

Political Science 250: State and Local Government

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Office: TBD

Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:30-1:15

Spring 2018

Tuesdays & Thursdays

9:30 – 10:45

Hull Hall 128

Overview and Aims

This course surveys the fundamentals of American government and politics at the state and local level. It emphasizes constitutional development and political science's role in analyzing and evaluating institutional and cultural change across the country's myriad regions, with special emphasis on the Commonwealth of Virginia. This course presents both historical and contemporary works of political science in order to facilitate the student's understanding of state and local political institutions. Deep attention is also paid to the relationship between different levels of political institutions, from the locality to the federal government. Each student will complete a position paper on an area deemed in need of policy or political reform; each position paper will be submitted to a state or local governing official.

By the end of this course students will be able to speak and write about political issues that are central to state and local governance; discuss the philosophical and theoretical arguments undergirding state and local governance in the American constitutional system; compare political processes at the state and federal level; describe and evaluate the institutional changes that have altered the relationship of power between and among localities, states, and the federal government; and write a position paper that evaluates and proposes an institutional reform or policy change needed at the state or local level.

Course Requirements and Grade Distribution

Note: Failure to complete or submit any of the following will result in a grade of "F" for the course:

- Attendance and Participation	10%
- State/Local Policy Brief (Due: April 30 th)	25%
- Midterm Exam (March 1 st)	25%
- Final Exam (May 5 th)	40%

All students will sit for a midterm and final examination. The midterm will be a take home, open-book exam. Per the University Registrar the final exam is scheduled for Tuesday, May 8th between 11:30 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. The final exam will be closed-book, timed, and subject to the University's Honor Code. For both exams, I will give you a list of possible essay questions. On the day of the exam, I will choose the questions on which you will write.

Readings

This course will rely almost exclusively on secondary readings, contemporary articles, and other "primary documents" related to our studies of state and local government. There are two books available for purchase at the bookstore, selections from which will *not* be posted on-line.

Martha Derthick. 2001. *Keeping the Compound Republic: Essays on American Federalism*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute Press.
[ISBN: 978-0815702030](#)

John R. Baker (ed.). 2010. *The Lanahan Readings in State and Local Government*, Second Edition. Baltimore, MD: Lanahan Publishers.
[ISBN: 978-1-930398-12-2](#)

All readings are posted on CANVAS for you to download. Additional readings and questions may be posted as the course proceeds. *NB: The syllabus available online and available for download is “clickable” and will direct you to PDF copies of each week’s readings.*

Participation

Our weekly meetings will provide an opportunity for you to discuss the essential questions or problems related to each week’s set of readings. Generally, I will provide a brief lecture on Tuesday and begin to problematize the week’s main issues. Our Thursday meetings will be dedicated to a seminar-style discussion of the week’s readings. Please ensure that, at least by Thursday, to have completed the week’s readings and to have reviewed the questions listed in the syllabus.

Attendance and participation at our meetings is required. Your attendance and consistent participation in class will comprise the 10% of your final grade. Of course, we all get ill from time-to-time or have intervening schedule conflicts. An absence or two will not count against you; just come to the next class fully prepared to participate. Moreover, there is no need to keep me apprised of minor colds/sniffles, although if there is a major conflict, I want to know so that I can help you make-up work and excel in this course.

State/Local Policy Brief

Working in groups no larger than three, each student will write a paper that studies a potential policy or political reform – a “brief”. The topic should be of interest to all students involved in writing the paper. For a policy brief, students might choose to study and write about an area of government activity, like education, policing, or transportation. For a politics brief, students might choose to study and write about a specific governing institution or institutional rule, like term limits for legislators, the date of local elections, or the organization of city government. The only restriction is that the issue must be predominantly state or local in nature (i.e., national defense or foreign diplomacy would be outside the scope of this assignment; local emergency preparedness or encouraging foreign investment, however, might not be).

Additional instructions will be made available on the first day of class. The paper will be evaluated on three dimensions: 1) Quality of the research used to support policy/political alternatives 2) The effective presentation of that research according to the formatting guidelines 3) Evaluation of group peers on their contribution or value-added to the project. Finally, only papers that have been submitted to the appropriate local or state governing official(s) will be considered for a grade.

