LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once said: “It is one of the happy incidents of the federal system that a single courageous State may, if its citizens choose, serve as a laboratory; and try novel and social economic experiments without risk to the rest of the country.” Thus states are “laboratories of democracy”. So it should be no surprise that the following occur:

If you have a new born, it is more likely to die in Louisiana and Mississippi than in Minnesota and Vermont. Why?

In 2008, Californians voted to end same sex marriages and in 2009, the state supreme court upheld the vote. In August 2010, a federal judge overturned that state’s gay marriage ban. In April 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court legalized gay marriage. Why the difference? Now the Supreme Court will decide about gay marriage.

What about Illinois? Two ex-governors are in prison. Pat Quinn is an unpopular governor. The legislature is solidly Democratic. We are in the 49th worst financial shape with one of the largest deficits and the largest unfunded pension liabilities in the nation. Recently, Moody’s Investor Services stated that: “Because of its financial weakness, Illinois is less well positioned than other states to handle a renewed downturn in the national economy,” Our pension debt is around 90+ billion (give or take a few billion), and many vendors haven’t been paid for over six months due to an 8+ billion backlog of unpaid bills.

2013 will be an eventful year for states – they will be the primary implementers of Obamacare; new national educational standards called Common Core will change how local education is carried out; marijuana legalization is on the move (with states leading the charge); look for gas taxes to rise if states want to improve their crumbling infrastructure.

This class is a comparative analysis of why there are such differences between states and localities. We will focus on various economic, political and cultural variables that may explain performance and policy variation between states. We will assess how well states perform their democratic function, and whether they have the capacity to meet future challenges.
WHAT WILL HELP US LEARN?

Why would you want to use your cell phone or be late? All distract people from learning. Habitual lateness will result in expulsion from class. If you are texting or using a phone – you would already rather be somewhere else – so go somewhere else.

Exams: Exams will be online. There will be four exams in this course. Roughly every three to four chapters there will be an exam. They will consist of multiple choice, true/false and short answer questions.

City Simulation: Students will redevelop a neighborhood.

Money paper and Budget paper: Track money through the political process.

Attendance & participation: I do not grade attendance or participation. Life is simple: “Show up, don’t quit, ask questions.”

Make up exams, plagiarism and religion: There will be no make-up exams unless I am contacted beforehand or before the end of the business day because of an emergency or valid reason.

If you miss an exam the grade will be zero. Plagiarism on any assignment will be a zero.

If you must miss any class due to religious observance, you must notify your instructor at least ten business days in advance in order to receive reasonable accommodations.

Text: Smith, Greenblatt, and Vaughn. Governing States and Localities. 3rd edition

Course Content Outcomes

1. Identify and evaluate major policy reforms as they relate to state functions of education, crime and social welfare.
2. Compare and contrast the influence of political culture, economic and political variables as empirical and normative explanatory factors in state politics.
3. Differentiate between periods of federalism and analyze the extent of these changes.
4. Identify and evaluate constitutional, legislative, judicial, bureaucratic, gubernatorial issues, reforms and developments.
5. Think critically about the impact of U.S. Supreme Court in state policy decisions and the development of federalism.
6. Identify current local social/economic problems; then compare and contrast local and state responses.
7. Think critically about what actors define the alternatives in the American political system.

Catalog description

This course is a comparative study of state and local political systems with an emphasis on Illinois politics. Special attention is given to contemporary problems facing state and local governments, including federalism, education, revenue, welfare and capacity to meet these issues.

GRADES & POINTS – Please keep track of your own scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point totals</th>
<th>Grade Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>- 35</td>
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<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>- 35</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td>- 35</td>
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<td>Exam 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Money Paper</td>
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<td>Budget Paper</td>
<td>- 20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Sim</td>
<td>- 20</td>
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Total - 210

All points are final. A 188 is a “B”, not almost an “A”

COURSE SCHEDULE : Subject to change if needed.


NO CLASS JANUARY 21st.

Exam 1 opens on Feb 1st. – closes on Feb 5th.

WEEK 4: Feb 4 - 8. Local Politics. Chapter 11.

WEEK 5: Feb 11 - 15. Local Politics/Simulation

**MONEY PROJECT DUE Feb 27**th. 
**NO CLASS MARCH 1**st.

WEEK 8: Mar 4 - 8. Interest groups. Chapter 6.  
**Exam 2 opens March 8**th. – closes March 12**th**.

WEEK 9: Mar 11 - 15. **NO CLASS - SPRING BREAK**


WEEK 12: April 1 - 5. Unelected policymakers. Chapter 10

**Exam 3 opens April 12**th. – closes April 16**th**. 
**Budget paper due April 15**th.


WEEK 16: April 29 – May 3. Education. Chapter 13


WEEK 18 : May 13 -17. **Exam 4 opens May 10**th – closes May 17**th.**