

**POLSCI 105**  
**STATE AND LOCAL POLITICS**  
Online format; Fall 2021

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Office Phone: 414-251-7458 (Microsoft Teams)  
Class Format: Online

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines political institutions, actors, and issues within American state and local governments. States are frequently described as “laboratories of democracy.” There is remarkable variation in how the states conduct business and in the policies that they produce. At the same time, because all fifty states are bound by the U.S. Constitution, as well as the broader U.S. political culture, there are many similarities in how states conduct business.

Among other topics, our class will discuss federalism, political culture, state campaigns and elections, political parties, public policies, constitutional provisions, and state government branches (legislative, executive, and judicial). At some points we will closely look at the politics that are relevant to the state of Wisconsin, while at other times we will examine political matters in other states. Overall, this class introduces students to a plethora of important concepts and theories relating to sub-national governments.

**GER:** This course fulfills the Social Science General Education Requirement (GER) through its focus on the study of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development, and through the study of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures, and interrelationships.

This course meets these requirements through our examination of the varied personal, social, and cultural forces that shape individual and collective political behavior. We will also examine the institutions and organizations on which state political and governmental systems are built.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Required Textbook:** Bowman, Ann O’M, and Richard C. Kearney. 2022. *State and Local Government*, 11<sup>th</sup> edition, Cengage Learning.

This book is available via the [UWM ecampus site](#). A new hard copy of this book is quite expensive, so please make sure you buy the least expensive version (e.g., rental or Ebook) that you can find.

**Lecture Notes:** You should also read the *lecture notes* assigned for each topic. Note: these might also take the form of lecture *slides* from time to time. These notes and/or slides are what I would be using if we were meeting for face-to-face lectures, and provide a framework for the sorts of things we would be discussing in class. Of course, the notes overlap with the book material, but there is also a fair amount of material not covered in the textbook, and it will be fair game for quizzes and exams.

**Supplemental Readings:** Further, since the world is constantly changing, I may periodically assign supplemental readings as well. These might include primary documents or relevant news articles. If any supplemental readings are required, they will be indicated on the course schedule and made available on Canvas or via links in the syllabus.

## GRADING & COURSE COMPONENTS

Evaluation in this course is based on the following components:

- Class Participation 15%
- Content Quizzes (10) 25%
- Exams (3) 45%
- Reaction Posts (3) 15%

### Participation (15%)

You will be required to complete four tasks throughout the semester in order to receive participation points. First, you must introduce yourself on Canvas in the Discussion section of Canvas titled “Introductions.” I would like everyone to introduce themselves in a paragraph or two by the end of the first week of the semester. Your specific response is graded as complete or incomplete; in other words, you will simply receive points for completing the task.

The other three tasks require posting a review question for each of the three exams in the Discussion section of Canvas. Further, you must respond to at least one student’s question for each review session. The discussion forum is located in the Discussion section of Canvas titled “Exam (#) Review Session.” I will not reward you any participation points unless you do both of these tasks. You must complete the tasks by Sunday at 11:59pm the day BEFORE the exam opens, but I encourage each of you to post questions as they arise and well in advance of the exam.

### Content Quizzes (10 x 2.5% = 25%)

There will be 10 content quizzes in this class worth an overall 25%. All quizzes will be accessed on Canvas. Content quizzes are designed to ensure that you are reading the material and that your level of comprehension is as at a point where you do well on the exams. The due dates for

quizzes are listed in the syllabus. The quizzes are open-note, open-book format, and I will allow you to take the quiz twice and will count the highest score toward your grade. The time limit for quiz completion is 50 mins. Finally, there are no make up quizzes as you have plenty of time and multiple chances to complete them. The quizzes are set up to be graded immediately upon completion.

### **Reaction Posts (3 x 5% = 15%)**

There are 3 short writing assignments for this course. For each assignment, students will respond to a posted prompt in the discussion board section of Canvas. These reaction post assignments have two parts: 1. original posts and 2. commentary. Students will have a minimum of 2 weeks during which to complete the reaction post assignment. For all reaction topics, a student must first post an original response in order to see other student responses. A rubric for grading the reaction posts is provided for you on the Canvas site.