Other Policies

I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to students with physical, visual, hearing, and other disabilities or impairments; plagiarism; racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, or religious discrimination; and all forms of harassment.

If you have (or suspect you have) a learning or other disability that requires academic accommodations, you must contact the Office of Disability Resources (<http://www.longwood.edu/disability/>) three weeks before any assignments are due. I take learning disabilities very seriously and will make whatever accommodations you need to be successful in this class. However, they must be properly documented by the ODR and I must have enough notice to make appropriate arrangements.

Plagiarism, or academic theft, is passing off someone else's words or ideas as your own without giving proper credit to the source. You are responsible for not plagiarizing and are expected to abide by the Longwood University Honor System: see page 19 in the [Longwood Student Handbook](#).

Lecture Schedule and Concept Outline

Week of January 15th

States and Localities in America's Constitutional Order
First Class Meeting Thursday, January 18th

Lecture: "Localism and the Civic Ideal"

Martha Derthick, "Why So Many Communities?"

Questions:

- 1) Americans love equality. Does the existence of so many constitutionally protected communities threaten this egalitarian ideal?
- 2) To what extent do local, spatial communities matter anymore. What threatens communities of "place"?
- 3) What nurtures the spirit of localism and are those features of social life threatened by the process of "fragmentation" described by Derthick?
- 4) What would Derthick think about the phrase, commonly tossed about today, to "think globally, act locally?" Does such a mindset comport with the ideal of keeping America's states and localities relevant?

Week of January 22nd

Federalism

Lecture: "Federalism in Historical and Comparative Context"

Martha Derthick, "The Enduring Features of American Federalism"

Alan Greenblatt, "Recipe for Respect," *Governing* (February, 2008) (on-line)

Francis R. Greene, "Madison's View of Federalism in *The Federalist*" (Lanahan Reader)

Martha Derthick, “Crossing Thresholds: Federalism in the 1960s”

Questions:

- 1) When the states “talk back” to the federal government, what dangers exist? Do the benefits of “talking back” outweigh those hazards?
- 2) A former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Louis Brandeis, once remarked that states are the “laboratories of democracy.” Brandeis also suggested that failure to set appropriate national standards encouraged states to engage in a “race to the bottom.” How would we know when states are experimenting, but experimenting well?
- 3) Another Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Robert H. Jackson, said that federalism underwent such dramatic change during the 1960s because “at bottom,” the American people had “a distrust in the capabilities of the federal system to meet the needs of American society in these fast-moving times.” What caused this distrust? Since the 1960s, have states and localities recovered any of this trust?
- 4) E.J. Dionne, Jr., Norman Ornstein, and Thomas Mann argue in their new book, *One Nation After Trump*, that the “United States is now a non-majoritarian democracy. If that sounds like a contradiction in terms, that’s because it is. Claims that our republic is democratic are undermined by a system that vastly over-represents the interests of rural areas and small states. This leaves the large share of Americans in metropolitan areas with limited influence over national policy.” Would the founders find this problematic?

Week of January 29th

State Constitutionalism

Lecture: “50 plus One”

G. Alan Tarr, “State Constitutional Interpretation” (Lanahan Reader)

Daniel J. Elazar, “The States and the Political Setting,” *American Federalism* (on-line)

David Miller, et al. “Mapping the Genome of American Political Subcultures” (Lanahan Reader)

Questions:

- 1) Do state constitutions even matter?
- 2) In what ways do the states differ from one another in politically meaningful ways? What is a meaningful difference anyway?
- 3) Do Americans generally think of their state governments as more or less competent than the federal government? What gives them that impression?

Week of February 5th

The People and their States

Lecture: “Bastions of Democracy or Administration?”

Sidney M. Milkis, “Localism, Political Parties, and Civic Virtue,” *Dilemmas of Scale* (on-line)

Kathleen Ferraiolo, “State Policy Activism via Direct Democracy in Response to Federal Partisan Polarization,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 47 (2017): 378-402.

