

PSC 311 American State Politics
Professor Joshua J. Dyck
University at Buffalo, SUNY
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MWF 2:00-2:50, 4 Clemens

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Much has been made in recent popular press about the importance of the political-geographic boundary of States in election outcomes. Before there was a “United” States, there were simply States. Before people were Americans, they were Virginians and New Yorkers. State identity was the first forged American political identity, and has been instrumental in shaping the institutions and dynamics of American politics.

The initial debate over the proper organization of the infant country centered around States. States, States-rights, and their relationship with the national government were the centerpieces of the Civil War. State jurisdiction is what the Civil Rights movement was about. States elect Presidents, States garner equal representation in the Senate, and States are typically leaders in political reform, from issues like stem-cell research to parental consent abortion laws, to gay marriage, to welfare reform. A person is more likely to be affected by state government on a daily basis than the federal government.

Interestingly enough, however, when most people think about politics, they think in terms of national political figures and events. This is just one of the conundrums we will take up in this course.

This is a course about States – about their institutional structure, purpose and foundation. This is a course about how States are similar and different, and how States affect our political experiences. At the same time, this course is not about any one particular state – this is not a course in New York politics (or California, Texas, or Hawaii politics). We will focus on the comparative method of learning about state politics by examining the institutional, demographic and experiential similarities and differences that exist.

We will pay special attention to one of the most fascinating institutional differences among the States – the use of direct legislation, currently practiced in most large cities and in about half of all States. Finally, we will cover topics relating to what state experiences and socialization mean for our national political behavior.

Books: The following books are *required* for the course and are available at the University Book Store. Any piece of reading listed for a given date on this syllabus is a required reading for that day.

- *State and Local Politics, Institutions and Reform* (2008) by Donovan, Mooney and Smith
- *Patchwork Nation* (2003) James G. Gimpel and Jason E. Shucknecht

Articles: In addition to the texts, several journal articles will be posted on UBLearns in pdf form. They are denoted in the syllabus by author and date followed by (UBL). Additional short/article readings may be added throughout the course of the semester at my discretion.

Course Expectations: This course is designed to make you think, to challenge your socialized predispositions, and to present the best science that political science has to offer you. It is analytically rigorous (professor-speak for ‘hard’) which means that students are expected to do more than memorize core concepts; you will be forced to apply those concepts.

All reading assignments should be completed for the date which they are assigned before class begins **AND you are required to bring the readings with you to class that day!** In addition to assigned reading, you are expected to read a major US News publication like the New York Times or Wall Street Journal, or keep up with wire reports online. This course will deal with current events, but it is not a current events course. Anyone can learn current events by picking up and reading a newspaper or going online. *The New York Times* is available to you free on campus, as well as free online, so this should not be excessively difficult and you might greatly benefit from perusing several of the nations top periodicals every day. *Reading the newspaper and knowing what’s going on currently in politics is a requirement of this course!* (and a habit I hope you’ll take with you once this course is over)

An unexcused absence on exam day will result in a forfeiture of all points for that exam. Make-ups can be scheduled only for students who pre-excuse their absence (that means before the exam, **not after**). An absence is only excused if supported by documentation either from University personnel or your physician.

I expect a lot of students in my class, so it goes without saying that you ought to expect something from me – a word about that. You can expect me to come to class prepared, enthusiastic, and to be open to questions at any time. I will strive to make myself available to students in and out of the class. I am available at three different times during the week in my office, and I respond to all e-mails within a 24 hour window (not including Saturday). Preferential treatment on questions will be given to students who are active in participating and attending class. *If you are struggling with the material in this class, then do not wait to come see me!*

One last note. I realize we live in a technology age, but that does excuse norms of common decency. I ask that you please refrain from occupying a seat in my classroom while Facebooking, tweeting, Myspace-ing, instant messaging or text messaging. If I become aware that this is occurring, I will simply ask you to leave. Having your laptop open during class time is a privilege that can be revoked at any time.

Grading: Grading will be on a standard 100 point scale with grade ranges in 10 point increments (e.g. 90-100 is the A range; 80-89 is the B range, 70-79 is the C range, 60-69 is the D range, below 60 is an F) unless I deem a curve necessary.

Exams (60%): There will be three exams each worth 20% of the final grade. Each will be a 50 minute in-class exam to be taken on 10/9, 10/30 & 11/20 during regular class. Exams will include objective (multiple choice) questions, and a variety of short answer questions. There is no cumulative final exam in this class.