**1. Original posts:** For each reaction assignment, there will be a posted discussion topic. Students are expected to respond to this question with an original, well-reasoned, grammatically correct response. Note that your post must correctly cite relevant sources (i.e. the assigned readings). You will need in-text citations only. The correct format for citing is “....blah blah (Last name of author - space - date of publication - comma- page number).” The page number need only be included if you are using a quote. Of course, you are welcome to include outside material as well, but you will need to include full citations for reference. Original reaction posts are to be a minimum of 15 complete sentences (about 3 paragraphs). Posts must be written in essay/paragraph format; unless otherwise specified, bullet points, numbered responses, and/or incomplete sentences are not acceptable.

**2. Commentary:** Each student is expected to comment on the discussion posts of at least 1 other student. Commentary must be constructive, respectful, and should offer an additional point, pose a question, or present a counter-argument. (i.e., Simply stating that you agree with someone is insufficient). Commentaries are to be at least 3 sentences in length.

### **Exams (3 X 15% = 45%)**

There will be three exams during the semester, listed in the course schedule. Each exam is worth 15% of your overall grade. The exam will consist of 30 multiple choice questions worth 2 points each. While these exams will be open book, they are timed, so you will need to use your time wisely. The exam time is limited to 90 minutes. All required material covered in the class will be ‘fair game’ for the exams, not just the material from the textbook. For each exam, you will have a 7 day span in which to take your exam. If you cannot take the exam within the allotted time span, you must notify the Instructor of your extenuating circumstances at least 2 weeks before the testing period begins. In such a case, you must be able to provide the requisite University-approved documentation. No make-up exams will be offered. Students may only take an exam once. **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MAKING SURE YOU HAVE A SECURE INTERNET CONNECTION.** Technical problems during the exam do not entitle any student to a make-up exam. You have one opportunity to submit your test; whatever is submitted (if it is submitted early or not at all) is what will be graded.

**Extra Credit:** Absolutely no extra credit assignments will be offered this semester. However, the instructor reserves the right to curve exams and other grades depending on overall class performance.

**Late Work:** Late work is not accepted. All of the assignment due dates, criteria for completion, and full explanation are provided well ahead of time. In addition, all of the assignments can be turned in electronically on Canvas without physically being in class. Therefore, there is no excuse for late work. As stated above, makeup exams will not be allowed except for extreme circumstances.

Final grades in this course are computed on the following basis:<sup>1</sup>

- A: 92-100%
- A-: 90-91%
- B+: 88-89%
- B: 82-87%
- B-: 80-81%
- C+: 78-79%
- C: 72-77%
- C-: 70-71%
- D+: 68-69%
- D: 62-67%
- D-: 60-61%
- F: <60%

NOTE: In cases in which a student is on the borderline between grades (e.g., 91.5), I will always round up to the higher grade, provided that you have engaged in regular and active participation in class. If you have any questions about grading policy in general, or any questions about any particular grade you received, please reach out to me via email. I will be more than happy to discuss your grade with you and find ways in which your work can be improved and your grade raised.

**Drop Deadline:** The last day to drop this course is **November 7**. You should have plenty of information about your grade by that point, so I encourage you to make a well-informed decision that benefits you in the long run.

## ONLINE INSTRUCTION

Since the class is conducted online, there is a great deal of leeway built into the completion of required coursework. However, it is up to you to pay attention to due dates and requirements. My assumption is that you will be spending 12-15 hours per week on this class (the same amount of time as a 3-credit face to face course.)

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<sup>1</sup> Students submit to the Academic Integrity rules of the University Student Code of Conduct.

Most importantly, you must have stable internet access for this class. I will not at any point in the semester hear complaints regarding late assignments due to not having internet access. The level of technological knowledge for participating in this class is minimal. If you need technical support, you can contact the UW-Milwaukee help desk with inquiries regarding Canvas problems.

In order to access any content on Canvas, you must complete a quiz dealing with the content of this syllabus. The quiz can be attempted an unlimited number of times, cannot hurt your grade, and must be completed with a 100%. The point of the quiz is to ensure that you understand the guidelines and requirements for the class so that there is no possibility for complaints later. In addition, your completion of the syllabus quiz is a contract that both of us agree to the guidelines set forth in this class.