Dan Frosch, “Professional Petitioners Aid Ballot Initiatives,” *New York Times* (Oct 23, 2010)

Tom Arrandale, “Confluence of Interest,” *Governing* (August 31, 2007)

Questions:

- 1) Do we have “decentralized administration” as Alexis de Tocqueville describes it? What values, according to him, did systems of decentralized administration promote?
- 2) Everywhere in the American political system inequalities in political participation exist. Does local government mitigate these disparities or exacerbate them? In other words, who participates in state and local government, and with what effect?
- 3) If so much of American politics takes place at the local and state level, why do so few citizens participate in politics at that level?
- 4) As methods of mass media and transportation break down geographic distance, is it even possible for local communities to make the decisions they want if they violate the beliefs and ideas of citizens living in other parts of the country (think about the current debate over taking down monuments)?

Week of February 12th

State Parties and Elections

Lecture: “Parties, Participation, and Development”

Shaun Bowler, et al. “Election Systems and Voter Turnout” (Lanahan Reader)

Don Hamilton, “The Oregon Voting Revolution” (Lanahan Reader)

Walter Kirn, “What Color is Montana?” (Lanahan Reader)

Greg Sargent, “First Among Thirds,” (Lanahan Reader)

Alan Greenblatt, “Can Redistricting Ever be Fair?” *Governing* (November 2011)

Questions:

- 1) One of the most important constitutional functions of state governments is in drawing district boundaries for state and federal elections. Should this process remain in the hands of state legislators?
- 2) Have state-level reforms provided workable models for changing the federal form of representation? How have states and localities encouraged third party movements in American politics? What are the drawbacks?
- 3) Do American political parties today encourage *civic virtue*? If not, why, and what can be done to recover or rejuvenate that critical role?
- 4) What does it mean to be a Democrat in, say, Arkansas, versus a Democrat in New York? What does it mean to be a Republican in, say, Massachusetts, versus a Republican in Kansas? How must a party behave in order to keep that type of intra-party, inter-state diversity?

Week of February 19th

Executive Power

Lecture: “The President and the States”

Adam R. Brown, “Are Governors Responsible for the State Economy? Partisanship, Blame, and Divided Federalism.” *The Journal of Politics* 72 (2010): 605-615.

Jennifer M. Jensen, “Governors and Partisan Polarization in the Federal Arena,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 47 (2017): 314-341.

Margaret R. Ferguson, “Chief Executive Success in the Legislative Arena” (Lanahan Reader)

Craig M. Wheelod, “An Institutionalist Perspective on Mayoral Leadership” (Lanahan Reader”

Questions:

- 1) What does it mean to say that a state has a “strong” governor? What are the sources of the that office’s strength? Why have governors across the states become more powerful institutional actors?
- 2) What is the claim to “neutral competence” in state and local bureaucracy, and how do governors/mayors leverage that claim?
- 3) How does the institution of “governor” matter for politics at the national level?
- 4) Do governors matter, or is it all a matter of imagery, partisanship and political posturing?

Week of February 26th

Legislative Power

NB: Reading Load is Lessened to Help Accommodate Midterm Examination

Lecture: “Amateur Hour”

Pervill Squire, “Measuring State Legislative Professionalism” (Lanahan Reader)

Russell Nichols, “Dealing with Term-Limited Legislators,” *Governing* (January 2011)

John A. Straayer, “Colorado’s Term Limits: Consequences, Yes. But Were They Intended?” (Lanahan Reader)

Questions:

- 1) Do un-professionalized state legislatures better realize the ideal of “self-government?”
- 2) How have state legislatures mattered for creating more descriptively representative systems? How well are women and racial and ethnic minorities represented in state legislatures as compared to the U.S. Congress? How has this changed and what institutional factors account for this, as well as variation across states?
- 3) A common critique of the U.S. Congress is that members are too dependent on interest groups and lobbyists. Is this criticism more pervasive at the state and local level?

