

**SYLLABUS**  
**PLSC 389: State Politics**  
**Loyola University Chicago**  
**Fall 2017**

TR 1:00 – 2:15 pm  
Mundelein 415

**Instructor**

Dr. Eric Hansen

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Office Location: Coffey Hall 326B

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 4:00 pm – 5:30 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, the vast majority of political decision making in the United States takes place at the state and local levels of government. The actions that elected and unelected officials take at these levels have far-reaching consequences for Americans' lives. Differences in state laws and policies can determine the quality of our education, whether or not we have access to healthcare, when and where we can purchase alcohol, who we can marry, and whether we can be put to death for our crimes. In many senses, states have a much 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 level
- 4) Develop skills in articulating and expressing their thoughts through speaking and analytical writing.

**Required Texts**

Gray, Virginia, Russell L. Hanson, and Thad Kousser. 2017. *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press.

**Optional Texts** [Excerpts of these books assigned for class reading will be posted on Sakai]

Bowman, Ann O'M., and Richard C. Kearney. 2014. *State & Local Government* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Donovan, Todd, Daniel A. Smith, Tracy Osborn, and Christopher Z. Mooney. 2015. *State & Local Politics: Institutions and Reform* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Haider-Markel, Donald P. 2010. *Out and Running*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Key, V.O., Jr. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Knopf

### 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
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 or below

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

Attendance: 10%

Participation: 15%

    Discussion: 10%

    Current Events: 5%

Writing Assignments: 30%

    Prospectus: 5%

    First Draft: 10%

    Final Draft: 15%

Final Presentation: 5%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 20%

I update grades as the semester progresses. Students may check their current grades anytime by logging onto the Sakai gradebook. I also report both midterm and final grades in LOCUS. Midterm grades will be reported no later than the ninth week of the semester so that students with grades of C- or minor can make an informed decision of whether to withdraw from the class. The last day to withdraw with a W falls on the tenth week of the semester. Refer to the LUC academic calendar online (<http://www.luc.edu/academics/schedules>) for the exact day for specific dates.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is worth 10% of the overall course grade. Students are expected to attend class every day. Of course, illness, extracurricular activities, work, family commitments, and other events can interfere. Students are allowed **three (3) “free” absences for any reason** over the course of the semester before absences begin to affect their grade. Beginning with the fourth absence, the attendance portion of the grade will be assessed a 10% penalty for each additional absence. I am relatively generous with free absences because, in most circumstances, I have no ability to distinguish legitimate excuses from illegitimate excuses except by taking the student’s word for it. As a result, I am quite strict on accepting excuses after the “free” absences are used up. Beginning with the fourth absence, students must present documentation from another university official (e.g. a dean or athletic official) in order for their absences to be excused, even if the absence is excusable for reasons such as a family emergency. My reasoning is that students are unlikely, except under extraordinary circumstances, to miss more than three days in class for excusable reasons. If a student believes they will be unable to meet the attendance requirements laid out, they should consult with me at the beginning of the semester.

### *A Note on Punctuality*

I will begin class promptly at our designated meeting time. Thus, it is in the student’s best interest to arrive five minutes before class begins, in order to find a seat, prepare materials, review notes, etc. 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.

### **Participation**

#### *Discussion*

Students are expected to participate actively in activities and in-class discussions of the course material. Quality of participation can make up for a lack of quantity. Please note that attendance is an integral part of discussions; you can’t join the conversation if you don’t show up. Therefore, this part of your grade will be tied to your attendance record.

#### *Current Events*

In order to tie our discussions into real-world issues and debates, students will be responsible for bringing five current events articles to present orally to the class throughout the semester. Current events should cover an issue arising in any state in the current calendar year (preferably within the last month) that is directly related to the day’s topic of reading and discussion. (For example, on the day we discuss fiscal policy, a student might share an article about the resolution

of Illinois' long-standing budget impasse earlier this year.) Students should email me with the link to their article (or if the article is in print, a brief summary) ahead of time so I can make sure that multiple students won't discuss the same article on the same day. Students will sign up for their current event days on the first day of class. Successful and timely presentation of all current events articles will account for 5% of the grade, with 1% awarded for each current event.

### **Writing Assignments**

Students will complete a ten-page research paper on a topic of their choice. This paper will emphasize critical thought, reasoning, argumentation, and organization. Many class research papers turn into a one-shot effort with little feedback given by instructors and little learning taking place among students. In order to make this assignment a more valuable learning process, I will require the research paper to be completed in stages. For the first three draft stages, students will submit their work through a dropbox on Sakai and receive typed comments. For the final draft, students should hand me a printed copy of papers should be handed in to me at the beginning of class on the due date.

Important deadlines for the research paper:

*Thursday, September 14:* Research Question. I must approve a paper topic/research question via email or one-on-one discussion. The question must be (a) relevant to a subject or multiple subjects we cover in this class, and (b) be stated in the form of a "Why?" question. The second requirement is so that the paper serves as an explanation and analysis of an event or phenomenon, rather than a description of it. More details will be provided in class and in a paper prompt to be handed out in class during the first two weeks of the semester.

*Thursday, October 5:* Prospectus. I will require students to submit a two-page essay summarizing your proposed strategy. Include a thesis statement, basic background information, and the beginnings of a defense. I will respond with impressions of your project and suggestions for expanding and/or refining your argument before the first draft is due.

