

****This is a representative example of the course syllabus. The official version will be posted on Blackboard prior to the first day of class****

**POLS 3307-001
Spring 2016**

**Comparative State & Local Politics
MWF 1:00 – 1:50 PM
Location: University Hall, Room 02**

Instructor: Dr. Brent Boyea
Office: 409 University Hall
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Website: <https://www.uta.edu/mentis/profile/?1389>
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 9:00-9:45AM

I. Introduction:

The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the functions and organizations of state and local governments. Throughout the course we will evaluate, comparatively, aspects of the American states, giving special attention to the role of institutions in shaping state political behavior. At the course's conclusion, students should be able to understand and discuss the operation of major political actors and institutions common in the American states. In the first section of the course, we will proceed toward an evaluation of state elections and political parties, focusing on the consequences of state electoral environments on election outcomes. From there, we will examine attributes of state legislatures as the engines of state democracy. Our attention there will be directed to the history of state legislative development to their contemporary status within the states. Thereafter, we will focus on the structure and functions of the executive and judicial branches of state government. The material presented in this course will serve as a foundation for understanding state and local government, including the relationship between state political structures and governing entities.

II. Required Textbooks:

1. Andrew Gelman. 2008 (2010 Expanded Edition). *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (ISBN – 9780691143934)
2. Melinda Gann Hall. 2014. *Attacking Judges: How Campaign Advertising Influences State Supreme Court Elections*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. (ISBN – 9780804793087)
3. Thad Kousser and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. *The Power of American Governors: Winning on Budgets and Losing on Policy*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (ISBN – 9781107611177)
4. Peverill Squire and Gary Moncrief. 2015. *State Legislatures Today: Politics under the Domes*, 2nd Edition. New York: Rowman & Littlefield. (ISBN – 9781442247499)
5. Prepared Readings on Blackboard. To access Blackboard, log in with your UTA NetID and password at <https://elearn.uta.edu/webapps/login/>. If you have difficulty when accessing Blackboard, visit <http://www.uta.edu/blackboard/students/index.php> or contact the [Office of Information Technology Help Desk](#) at 817-272-2208.

III. Course Requirements and Grading:

1. Class Participation – While there is not an attendance grade, students are expected to attend class and to arrive on time prepared to discuss the day's readings. Failure to attend class will have a direct negative result on your participation grade (10% of the course grade). I expect thoughtful participation in each class where participation reflects class engagement and careful thinking about that day's readings. Related, students will be called upon at random throughout the semester. The exercise of answering questions in class requires preparation and readiness to discuss the matters being discussed. One answer

pass will be given per student during the semester; thereafter, deductions of twenty (20) percentage points will be made from the participation grade where students have not responded sufficiently or where students are not present to answer a question.

2. Research Paper – All students are required to write a research paper, which will relate to the 2016 state primaries and caucuses that will decide the nominees for the upcoming presidential elections. A detailed research assignment with a delegation of the different states will be delivered to the class on February 1st. Students are expected to conduct independent research and papers should be 8-10 pages in length, double-spaced with a 12-point font, and have one-inch margins. Importantly, only approved news media and scholarly sources (e.g., library books or articles downloaded from a university affiliated databases, such as Lexis-Nexis, Academic Search Premier, or JSTOR) are acceptable as outside sources. Non-governmental websites are strictly not accepted for paper citations and should not be used. Citations to non-academic sources such as Wikipedia will result in a returned non-graded paper, which will be considered late. Complete citations are expected for all research. Failure to fully cite your research is a violation of academic honesty and must be avoided. Papers are due at the beginning of class on April 22nd. Late papers will be penalized one letter grade per day that they are late.
3. Examinations – There will be three midterm examinations and one partially cumulative final examination. Each midterm exam is worth 15% of the course grade and the final exam will be worth 25% of the course grade. Examinations will be essay and short answer format. The first mid-term examination is on February 15, the second midterm examination is on March 11, and the third midterm examination is on April 15. The final examination will be on May 9th from 11:00AM-1:30PM. All students will take the examinations at the designated times with no make-up examinations allowed except for situations such as medical emergencies or deaths in the family. In relation to examination absences caused by medical emergencies, the student is expected to contact the instructor by the *day of the test* and will be required to present proof of a physician's examination. Otherwise, failure to take an examination will result in a grade of zero.

Make-up Examination Policy

Where make-ups are permitted for a midterm examination and not completed within one week of the scheduled exam, the make-up will then be scheduled for the final week of the semester. In those situations, make-up exams are generally more difficult due to the time that has passed since the graded material was covered.

Exam Tardiness Policy

Students entering an exam late disturb other students. Further, tardiness permits students to ask other exiting students about the content of an exam – that is obviously not fair for students that have arrived on time. Unless a prior arrangement has been made, students will receive a grade of zero when tardy for an examination.

