

**POLSCI 105**  
**STATE POLITICS**  
Online, Spring 2022

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines political institutions, actors, and issues within American state and local governments. Among other topics, we will discuss federalism, political culture, state campaigns and elections, political parties, public policies, constitutional provisions, and state government branches. 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 plethora of important concepts and theories relating to sub-national governments.

American state and local governments are frequently described as “laboratories of democracy.” They are a manageable number of cases similar enough in social structure, economics, politics, and government to allow meaningful comparisons of them that are not overwhelmed by extraneous variation. Yet they are also different enough from one another in theoretically and substantively important ways to allow the exploration of a wide range of questions about political behavior and policy making that are central to our understanding of politics. In addition to the great leverage state and local governments can provide in exploring broad political questions, these governments have a far greater practical impact on our daily lives.

As a result of successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the basic organization and structure of state and local government in the US.
- Comprehend the role of the states in America's federal arrangement.
- Knowledgeably discuss the fundamentals of state and local government budgeting and public policy making.
- Understand the ways in which state and local governments affect our daily lives.

**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

### 1. Required Book

You should read assigned chapter(s) for the topic each week from:

Bowman, Ann O'M, and Richard C. Kearney. 2022. *State and Local Government*, 11th edition, Cengage Learning.

- \* This book is available via the UWM ecampus site.
- \* UWM library reserves this book for the course with 2 day of loan period.
- \* While you prepare the book, Chapters 1 and 2 will be uploaded to Canvas as PDF.

### 2. Lecture Slide & Notes

You should also read the lecture Slides and Notes assigned for each topic. They 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.

### 3. Supplemental Readings

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 or recommended, they will be indicated on the course schedule and made available on Canvas.

## GRADING & COURSE COMPONENTS

Evaluation in this course is based on the following components:

- Participation. 10%
- Quizzes (x10) 30%
- Exams (x3) 45%
- Reaction Posts (x3) 15%

### 1. Participation (10%)

You will be required to complete two tasks throughout the semester in order to receive participation points.

- **Introduce yourself:** I would like everyone to introduce themselves in a paragraph or two by the end of the first week of the semester on Canvas Discussion section. Your specific response is graded as complete or incomplete; in other words, you will simply receive points for completing the task.
- **Something Interesting:** Another task requires posting relevant articles (or media, websites, etc) for other students. You are required to post at least one article during

semester and the contents to share should be relevant to our weekly topic. When you post an article, you need to identify the topic and briefly explain why this article is interesting, important, or worthy to read. Feel free to leave comments on any post. Active participation will be rewarded with additional points.

## 2. Quizzes (10 × 3% = 30%)

There will be 10 quizzes in this class worth an overall 30%. 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 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.

## 3. Reaction Assignments (3 × 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.

- **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 - year of publication - comma- page number)”. The page number need only be included if you are using a quote.

E.g., “The study of state and local politics.... (Bowman and Kearney 2022, 2)”.

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.

- **Commentary:** Each student will be randomly assigned to provide commentary on the post of 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. Commentary due is one day after the original post due date.

#### 4. Exams (3 × 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.

Final grades in this course are computed on the following basis:

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|---------------|--------------|
| • 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.
- \* 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.

## **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.)

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 and use professional tone and formal writing when you write a post or emails.

## **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. Remember that once a due date has passed, options become very limited.

## **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>Week 1: Context of State Politics</b>	
Date	1/24 - 1/28
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• Chapter 1</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post Introduction by Sunday, Jan 30 at 11:59pm</li> <li>• Complete Syllabus Quiz (required in order to access course content)</li> </ul>
Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten Reasons Why We Should Pay Attention to Local Politics</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2: Federalism</b>	
Date	1/31 - 2/4
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 2</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 1 by Sunday, Feb 6 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3: State Constitutions</b>	
Date	2/7 - 2/11
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 3</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 2 by Sunday, Feb 13 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4: Participation &amp; Elections</b>	
Date	2/14 - 2/18
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 4</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 3 by Sunday, Feb 20 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Browsing through Wisconsin Elections Commission Website <a href="https://elections.wi.gov">https://elections.wi.gov</a></li> </ul>
<b>Week 5: Parties, Groups, Campaigns</b>	
Date	2/21 - 2/25
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 5</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 4 by Sunday, Feb 27 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6: Exam 1</b>	
Date	2/28 - 3/4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exam 1</b> Opens Feb 28 (Mon) and is due by Mar 6 (Sun) at 11:59pm</li> <li>• <b>Reaction Assignment 1</b> due by Mar 6 (Sun) at 11:59pm &amp; Commentary by Mar 7.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7: State Legislatures</b>	
Date	3/7 - 3/11
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 6</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 5 by Sunday, Mar 13 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
Recommended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Browsing through Wisconsin State Legislature Website <a href="https://legis.wisconsin.gov">https://legis.wisconsin.gov</a></li> </ul>

<b>Week 8: Governors</b>	
Date	3/14 - 3/18
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 7</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assigeneemnts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 6 by Sunday, Mar 20 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 9: Bureaucracy</b>	
Date	3/21 - 3/25
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 8</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assigeneemnts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 7 by Sunday, Mar 27 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10: State Courts</b>	
Date	3/28 - 4/1
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 9</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assigeneemnts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 8 by Sunday, Apr 3 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 11: Exam 2</b>	
Date	4/4 - 4/8
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Exam 2</b> Opens Apr 4 (Mon) and is due by Apr 10 (Sun) at 11:59pm</li> <li>• <b>Reaction Assignemnt 2</b> due by April 10 (Sun) at 11:59pm &amp; Commentary by 4/11.</li> </ul>
<b>Week 12: Local Governments</b>	
Date	4/11 - 4/15
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 10</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assigeneemnts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 9 by Sunday, Apr 17 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 13: State–Local Relations</b>	
Date	4/18 - 4/22
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 12</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assigeneemnts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 10 by Sunday, Apr 24 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 14: Revenue Sources</b>	
Date	4/25 - 4/29
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chapter 13</li> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>
Assigeneemnts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quiz 10 by Sunday, May 1 at 11:59pm</li> </ul>
<b>Week 15: Policy Process</b>	
Date	5/2 - 5/6
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture Slide/Notes</li> </ul>

<b>Week 16: Exam 3</b>	
Date	5/9 - 5/13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Exam 3</b> Opens May 9 (Mon) and is due by May 15 (Sun) at 11:59pm</li><li>• <b>Reaction Assignment 3</b> due by May 15 (Sun) at 11:59pm &amp; Commentary due by May16</li></ul>	