***** MIDTERM EXAMINATION: THURSDAY, MARCH 1st *****

Week of March 12th

Judicial Power

Lecture: “Supremacy and Hierarchy in Law”

Baker v. Carr (1962), Frankfurter’s Dissent

Carpenter, “How Ferguson, Missouri, Uses Cops and the Courts to Prey on Its Residents,” *The Nation* (on-line)

Martha Derthick, “Federalism and the Politics of Tobacco”

James P. Levine and Steven Zeidman, “The Miracle of Jury Reform in New York” (Lanahan Reader)

Questions:

- 1) At the federal level, it is taken as a given that judges and justices should be unelected; that way they can interpret the law without political influence. How have states and their experience with elected judges challenged that conventional wisdom?
- 2) How did the “reapportionment revolution” change the legislative power in the states? What were the causes of this “revolution?”
- 3) How do the experiences of Ferguson citizens challenge the idea that justice is more accountable, or even less cruel, at the local level?
- 4) In what ways did the 1998 tobacco “master settlement” challenge the Madisonian ideal of “self-government,” “separation of powers,” and “electoral accountability”?
- 5) In visiting the United States in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville commented that, “The jury contributes most powerfully to form the judgement and to increase the natural intelligence of a people, and this is, in my opinion, its greatest advantage.” Does the perspective offered by Levine and Zeidman (and maybe your own experience) confirm this optimism?

Week of March 19th

Administration

Lecture: “Levels of Bureaucracy”

Alan Greenblatt, “Counties: An Outdated Concept or the Future?” *Governing* (August 2012)
Kevin Esterling, “Does the Federal Government Learn from the States? Medicaid and the Limits of Expertise in the Intergovernmental Lobby,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 29 (2009): 1-21.

Martha Derthick, “Up to Date in Kansas City”

Clint Bolick, “The Many Manifestations of Grassroots Tyranny,” *Grassroots Tyranny: The Limits of Federalism* (on-line)

Questions:

- 1) Describing state and local bureaucracy in 1887, Woodrow Wilson wrote, “The field of administration is a field of business. It is removed from the hurry and strife of politics; it at most points stands apart even from the debatable ground of constitutional study. It is a part of political life only as the methods of the counting house are a part of the life of society; only as machinery is part of the manufactured product.” Considering the depictions offered by Esterling, Derthick, and Bolick, is this an accurate portrayal of how bureaucrats behave in our political system?
- 2) What organizational challenges alter the success of state and local administration? Do more governments necessarily produce better government?
- 3) How does state and local reliance on experts challenge the ideal of self-representation?
- 4) When powers are devolved to the states and localities, do they become less bureaucratic and more responsive to the citizenry?

Week of March 26th

State-Local Relations

Lecture: “Who Started It?”

Alan Ehrenhalt, “Trading Places,” *The Great Inversion* (on-line)

Jenni Bergal, “Many Cities are Creating Policies Apart from their States,” *Governing* (January 15, 2015)

Lori Riverstone-Newell, “The Rise of State Preemption Laws in Response to Local Policy Innovation,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 47 (2017): 403-425.

Alan Ehrenhalt, “What Do States Have Against Cities, Anyway?” *Governing* (November 2017)

Questions:

- 1) Why do cities and other types of localities continue to exist if they lack specific protections in the U.S. Constitution?
- 2) As Ehrenhalt asks, “What do states have against cities, anyway?”
- 3) Why do we go to great lengths to mitigate intra-state inequities by redistributing local tax revenue, but rarely go to such lengths to redistribute state monies to reduce national inequities?
- 4) Do cities and other types of localities need effective state governance, or do they thrive when states are hamstrung and gridlocked?
- 5) When states preempt local decision making, are they violating principles of federalism that protect their position in the U.S. federal system?

Week of April 2nd

Federal-Local Relations

Lecture: “Progressivism and Localism”

Martha Derthick and John Dinan, “Progressivism and Federalism”

J.B. Wogan, “What Can Cities Really Do About Climate Change?” *Governing* (December 2014)

Richard M. Valelly, “Net Gains: The Voting Rights Act and Southern Local Government,” *Dilemmas of Scale* (on-line)

Andrew Saultz, et al. “The Every Student Succeeds Act, the Decline of the Federal Role in Education Policy, and the Curbing of Executive Authority,” *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 47 (2017): 426-444.