IV. Grading:

1. Participation – 10%
2. Research Paper – 20%
3. Mid-term Examination 1 – 15%
4. Mid-term Examination 2 – 15%
5. Mid-term Examination 3 – 15%
6. Final Examination – 25%

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D

V. Class Schedule:

Week 1: January 20-22

The State of the States

- **TBD**

Week 2: January 25-29

Public Opinion and Voting

- Gelman, *Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State*, chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pp. 1-40)

Week 3: February 1-5

Party Nominations and General Elections

- Gelman, chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 (pp.41-107)

Week 4: February 8-12

Political Parties

- Gelman, chapters 8, 9, 10, and Afterword on 2008 Election (pp. 109-196)

Midterm Examination 1: Monday, February 15th

Week 5: February 17-19

The History and Structure of State Legislatures

- Squire & Moncrief, *State Legislatures Today*, chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-59)

Week 6: February 22-26

Legislative Organization

- Squire & Moncrief, chapters 3 and 4 (pp.61-132)

Week 7: February 29–March 4

The Lawmaking Process and Representation

- Squire & Moncrief, chapters 5 and 6 (pp.133-204)

Week 8: March 7-9

Redistricting

- Squire & Moncrief, chapter 7 (pp. 205-224)

Midterm Examination 2: Friday, March 11th

Spring Vacation: March 14-18

Week 9: March 21-25

The History and Powers of State Governors

- Kousser & Phillips, *The Power of American Governors*, chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-73)

Week 10: March 28-April 1

The Agenda-setting Powers of Governors

- Kousser & Phillips, chapters 3, 4, and 5 (pp. 74-156)

Week 11: April 4-6

Governors in the Separation of Powers

- Kousser & Phillips, chapters 6 and 7 (pp. 157-218)

Class Cancelled: April 8

Week 12: April 11-13

Governors in the Separation of Powers cont.

- Kousser & Phillips, chapters 8 and 9 (pp. 219-260)

Midterm Examination 3: Friday, April 15

Weeks 13: April 18-22

Controversies Involving State Judicial Selection

- Hall, *Attacking Judges*, chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 1-64)

Research Papers Due: Friday, April 22nd

Week 14: April 25-29

Judicial Elections in the American States

- Hall, chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 65-126)

Week 15: May 2-6

Policy Outcomes and the Behavior of State Judges

- Hall, chapters 5 and 6 (pp. 127-181)

Final Examination: Monday, May 9th from 11:00AM-1:30PM

VI. Core Expectations and Citizenship

Expectations of Students

I have strong yet reasonable expectations for students. To perform well, students are expected to work - meaning a combination of recurrent attendance, frequent class participation, and careful attention to the readings is required. Students that do not attend class regularly, do not take careful class notes, and do not carefully read the assigned material will have a more difficult time with the exams. Additionally, I encourage students to see me during my office hours. Where questions arise about the content of the course or a student's grade, office hours represent important opportunities for interaction between students and their instructor.

Citizenship

While each student pays a significant cost to attend this course, sometimes an individual is less interested in learning, and disturbs others during class (i.e., talking, receiving or making phone calls, or text messaging). As a result of student complaints, use of cell phones during class will result in a two-point deduction from a student's final semester grade for each offense (one offense equals 2 points, two offenses equals 4 points, etc.). I also reserve the right to ask students to leave class when cell phone use is observed. Otherwise, do not walk in late, leave early, or push around others to find a seat once class has begun - it disturbs others! Be careful with laptop computers. Unfortunately, a majority of students use their laptops to access the web for non-related material, play games or read email rather than paying attention to the lecture. Where I see a laptop being used, I assume (rather accurately) that it is being used for something other than class purposes.

VII. Special Notes:

1. Cell Phones and Electronic Devices – Students are instructed to turn off their cell phones prior to class. See comments about cell phone usage in the Citizenship section. Usage of a cell phone or other non-permitted electronic device during an examination or quiz will result in a grade of zero on that examination or quiz.

2. Test Conduct – All materials must be removed from one’s desk during an examination or quiz. Additionally, headwear (e.g., hats, scarves, etc.), sunglasses, and earphones are absolutely not permitted during an examination.
3. Academic Integrity - All students are expected to obey the civil and penal statutes of the State of Texas and the United States, the Regents’ Rules and Regulations of The University of Texas System, the rules and regulations of the University, and the orders or instructions issued by an administrative official of the University or U.T. System in the course of his/her duties, and to observe standards of conduct that are compatible with the University’s function as an educational institution. Any student found to engage in cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will be sanctioned.
4. Inclement Weather – If a class is canceled due to inclement weather, its subject will be delayed until the following class. Similarly, all tests canceled because of inclement weather will be delivered during the following class. For information related to weather related class cancellations please call (972) 601-2049.
5. Students with Disabilities - Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with the instructor during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential.
6. Diversity Policy – It is the policy of the University of Texas at Arlington that, to the extent provided by applicable laws, no person shall be denied employment or admission, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or subject to discrimination under, any program or activity which it sponsors or conducts on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, disabilities, veteran status, or sexual orientation.
7. Student Support Services - The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For more information, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources.
8. Syllabus Changes – The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester.