

SYLLABUS
PLSC 389: State Politics
Loyola University Chicago
Spring 2024

MWF 2:45 – 3:35 pm
Mundelein 303

Instructor

Dr. Eric Hansen

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Office Location: Coffey Hall 326B

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3:45 – 5:45 pm; Fridays, 1:30 – 2:30 pm; or by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

Though we most often see reports about the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court in the news, much of the political decision making in the United States takes place at the state level of government. The actions that state officials take are important and consequential. Differences in state laws affect the quality of our education, whether we have access to healthcare, when and where we can purchase alcohol, how much we pay in taxes, and the severity of criminal punishments. State governments often have a more immediate impact on Americans' lives than the federal government.

This course serves as an overview of American government and politics at the state level. It adopts the comparative perspective of state politics, in which we will learn about the 50 states by observing the similarities and differences between their political systems and institutions. Though Illinois is an important state among the 50, this is not a course specifically about Illinois government and politics.

Students enrolled in this class will:

- 1) Understand the variation between states in terms of the composition of their citizenries, their governmental institutions, and their laws and policies.
- 2) Learn to think critically about political decision-making and outcomes in the states.
- 3) Acquire knowledge of how to participate and engage with the political system at the state and local levels.
- 4) Develop skills in articulating and expressing their thoughts through speaking and analytical writing.

Required Texts

None

Recommended Texts

I recommend students subscribe to the free daily email newsletter from [Pluribus News](#) to track state-level news during the semester.

Optional Texts [Excerpts assigned for class reading will be posted on Sakai]

Bowler, Shaun, and Todd Donovan. 1998. *Demanding Choices*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dye, Thomas R., and Susan A. McManus. 2019. *Politics in States and Communities*. 15th Ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Hall, Melinda Gann. 2013. *Attacking Judges*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hopkins, David A. 2017. *Red Fighting Blue*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kousser, Thad, and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. *The Power of American Governors*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Masket, Seth E. 2009. *No Middle Ground*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Michener, Jamila. 2018. *Fragmented Democracy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Squire, Peverill, and Gary Moncrief. 2015. *State Legislatures Today*. 2nd Ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Grades

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to individual grades based on overall performance in the course and/or extenuating circumstances. There will be **NO** extra credit provided.

Letter Grade	Percentage Score
A	93-100
A-	90-92.99
B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99
B-	80-82.99
C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99
C-	70-72.99
D+	67-69.99
D	60-66.99
F	59.99 or below

The proportion of each assignment as part of the overall grade is as follows:

Participation: 20%

Reading Quizzes: 15%

State Geography Quiz: 5%

Exams: 60%

Participation

Participation is worth 20% of your overall course grade. Students are expected to participate in activities and in-class discussions of the course material. Though there is no formal attendance requirement, attendance is an integral part of discussions. You can't join the conversation if you don't show up! Grades are assigned according to the following scheme:

100%: Regular attendance, daily or near-daily contributions to discussion

90%: Regular attendance, occasional contributions to discussion

80%: Intermittent attendance, occasional to rare contributions, lack of attention

70%: Rare attendance, rare contributions, disruptive behavior

60% or lower: I don't recognize you

A Note on Punctuality

I will begin class promptly at our designated meeting time. Students should arrive five minutes before class begins to find a seat and make any preparations of materials before class starts.

Getting to class ahead of time is also a courtesy to other students, who may become distracted by late arrivers. Students who must routinely arrive late due to circumstances outside their control (for example, a class immediately before mine on the opposite side of campus) should inform me at the beginning of the semester.

Reading Quizzes

Students will be given six pop quizzes throughout the semester to check for reading completion. Reading quizzes are fair game on any day there is assigned reading. All assigned readings must be completed by the beginning of the class period on the day listed on the reading calendar below. Questions will assess students' comprehension of the major themes of the assigned readings. At the end of the semester, I will drop each student's lowest reading quiz grade from the calculation of the overall course grade.

All quizzes must be completed in class. No makeup quizzes will be given unless I receive written communication from another university official (e.g. dean, athletics official) requesting me to excuse an absence. I do not request or accept doctors' notes. I understand students must sometimes miss class for reasons outside their control, which is why I drop the lowest quiz grade.

State Geography Quiz

Students will be given an in-class quiz asking them to demonstrate their knowledge of the geography of the 50 states. Knowing the geography of the country is important for interpreting map-based data, understanding the geographic or demographic variables driving state-level political decision making, and keeping up with lecture and class discussion. Exercises and exam

questions later in the semester will also require you to apply your geographic knowledge to answer the questions correctly. Students will be asked to identify states on a map, as well as list capitals, major cities, and regional affiliations. Students will receive a study guide with all answers in advance, though they must complete the quiz from memory.

Exams

There will be three exams during the semester, each worth 20% of the course grade. Exams will test students on the material covered in the third of the course preceding it. In other words, the exams, including the final, are not cumulative. Each exam will contain a mixture of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

Students unable to take one of the first two exams on the scheduled date may request to take it a different date with a 5-point (out of 100) grade penalty. I will waive the penalty if I receive written communication from another university official (e.g. deans, athletics officials) asking me to excuse the absence. I do not request or accept doctors' notes. I understand students must sometimes miss class for reasons outside their control, which is why the rescheduling penalty is small. Students should make every effort to reschedule the exam *before* the exam date.

I will not offer the final exam at any time besides the time listed below unless the student has petitioned their dean's office for a change in exam time.

Communication, Office Hours, Question about Grades

Please direct all communication with me outside class or office hours through my campus email account, which can be found in the header of this syllabus. I check my campus email account several times daily and will try to reply to student emails as quickly as possible. Students should not necessarily expect me to reply immediately to emails sent to me at the last minute. I may not be able to reply to questions about course material the morning of an exam or provide resources for an assignment the night before it is to be turned in.

My office hours exist solely for you to visit me with questions about this class. If you can't make those times, email me to schedule a more convenient appointment time. Email is only for brief communications. If you have long and complicated questions, come to my office hours. I will not send grades over email—check Sakai for the latest updates. After I have graded and returned your assignments, there is a 24-hour moratorium before I will answer questions about that assignment.

Technology Use

I will not allow the use of computers, tablets, or other electronic devices during class. There may be some days when I will ask you to bring a computer with you (if there is an online activity, for example). Most of class time will involve lecture or discussion of articles and concepts related to the course—this can be accomplished without computers. I will only allow computers in class if the student presents a notice of accommodations from SAC.

The use of cell phones or other mobile communication devices is prohibited during class, except in the event of an emergency. Cell phones minimally should be put on silent but preferably should be turned off. Students discovered using their phones during class time will be asked to

turn off their phones and place them out of reach.

Student Accessibility

Loyola University provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with Students Accessibility Center (SAC), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Students should provide me with an accommodation notification from SAC, preferably within the first two weeks of class. Students are encouraged to meet with me individually in order to discuss their accommodations. All information will remain confidential. For more information or further assistance, please call (773) 508-3700 or visit <http://www.luc.edu/sac>.

Academic Integrity

Students are responsible for adhering to university policy on academic honesty and avoiding acts of plagiarism or cheating. Students can find more information about what constitutes plagiarism at the Writing Center's website: (<http://www.luc.edu/writing/studentresources/onlineresources>). Consult the College of Arts and Sciences' statement to learn more about college policy: (<http://www.luc.edu/cas/advising/academicintegritystatement>). I reserve the right to case-by-case discretion in assigning penalties for acts of academic dishonesty. However, students should expect to receive a score of "0" on any assignment or exam where they are observed plagiarizing, cheating, or passing off someone else's ideas as their own. If a student commits more than one act of academic dishonesty during the semester, I will fail that student in the course. I report all instances of academic dishonesty to the Office of the Dean of the College of Arts and Science.

Statement on AI Use

The purpose of this class is for students to develop their individual ability to think critically, comprehend, and write about state politics in the U.S. That can only be achieved through personal engagement with ideas and material. Therefore, students may not use artificial intelligence (AI) to generate ideas or create text for any written assignments in this class. Students suspected of using ChatGPT, Bard, Claude, or any similar services to complete their written assignments will be subject to the sanctions described in the previous section.

Readings

Students are expected to complete daily reading assignments in preparation for class. Students should read carefully and be ready to discuss the material, as discussions based around these readings will form the basis of the participation grade. I reserve the right to make changes to the reading list and will inform students well in advance of any changes.

All reading assignments are to be completed by the beginning of class on the day the assignment is listed. Students are responsible for understanding the material from the assigned readings for the midterm and final exams. All articles/chapters will be posted on Sakai. Students may not share course materials with others outside of the class without my written permission.

<i>January</i>	
Wednesday 1/17 Introduction	Read course syllabus

Friday 1/19 Why Study States?	Read “The Policy Trends to Watch in 2024,” <i>Pluribus News</i> Watch “What to Expect from State Legislatures in 2024,” <i>PBS Newshour</i>
Monday 1/22 Federalism	No reading
Wednesday 1/24 Federalism	Read <i>Federalist 45 & 46</i>
Friday 1/26 Constitutions	State Geography Quiz No reading
Monday 1/29 Constitutions	Read Preambles and Bills/Declarations of Rights from: -U.S. Constitution -North Carolina State Constitution -Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania -Constitution of the State of Iowa
Wednesday 1/31 Interest Groups	No reading
<i>February</i>	
Friday 2/2 Interest Groups	Read Lowery and Gray, “The Population Ecology of Gucci Gulch,” p. 1-12
Monday 2/5 Parties	No reading
Wednesday 2/7 Parties	Read Grumbach, “Interest Group Activists and the Polarization of State Legislatures”
Friday 2/9 Elections	No reading
Monday 2/12 Elections	Read Hopkins, Ch. 2
Wednesday 2/14 Direct Democracy	No reading
Friday 2/16 Direct Democracy	Read Bowler and Donovan, Ch. 1 Watch “State Ballot Measures in 2024,” <i>PBS Newshour</i>
Monday 2/19 State-Level Media	Read Moskowitz, “Local News,” p. 114-120 & 126-127
Wednesday 2/21 Redistricting	No reading
Friday 2/23 Exam	Exam #1
Monday 2/26 Policy Diffusion	TBD <i>Guest lecturer: Ashley Grace Burkholder</i>
Wednesday 2/28 Legislatures	No reading
<i>March</i>	
Friday 3/1 Legislatures	Read Squire & Moncrief, Ch. 3
Week of 3/4	No class – Spring Break

Monday 3/11 State Executives	No reading
Wednesday 3/13 State Executives	Read Kousser & Phillips, pp. 1-22
Friday 3/15 Bureaucracy	No reading
Monday 3/18 Courts	No reading
Wednesday 3/20 Courts	Read Hall, Ch. 2
Friday 3/22 Local Governments	No reading
Monday 3/25 Local Governments	Read Dye and MacManus, Ch. 11
Wednesday 3/27 Local Governments	Read Einstein et al., "Neighborhood Defenders"
3/29 – 4/1	No class – Easter Break
<i>April</i>	
Wednesday 4/3 Exam	Exam #2
Friday 4/5 Economic Development	Read "Political Shrugs Replace Scramble for Funding," <i>Chicago Tribune</i>
Monday 4/8 Fiscal Policy	No reading
Wednesday 4/10 Fiscal Policy	Read Hayes and Medina Vidal, "Fiscal Policy and Economic Inequality in the U.S. States"
Friday 4/12 Urban-Rural Politics	Read Cramer Ch. 4
Monday 4/15 Education	No reading
Wednesday 4/17 Education	Read Kogan et al., "The Democratic Deficit in U.S. Education Governance"
Friday 4/19 Criminal Justice	No reading
Monday 4/22 Criminal Justice	Read Duxbury, "Who Controls Criminal Law?" p. 125-30 & 146-48.
Wednesday 4/24 Healthcare & Welfare	No reading

Friday 4/26 Healthcare & Welfare	Read Michener, Ch. 3
Friday 5/3	Final Exam – 4:15 pm

Changes to the Syllabus

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. If changes are made, students will be informed through email and verbally in class, and a new syllabus document will be posted on Sakai.