Quizzes (15%): There will be approximately one quiz a week which will generally consist of a simple question of comprehension/completion of the assigned reading. Quizzes will be of the “pop” form, so it behooves you to have completed your reading before class. I will drop your three lowest quizzes (total number of quizzes will be around 10-15). There are no excused absences for quizzes. All quizzes are out of 10 points. Being absent for a quiz results in a 0; a wrong answer, however, is worth 5 points (half of life is just showing up; the other half is doing your reading)

Paper/Presentation (25%): Finally, using the state chapters in *Patchwork Nation* as a model, you will write a paper of *no more than 6 pages* covering one of the States *not* in *Patchwork Nation*. Your paper will focus on summarizing recent political outcomes and issues in the state, as well as the political geographic distribution of the population, migration, immigration, micro-economic issues, partisan change, etc. You and other students writing about your state will be expected to give a short (10 minute) presentation which includes a summary handout for the class. The actual paper is worth 80% of your paper grade (.8x.25=.20 of your total grade) and is due on Friday, November 13th; the presentation is worth 20%. In the 2nd week of class, you will be permitted to submit a preference for up to 3 States that you’d like write on. Taking into account preferences, I will assign you a state (note: you are not guaranteed to get any of your choices – in the event that 20 people want to write about Hawaii, I will use a random decision rule).

Academic Integrity: From student affairs, “The University has a responsibility to promote academic honesty and integrity and to develop procedures to deal effectively with instances of academic dishonesty. Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect for others' academic endeavors. By placing their name on academic work, students certify the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgments.”

All students in this class are subject to the rules of academic integrity of the University at Buffalo. If you are not familiar with what constitutes academic dishonesty, information is available here: <http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/judicial/art3a.shtml#integrity>. I have ZERO tolerance for cheaters in my class. One offense results in automatic failure on that exam, period.

Paper Assignment – The Details

This spring, we will read the book *Patchwork Nation*, which hones in on the way which States, as agents of political socialization, enforce and reinforce the political values of their citizenry. In this project, you will extend the research of Gimpel and Schuknecht. Please note that this is a research project and hence, you need to adequately budget your time to complete it before the due date. In other words, if you start on March 30th, you will find yourself in severe trouble.

The Paper: Using the 12 State Chapters in the book as a guide, you will write a paper of **no more than 6 pages of text** (tables and figures should go at the end of the paper) detailing what has affected the partisan and electoral sectionalism in your State, and how this has changed over time (note: students will submit preferences for States in week 2 and will be assigned States in week 3 of the class). Because each state is different, papers about different states will not be the same. Some areas that you may want to focus on are: the economy of the State including the largest employers (union/non-union distinctions may also be helpful), urban/rural population distribution (as well as # of urban centers), patterns of migration (domestic movement) and immigration, political changes over time, racial and ethnic population distributions, geographic isolation, etc. This will require research, including the collection of data, as well as resources about your State.

A good place to start is simply by examining the county-level trends for Presidential election returns between 1960 and 2008 by referencing Dave Leip's US Election Atlas (<http://www.uselectionatlas.org>) and answering the following questions: (1) Does sectionalism exist in 2008? (2) Has sectionalism changed over the last 50-100 years? (3) If so, how has it changed? (i.e. has it increased or decreased), (4) What are the root causes of changing or stagnating sectionalism?

The Presentation: After you have written your paper, you and one or two other students from the class (those who have written on the same topic) will do a short 7-10 minute presentation on your State. You will produce a one page handout for the class, with the relevant information that you have found in your research. Presentations will take place during the last two weeks of class; attendance of all students is required in every single one of these classes.

Due Date: A hard copy of the paper is due at the beginning of class (2:00 pm, EST, *sharp*) on **Friday, November 13th**. Do not e-mail me your paper! Late papers can be turned in via e-mail and will be graded down one full letter grade for every day late (e.g. a paper turned in between 2:01 pm, EST on 11/13 and 2:00 pm, EST on 11/14 will be marked down one letter grade; between 2:01 pm, EST on 11/14 and 2:00 pm EST on 11/15 – 2 letter grades). Weekend days count. You are advised to avoid this situation altogether by completing your assignment well ahead of the deadline. Early papers are always accepted.

Citations: All direct quotes, paraphrased text and ideas should be cited in your paper. As a general rule, if you got an idea from somewhere, you should cite the source. Cited material can either appear in footnotes or in a bibliography at the end of your paper. All sources should contain the following information: Author, Title, Year, Place of Publication/Issue/URL.

