

## Political Science 322W: State Politics

University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Department of Political Science

**Section: 01**

**Day: Monday and Wednesday**

**Time: 2:00-3:15**

**Room: 209 Graham Building**

**Instructor: Dr. Thomas H. Little**

**Office: 411 Graham/ 323 McIver**

**Office Hours: 12:30-2:00 M-W**

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### Course Objectives

Do you wonder why (and thank God that) politics is different in California than elsewhere? Do you ever wonder why Minnesota spends so much on education and Mississippi so little? How about why interest groups and political parties are more important in Ohio than Wisconsin? Why do some states allow voters to pass laws, while others don't? Why are gas taxes higher in North Carolina than other places? What difference can a strong governor make?

These are the kinds of questions we will discuss in this class. By the end of the semester, I expect you will have mastered the following:

- The importance of state government and the policies they pass.
- The changing balance and nature of federalism
- An understanding of the key institutions that make up state government, their purposes and structures.
- A basic understanding of the similarities and differences between the processes, structures and policies across the fifty states.
- An understanding of the linkage between historical, economic and political environments of a state and the policies produced by that state.

### Text Books

*State and Local Government: 2009-2010*. Washington, Edited by Kevin B. Smith. DC: CQ Press (2009)

### Student Responsibilities

**Attendance and Participation (5%).** Students are expected to attend class regularly participate in class discussions. The format of the class will be interactive discussion with some exercises and small group discussions. I will not take attendance on a regular basis, but will keep a record of participation. If you expect to be out for a week or more, please inform me.

**Exams (20% and 30%).** Your grade will be based upon two exams, each covering a separate section of the course. The exams will be a combination of subjective (essay and short answer) and objective (multiple choice) questions and will focus on both the notes and the text book. The final exam will NOT be cumulative.

If you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time, you must contact the instructor at least 24 hours before class, or within 24 hours of missing the exam. Students must present a medical excuse in order to reschedule an exam they missed and **make-up exams will be scheduled at the convenience of the instructor.**

**Internet Research (10%):** At least once a week, you will be expected to review articles on state government and politics using stateline.org for articles pertaining to your research paper. You need to print out at least one article a week and keep in a notebook. I will review the notebook periodically to make sure you are collecting acceptable articles. Also, regularly check blackboard for posted class readings.

**Research Paper (35%).** Each student will be responsible for the completion of a research paper examining the effect of five variables on a particular component of state government. Different parts of the assignment will be due throughout the semester, with the final paper due the last week of class.

The research paper will be comprised of three smaller papers that will be tied together in the final research paper due on the last day of class.

**Paper #1:** Thoroughly describe the contextual factors of two states that you perceive to be very different. You should thoroughly describe key factors of the historic, economic, geographic, demographic and political contexts of two states. Based on this description, offer your predictions regarding the political and institutional qualities of the two states. I expect this paper to be 5-8 pages (5% of grade). **Due September 16.**

**Paper #2:** Discuss the nature of elections in the two states you described in the first paper, including the strength and nature of political parties, the competitiveness of elections, the absence or prevalence of direct democracy and the role of interest groups. Based on these qualities alter any of your predictions from the first paper if you feel such alterations are necessary. I expect this paper to be 4-6 pages (5% of grade). **Due October 19.**

**Paper #3:** Examine the institutional qualities of the legislature, the governor, the bureaucracy and the court system in the two selected states. Now, add predictions regarding public policy (spending priorities, criminal justice, etc.) based on these institutional factors and the factors discussed in the previous two papers. I expect this paper to be 4-6 pages (5% of grade). **Due November 18.**

**Final Paper:** In the final paper, you will bring together all that you have learned from the first three papers. Indeed, it is fine if you cut and paste from these three papers to complete this one, but make sure that it reads as one paper. Describe the context, political and institutional characteristics of the two states and then explain if they are related as you predicted in your previous papers. For example, if the governor of one is powerful in one state and weak in the other, can you explain those differences by looking at context and politics? Of, if one has the death penalty and the other does not, can you explain the difference? I expect this paper to be 15-20 pages. (20% of grade). **Due December 9.**

## Student Evaluation(\*)

<b>Participation</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Internet Research</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Research Paper</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>30%</b>

\* I reserve the right to add extra points for attendance or "pop quizzes" if necessary.

## Possible Sources for your Research Paper

### *Books and Magazines*

*Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis* (CQ Press)

Books on Interest Groups in various US Regions by Ronald J. Hrebmar and Clive Thomas (dated, but good information).

*Book of the States, 2009-2010* (Council of State Governments)

*Politics in the America 2010* (CQ Press)

*America Votes 2008*

*Political Parties and Elections in American States* (CQ Press)

*The Legislative Branch of State Government: People, Process and Politics* (ABC-CLIO)

*The Executive Branch of State Government: People, Process and Politics* (ABC-CLIO)

*The Judicial Branch of State Government: People, Process and Politics* (ABC-CLIO)

### Websites

<http://www.stateline.org> (Stateline.org)

Governing.com (Governing Magazine)

US Census Bureau

<http://www.iandrinstute.org/> (Initiative and Referendum Institute)

## Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignments</u>
Aug. 24	Introduction: Why Do States Matter?	
Aug. 26	Differences that Make a Difference	
Aug. 31-Sept. 2	Federalism	Part I, Articles 1 & 3
Sept. 7	Labor Day- No Classes	
Sept. 14	Federalism II	Articles 2 & 5
Sep. 16	Direct Democracy	Part II
Sept. 21	Direct Democracy	Article 9
Sept. 23	Who Votes	Articles 7 and 8
Sept. 28	Election Outcomes Across the States	Article 6
Sept. 30- Oct. 5	Political Parties	Part III, Articles 10 & 11
Oct. 7	Mid Term Exam	
Oct. 10	Fall Break	
Oct. 12-19	Interest Groups	Part III, Article 12
Oct. 21, 26	State Legislatures: Organization	Part IV, Article 14
Oct. 28, Nov. 2	State Legislatures: Members and Functions	Article 15
Nov. 4	No Class	Work on your papers!
Nov. 9-23	Governors and Bureaucracy	Part V and Part VII, Articles 16- 18, 22. 24
November 25	The Judiciary	Part VI, Articles 19-21
Nov. 30 & Dec. 2	Budgets and Taxes	Part IX, Articles 30-34
Dec. 7	No Class	Finish Papers!
Dec. 8	Reading Day	
Dec. 14, 12:00-3:00	FINAL EXAM	