Questions:

- 1) In what ways is the progressive impulse for rationale, homogenized, and efficient government inconsistent with multiple governments sharing power? In what ways is it consistent? Can a modern-day liberal or progressive defend federalism while advocating for more government?
- 2) Do cities and other types of localities need effective national governance, or do they thrive when the Congress and presidency are hamstrung and gridlocked?
- 3) In what ways does the *Every Student Succeeds Act* suggest a return to local control in education policy? What were the political reasons for that policy reform?

- 4) Professor Derthick writes that if one were to take a principled stand in favor of federalism it would require, in part, “defenders of states’ rights to acknowledge that distinct political communities...must honor constitutionally prescribed standards of the United States for citizenship and political participation.” In what ways does the Voting Rights Act, therefore, nurture the localities place in the federal system?

Week of April 9th

Metropolitan Problems

Lecture: “Urban Renaissance”

Edward C. Banfield, “The Capacities of Local Government,” *Here the People Rule: Selected Essays* (2nd Ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1991. (on-line)

Jane Jacobs, “Introduction,” *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (on-line)

Questions:

- 1) What makes city life so attractive? What *politically* makes the city distinct as a political form in the United States?
- 2) According to Jane Jacobs, what type of politics encouraged the “life” of healthy, vibrant cities? Historically, what accounts for their “death”?
- 3) Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, scholars spoke of “de-urbanization,” as more non-international migrants left American cities than came into them. What accounted for that trend, how did cities respond, and why have Americans – especially millennials – begun to move back to the city?

Week of April 16th

Budgeting and the Fiscal State

Lecture: “Follow the Money”

Sujit M. Canagaretna, “Budget Balancing Tactics” (Lanahan Reader)

Bruce Buchanan, “Rolling the Dice” (Lanahan Reader)

Paul Posner, “Mandates: The Politics of Coercive Federalism,” *Intergovernmental Management for the 21st Century*. (on-line)

Questions:

- 1) Every single state is constitutionally required to have a balanced budget. How has this mattered for American political development at the national and sub-national level?
- 2) Are states necessary institutions for the implementation of federal policy, or are they merely convenient?
- 3) How does public spending vary across the states and within the states? What are the political causes of that variation?
- 4) How has the growth of the federal government limited the ability of states and localities to raise – and then spend – tax revenue?

- 5) Louis Brandeis feared that too much competition among state governments for corporate tax revenues would encourage a “race to the bottom.” In what ways have his fears been realized?

Week of April 23rd

Health, Education, and Welfare

Lecture: “Non-Centralized Policy Making”

Christine Vestal and Michael Ollove, “Why Some State-Run Health Exchanges Worked,” *Stateline* (December 2013)

Adrienne Lu, “Common Core Sparks Flood of Legislation,” *Stateline* (June 2014)

Daniel Dagan and Steven M. Teles, “Locked In? Conservative Reform and the Future of Mass Incarceration,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 65 (2013)

Questions:

- 1) What do the examples of state-run “Obamacare” exchanges, Common Core, and criminal justice reform suggest about policymaking in the states? Could you imagine similar policy changes at the federal level? If not, what accounts for their political feasibility at the sub-national level?
- 2) Do states and localities make it easier for policy to change, or do they, in fact, make it easier for policies to become “entrenched”?
- 3) In 1960, E.E. Schattschneider wrote that, “The flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent.” How do inequities manifest in the current policy making process at the state and local level?

***** POLICY BRIEF WORKSHOP: THURSDAY, APRIL 26th *****

Week of April 30th

Conclusion

Lecture: “Preserving Institutions”

Martha Derthick, “Paradox of the Middle Tier”

***** FINAL EXAM: FRIDAY, MAY 4th, FROM 11:30 a.m. TO 2:00 p.m. *****