

State & Local Politics Syllabus and Course Overview

The Graduate School of Political Management

The George Washington University

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Tuesday 7:10-9:40

Corcoran Hall Room 205

Fall 2006

Overview:

The power of state legislatures and local governments is often underestimated and misunderstood. However, significant power and decisions are wielded at the state level. State and Local Politics is a lecture style course that will engage students fully in the state and local political process. Specific topics include: legislative drafting, committee process, lobbying state legislatures, the role of professional lobbyist, the role of citizen activist, ballot initiatives and citizen petitions, the interaction of the three branches of government – judicial, legislative and administrative, and the local government structure. Through case studies and in-class discussion, we will explore the inner workings of the state and local legislative process. In addition to the “how” of the state and local political process, we will explore in-depth the “why” of decision making at the state and local level.

This course is taught by a former 12 years State Senator from Massachusetts and former Assistant Attorney General who focused on Civil Litigation at the state level. This course uses readings, case studies and dynamic lectures to engage the student. There is ample opportunity for student discussion and involvement. Case studies will include the “behind the scenes” details of how some of the most controversial state legislation passed or failed to pass. The class will emphasize student discussion by rewarding classroom participation. A final exam will be given.

Course requirements:

This course will be conducted in a lecture and discussion style manner with analysis and dissection of real state legislative action.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

1. **Class Participation.** 10% of the grade will be based on active and thoughtful participation in class discussions.

2. Individual State & Local Politics Assignment (presentation). 10%
3. Final Examination. 80%

Weekly Class Schedule

- 9/5 Topic: Introduction & overview of State & Local Politics.
Explanation of individual assignment.
- 9/12 Topic: Legislative Process - How a Bill Becomes Law
Lecture and discussion.
Individual assignments
- 9/19 Topic: Legislative Process Continued.
Lecture and discussion
Individual assignments
- 9/26 Topic: Legislative Process Demonstrated Through Assault Weapons Ban Law
Lecture and discussion
Individual assignments
- 10/3 Topic: Legislative Process Demonstrated Through Assault Weapons Ban Law
Continued. Lecture and discussion.
Individual assignments
- 10/10 Topic: The Committee Process
Lecture and discussion.
Individual assignments.
- 10/17 Topic: Drafting Legislation & Interpretation
Lecture and discussion.
Individual assignments
- 10/24 Topic: Drafting Legislation & Interpretation continued.
Lecture and discussion.
Individual assignments.
- 10/31 No Class

- 11/7 Topic: Analysis of National, State & Local Elections.
Lecture and discussion
Individual assignments
- 11/14 Topic: State Constitutional Office Holders – duties and role.
Lecture and discussion
Individual assignments
- 11/21 State Constitutional Office Holders – duties and role continued.
Lecture and discussion.
Individual assignments
- 11/28 Topic: State Ballot Questions & Initiatives
Lecture and discussion.
Individual assignment
- 12/5 Final Class. Topic: State Ballot Questions & Initiatives Continued, review for final exam.
Lecture and discussion.
Individual Assignments.

Contact Information:

I am happy to talk with students. Please email me at Cheryl@cheryljacqus.org or call me at 202-716-1600.

Reading List:

Required Reading:

The Legislative Process John M. Kernochan Foundation Press

A daily major newspaper, preferably The Washington Post or New York Times.