*Thursday, November 14:* First Draft. I will require a full draft of your paper. Your research question and thesis should be clearly stated, your principal supporting arguments fleshed out, and the majority of your sources cited. It is not necessary to have exactly ten pages at this point, but in order for a full draft to be complete, I expect to see at least eight pages. I will return your drafts to you with comments the following Monday in class.

*Thursday, December 7:* Final Draft. This is it. Final draft, all ten pages, fully conforming to the format requirements outlined in the paper prompt.

A grading rubric for the papers containing standards for evaluation, as well as formatting instructions and lateness policies, will be distributed to students in the first two weeks of class.

### **Final Presentation**

In addition to writing a final paper, students will present their work to their classmates during the last class meeting of the semester. Each student should prepare to present for roughly 10 minutes, outlining their research question, findings, and conclusions. I will present students with

a rubric for evaluation in the weeks leading up to the due date. The presentation will account for 5% of the final grade.

### **Midterm & Final Exam**

There will be two exams during the course of the semester, each worth 20% of your grade. Each exam will test you on the material covered in the half of the course preceding it. In other words, the final exam is not cumulative. Both exams will likely consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions, though I reserve the right to tailor the format of the exam based on the material covered and input from students.

### **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. That being said, 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 writing assignments 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. University Policy stipulates that no grades can be sent over email. After I have graded and returned your assignments, there is a twenty-four 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 will 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.

The use of cell phones or other mobile communication devices is strictly prohibited during recitation section, 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.

### **Students with Disabilities**

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 Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD), located in Sullivan Center, Suite 117. Students should provide me with an accommodation notification from SSWD, 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/sswd>.

## 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. Generally speaking, 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 acts of academic dishonesty to the Dean of the College of Arts and Science's office.

## Readings

Students are expected to complete daily reading assignments in preparation for class. The assigned reading may be a book chapter, a scholarly research article, or news articles from mainstream media sources. Read carefully and be ready to discuss the material, as discussions based around these readings will form the basis of the participation component of your 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. Readings from the required textbook are noted with the abbreviation GHK. All other chapters and articles will be posted on Sakai. Students may not share course materials with others outside of the class without my written permission.

<i>August</i>	
<b>August 29</b> Introductions, course overview, syllabus review.	Read the course syllabus Read "13 Issues for States to Watch in 2017," <i>Governing</i> .
<b>August 31</b> Why Study States?	Read Ch. 1, GHK
<i>September</i>	
<b>September 5</b> Federalism	Read Ch. 2, GHK
<b>September 7</b> State 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
<b>September 12</b> Participation	Read Donovan et al. Ch. 3, pp. 74-96

<b>September 14</b> Parties and Elections, pt. 1	Read Ch. 3, GHK <b>Research Questions Due</b>
<b>September 19</b> Parties and Elections, pt. 2	Read Key, <i>Southern Politics in State and Nation</i> , Ch. 14
<b>September 21</b> Representation pt. 1	Read Ch. 5, GHK
<b>September 26</b> Representation pt. 2	Read Haider-Markel, <i>Out and Running</i> , p. 1-16, 148-55 Read Rigby and Wright, "Political Parties and Representation of the Poor"
<b>September 28</b> Direct Democracy	Read Ch. 6, GHK
<i>October</i>	
<b>October 3</b> Interest Groups	Read Ch. 4, GHK
<b>October 5</b> Media	Read "America's Shifting Statehouse Press," <i>Pew Research Center</i> , p. 5 - 36. Wrap-up and Review for Midterm Exam <b>Prospectus Due</b>
<b>October 10</b>	NO CLASS – Fall Break
<b>October 12</b>	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
<b>October 17</b> Legislatures	Read Ch. 7, GHK
<b>October 19</b> Legislatures	Read Wright and Schaffner, "The Influence of Party" Read Maestas, "The Incentive to Listen"
<b>October 24</b> Governors	Read Ch. 8, GHK
<b>October 26</b> Bureaucracy	Read Ch. 17, GHK Read "Taken," <i>The New Yorker</i>
<b>October 31</b> Courts	Read Ch. 9, GHK
<i>November</i>	
<b>November 2</b> Local Government	Read Bowman & Kearney Ch. 12
<b>November 7</b>	TBD
<b>November 9</b> Economic Development	Read Ch. 16, GHK Read "Giving Away Louisiana," <i>The Advocate</i> [Baton Rouge, LA]
<b>November 14</b> Fiscal Policy	Read Ch. 11, GHK <b>First Draft Due</b>
<b>November 16</b> Economic Inequality	Read Ch. 18, GHK Read Carnes and Hansen, "Does Paying Politicians More Promote Economic Diversity?"
<b>November 21</b> Education Policy	Read Ch. 13, GHK

<b>November 23</b>	NO CLASS – Thanksgiving
<b>November 28</b> Criminal Justice Policy	Read Ch. 10, GHK Read “High-Yield Corrections,” <i>State Legislatures</i> Read “State Prison Populations,” <i>Washington Post</i>
<b>November 30</b> Healthcare & Welfare Policy	Read Ch. 12, GHK Read Holahan et al. “The Launch of the ACA in Selected States”
<i>December</i>	
<b>December 5</b> Healthcare & Welfare Policy	Read Fellowes and Rowe, “Politics and the New American Welfare States” Wrap up and review for final exam
<b>December 7</b>	<b>Project Presentations</b> <b>Final Draft Due</b>
<b>December 15</b>	<b>Final Exam – 1:00 pm</b>

### 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.