is not always easy to predict how quickly particular topics will be covered, so flexibility is needed in case we fall behind in covering the material.

Makeup exams will only be given under the following circumstances.

Number 1. You have a University excused absence. An absence is considered excused if you can provide official documentation of a medical condition, such as a note from a physician.

If you do not have official documentation (such as a doctor's note, a court order, etc.), then I am not required to give you a makeup exam.

If I decide to allow a makeup exam in the case of an unexcused absence, the maximum grade you can receive is the class average for the test you missed. For example, if you receive an 88 on a makeup but the class average on the exam was a 78, you will receive a 78 for your grade. If your grade is below the class average, then there will be no adjustment in your grade.

Number 2. You must contact me prior to the exam, or by 5pm on the day of the exam if you need to take a makeup.

Makeup exams must be completed within a reasonable amount of time (normally before the next class session). While the regular exams will be multiple choice in format, the makeup exams will be essay exams. The content of the makeup exams (such as topics covered) will differ from the content covered on the regular exams.

Showing up excessively late for an exam is considered an unexcused absence, and I reserve the right to give alternate versions of the exam to those who do not show up for the exam on time.

Missing an exam because you were not in attendance to find out a revised exam date is not considered a valid excuse. Any changes in exam dates will be announced in class and will be posted on the D2L site for this course.

When notifying me of an excused absence, please provide me with a contact (phone number, e-mail address, etc.) that you check often.

Special accommodations

Students with special needs are encouraged to contact me at the beginning of the semester to work out any necessary arrangements.

Academic Misconduct

The university has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others' academic endeavors. Any instances of cheating will be referred to the appropriate university authorities for disciplinary action.

Topics

Readings

Political Culture and State Diversity

Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 2
Holbrook, Chapter 1

State Constitutions

Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 4
and pgs. 157-166 (direct democracy section)
Holbrook, Chapter 3

Federalism

Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 3

Political Parties and Political Behavior Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 8
Holbrook, Chapter 5

Interest Groups Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 7
Holbrook, Chapter 6

First Exam (approximately Tuesday, Feb. 22nd)

State Legislatures Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 10
Holbrook, Chapter 8

Governors Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 9
Holbrook, Chapter 7

State and Local Courts Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 13
Holbrook, Chapter 9

Local Government Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 11
Holbrook, Chapter 4

Second Exam (approximately Tuesday, April 5th)

Economic Policy Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 18
Holbrook, pgs. 180-187 (start at “Wisconsin Taxes”)

Criminal Justice Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 14

Social Welfare Policy Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 16
Holbrook, pages 196-201 (start at “Social Welfare – Wisconsin among the States”)

Education Policy Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 15
Holbrook, pages 189-196

Environmental Policy Dresang and Gosling, Chapter 17

Third Exam (Monday, May 16th 12:30 – 2pm)