A note about conduct: Since the class is conducted online and not face-to-face, some degree of anonymity occurs. On rare occasions, this anonymity is accompanied by a lack of formality or professional conduct. Please take note to not be disrespectful to other students. I also expect that emails to me will be accompanied by a professional header, consist of a professional tone, and include formal writing (as though it were a business email). If the emails are not drafted in this manner, I will simply not respond to them. If they are written in a professional manner, you can expect a response in two business days or less.

### **SPECIAL ACCOMODATIONS**

It is the University's policy to provide, on a flexible and individual basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services for a letter of verification to provide to their instructors. If you are working through Disability Services and require specific course delivery options, please contact me as soon as possible so we can work to make these adjustments. Similarly, if you have an upcoming event or emergency circumstances that will impact your performance in the course, let me know as soon as possible. Once a due date has passed, options become limited, and unless it is a true catastrophic emergency, you will not be able to make up missed work!

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

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. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions. The disciplinary procedures can be found on the Student Academic Misconduct/Academic Discipline Procedure website.

## CLASS SCHEDULE

	<b>DATE</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENTS</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b>	9/2-9/3	Introduction & the Context of State Politics	Syllabus Chapter 1; Lecture Notes	Syllabus Quiz; Introduction
<b>DUE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student introductions by Sunday, September 5th at 11:59pm</li> <li>• Complete Syllabus Quiz (required in order to access course content!)</li> </ul>				
<b>WEEK 2</b>	9/6-9/10	Federalism	Chapter 2; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 1
<b>WEEK 3</b>	9/13-9/17	State Constitutions	Chapter 3; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 2
<b>DUE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes 1 &amp; 2 due by Sunday, September 19th at 11:59pm</li> </ul>				
<b>WEEK 4</b>	9/20-9/24	Participation & Elections	Chapter 4; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 3
<b>WEEK 5</b>	9/27-10/1	Parties, Groups, Campaigns	Chapter 5; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 4
<b>DUE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes 3 &amp; 4 due by Sunday, October 3rd at 11:59pm</li> <li>• Exam Review Session due by Sunday, October 3rd at 11:59pm</li> </ul>				
<b>WEEK 6</b>	10/4-10/8	Exam 1		
<b>DUE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam 1- Opens Monday, October 4th and is due by Sunday, October 10th at 11:59pm</li> <li>• Reaction post 1 and commentary also due by Sunday October 10th at 11:59pm</li> </ul>				
<b>WEEK 7</b>	10/11-10/15	State Legislatures	Chapter 6; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 5
<b>WEEK 8</b>	10/18-10/22	Governors	Chapter 7; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 6
<b>DUE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes 5 &amp; 6 due by Sunday, October 24th at 11:59pm</li> </ul>				
<b>WEEK 9</b>	10/25-10/29	Bureaucracy	Chapter 8; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 7
<b>WEEK 10</b>	11/1-11/5	State Courts	Chapter 9; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 8
<b>DUE:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quizzes 7 &amp; 8 due by Sunday, November 7th at 11:59pm</li> <li>• Exam Review Session due Sunday, November 7th at 11:59pm</li> </ul>				
<b>WEEK 11</b>	11/8-11/12	Exam 2		

**DUE:**

- Exam 2- Opens Monday, November 8<sup>th</sup> and is due by Sunday, November 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm
- Reaction post 2 and commentary due by Sunday, November 14<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm

<b>WEEK 12</b>	11/15-11/19	Local Governments	Chapter 10; Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 9
<b>WEEK 13</b>	11/22-11/26	Policy Process	Lecture Notes	
<b>WEEK 14</b>	11/29-12/2	Revenue Sources	Chapter 13, Lecture Notes	Content Quiz 10

**DUE:**

Quizzes 9 & 10 due by Sunday, December 5<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm.  
Note: Quiz 10 will include material from weeks 13 & 14!

<b>WEEK 15</b>	12/6-12/10	Policy *Subject TBD!	*TBD	
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**DUE:**

Exam 3 Review Session due Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm

<b>WEEK 16</b>	12/13-12/17	Exam 3		
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**DUE:**

- Exam 3- Opens Monday, December 13<sup>th</sup> and is due by Sunday December 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm
- Reaction post 3 and commentary due by Sunday, December 19<sup>th</sup> at 11:59pm