

PLS 2603 - State and Local Government
Eastern Illinois University
Spring 2009

Instructor: John S. Morris

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Office Hours: 11 - 12 MWF; 1 - 2 M or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims at highlighting the mechanisms and complexities of American government and politics at the state and local levels. This survey course hopes to expose students to some theoretical approaches within the field, focusing upon important issues and debates in American politics at the state and local level. This course will enable the student to understand the workings of state and local governments, and in doing so, broaden the student's ability to interpret the workings of state politics in the communities in which they live. This course is also designed to provide you with the most useful up-to-date assessment of state and local politics. The states and their localities have increasingly played a more significant and visible role in American politics and thus need to be critically examined. Perhaps most importantly, the course will help students better understand and appreciate what it means to be a civic leader.

REQUIRED READINGS:

1) Dresang and Gosling, Politics and Policy in American States and Communities, 5th ed., 2006.

PARTICIPATION

I encourage questions and discussion in order to promote a class climate that is conducive to learning and exploration of issues. Please feel free to express your views in this class, and please note that you will be given ample opportunities to participate (e.g., debating an issue, in-class presentations, discussing a reading).

EVALUATION:

Examinations:

There will be four exams throughout the semester. Each exam will be worth 100 points.

Presentation:

Students are to give a presentation to the class and turn in an outline and summary (details will follow). The presentation will be worth 50 points.

Paper:

A paper will be 4-5 pages in length (typed). The paper will be worth 50 points.

EXTRA CREDIT:

Students may earn extra credit by bringing in articles related to state and local government which may be discussed during class. Sources for articles may include but are not limited to newspapers, magazines or journal articles. Each article will be worth one point per chapter discussed for a total of fourteen points. If the student accumulates a total of fourteen points an additional six bonus points will be added for a total of twenty points.

GRADING:

A = 450-500
B = 400-449
C = 350-399
D = 300-349
F = 239-Below

Make-up exams/late papers or missed presentations will be allowed only for excused absences. Failure to meet this obligation will result in a lower grade.

DISABILITIES:

Students with a disability that requires special arrangements should notify the instructor during the first week of the course. The instructor will do his best to accommodate your needs.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to, cheating, or helping another student to cheat on any class assignment or exam, as well as plagiarism. It is the instructor's obligation to report all instances of academic dishonesty and the student will receive a zero for that assignment.

EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITY:

If there is a conflict due to extra-curricular activities, please bring me a copy of your schedule.

COURSE OUTLINE :

Chapter 1- Face-to-Face Governance
Chapter 2 - State Diversity
Chapter 3 - Federalism
Chapter 4- Constitutions
Exam I

Chapter 6 - Grassroots Participation
Chapter 7 - Interest Groups
Chapter 8 - Political Parties
Exam II

Chapter 9 - Governors
Chapter 10 - State Legislators
Chapter 11 - Local Government
Exam III

Chapter 14 - Crime and Corrections
Chapter 15 - Education Policy
Chapter 16 - Social Welfare and Health Policy
Final Exam

***please note this schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion!!!**

Presentation Guidelines

- a) the presentation will be 4-5 minutes in length
- b) the presentation must be polished, concise, and well presented
- c) the presentation must fit the length requirement (practice and time it)

1) Issue Presentation

Each student will give a short presentation presenting support for one side of a particular issue. Points will be deducted for those who make a half-hearted effort to present this view point and laugh at the ideas presented. The bottom line is that I want you to try and convince us that this position is correct. Also, remember that this is a class on state and local politics so attempt to bring the issue down to this level where possible. You must hand in an outline of the presentation.

2) Paper

Each student will select a bill from the Illinois Senate or House and track its progress from the beginning of the semester until the time the paper is due. I want you to look for the following:

- A) what is the bill?
- B) what is the bill supposed to do?
- C) who sponsored and supported the bill?
why?
- D) what happened to the bill?
why?

**the “why” questions is the heart of the matter and will require you to start thinking in political terms. Who does the bill help, who does it hurt? Why would it get support or die?*

The

paper should be 4-5 pages in length.