A reasonable number of citations might be somewhere around 10 different pieces (newspaper articles, books, academic articles, etc.), give or take a few. Wikipedia is an OK place to look for

ideas, but you should follow up with original sources. *DO NOT cite Wiki in your bibliography! Doing so will result in a one letter grade deduction on your paper.*

Paper Format: All papers should follow these strict formatting guidelines. If you fail to meet the formatting standards, your grade will suffer:

- No more than 6 double spaced pages of text (not including endnotes, references, figures or tables)
- Times New Roman, 12 point font
- Double spaced
- 1 inch margins top and bottom
- 1.25 inch margins right and left

In addition, all papers are expected to be edited for appropriate spelling and grammar. Spelling, grammatical and typo mistakes in excess of one or two will decrease your grade.

Drafts: While I encourage you to come to office hours with an outline to talk with me about how you will write your paper, as a general policy, I do not read drafts.

Places to find data:

Dave Leip's US Election Atlas: <http://www.uselectionatlas.org>

National Council on State Legislatures: <http://www.ncsl.org>

Library Collection: The Book of the States

The US Census: <http://www.census.gov/>

Current: <http://factfinder.census.gov/> OR
<http://www.census.gov/main/www/cen2000.html>

1960 Census by State:
<http://www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/1960cenpopv1.htm>

Course Schedule

Abbreviations:

DMS = Donovan, Mooney and Smith textbook

Gimpel=Gimpel and Schuknecht's *Patchwork Nation*

UBL = refers to readings posted on UBLearn

Day	Date	Topic	Reading (completed before class)
M	8/31	Course Introduction	N/A
W	9/2	Politics as science and the comparative method	DMS, Ch. 1; Pearson-Merkowitz and McTague 2008 (UBL)
F	9/4	<i>No Class - APSA</i>	
M	9/7	<i>No Class – Labor Day</i>	
W	9/9	Federalism	DMS, Ch. 2
F	9/11	Federalism	DMS, Ch. 2 (continued)
M	9/14	Federalism	Chubb 1986 (UBL)
W	9/16	Federalism/Constitutions	New York State Constitution (UBL)
F	9/18	Elections and Voting Behavior (intro)	DMS, Ch. 3
M	9/21	Election and Voting Behavior (administration)	Kimball et. al. 2006; Dyck and Seabrook 2009 (UBL)
W	9/23	Patchwork Nation	Gimpel, Intro and Ch. 1
F	9/25	Patchwork Nation	Gimpel, Ch. 2
M	9/28	<i>No Class – Yom Kippur</i>	
W	9/30	Patchwork Nation	Gimpel, Ch. 3-8 (skim)
F	10/2	Patchwork Nation	Gimpel, Ch. 9-14 (skim)
M	10/5	Patchwork Nation	Gimpel, Chapter 15
W	10/7	Exam Review/Catch-up	
F	10/9	Exam #1	
M	10/12	Parties	DMS, Ch. 5

W	10/14	Interest Groups	DMS, Ch. 6 (only pp. 183-190)
F	10/16	State Legislatures	DMS Ch. 7
M	10/19	State Legislatures	Mooney 2009; Kousser 2006 (UBL)
W	10/21	Governors and the Plural Executive	DMS Ch. 8
F	10/23	The Court System	DMS Ch. 9
M	10/26	Fiscal Policy	DMS Ch. 10
W	10/28	Exam Review/Catch-up	
F	10/30	Exam #2	
M	11/2	Local Governments	DMS Ch. 11
W	11/4	Space and Governance	DMS Ch. 12
F	11/6	Direct Democracy (intro)	DMS Ch. 4
M	11/9	Direct Democracy (responsiveness)	Matusaka 1995 (UBL)
W	11/11	Direct Democracy (responsiveness)	Lascher et. al. 1996 (UBL)
F	11/13	Direct Democracy (secondary effects) ***Papers Due***	Bowler and Donovan 2002; Dyck and Lascher 2009 (UBL)
M	11/16	Direct Democracy (tyranny of the majority)	Gamble 1997; Hajnal et. al. 2002 (UBL)
W	11/18	Exam Review/Catch-up	
F	11/20	Exam #3	
M	11/23	<i>No Class – Cancelled</i>	
W	11/25	<i>No Class – Fall Recess</i>	
F	11/27	<i>No Class – Fall Recess</i>	
M	11/30	TBA	
W	12/2	Patchwork Nation Presentations	
F	12/4	Patchwork Nation Presentations	

M	12/7	Patchwork Nation Presentations	
W	12/9	Patchwork Nation Presentations	
F	12/11	Patchwork Nation Presentations	
<i>Note: There is no exam scheduled during final exam week for this class</i>			