

# COURSE SYLLABUS

## POLS 226: STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Spring Semester, 2017

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Office hours: Fridays 2-4 p.m. Since on-campus meetings or off-campus obligations may occasionally prevent my being in my office during office hours, making an appointment in advance, even during office hours, is a good idea. But I do expect to be regularly in my office during office hours, unless otherwise announced. I am also available for appointments at other times.

### I. OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

This course will provide an overview of sub-national (i.e. state and local) government(s) in the USA, a vast and diverse topic. In one semester we shall not be able to cover all the interesting and important phenomena and issues to which sub-national governance in the American political system gives rise. That having been said, we shall attempt to lay a good foundation for an overall understanding of American sub-national governments.

The course will begin with theoretical, conceptual, and historical matters, which can anchor our understanding of sub-national government(s) in political systems in general and American sub-national government(s) in particular. Part 1 of the course will address the functions that sub-national governments can perform and the values that they can foster in a national political system, the origins of state and local governments in the United States, and implications of the size of sub-national government units for the practice of democracy. Particular attention will be paid to federalism and other structural relationships among different governments in a single national political system such as the U.S.A.

Part 2 of the course will address state politics, and Part 3 will treat local politics.

There are, of course, significant connections between state and local governments in the United States and those connections will be reflected in our treatment of each of these two levels of sub-national government in the United States. In addressing state governments in Part 2 of the course we shall focus on the three traditional branches of government and the “direct democracy” phenomena of referenda, initiatives, and recalls (as well as the related phenomenon of “retention

elections”). In treating local governments in Part 3, we shall address localities’ enormous diversity and consider their noteworthy roles and peculiarities. .

Students enrolled in POLS 226 will be expected to approach the workings of American sub-national governments as *political scientists*. Among other things, they will need to complete two projects as part of their responsibilities in the course. More details about these two projects will be forthcoming, but they will include (i) systematically observing and reporting on two local government public meetings and (ii) one or more of the following: class presentations, research papers, and/or reflective essays. More generally, we shall all be in the midst (or “grips”?) of state and local governments during the semester, and there are few, if any, limits to the ways in which POLS 226 students can observe, interact with, and be affected by state and local governments during spring semester, 2017, and indeed during almost any period of time in which they reside within the United States. These up-close-and-personal and relevant opportunities may be as great—or greater—for POLS 226 than for any other course offered at DePauw.

The Indiana General Assembly (i.e., Indiana state legislature) has been meeting since early January, 2017, in its biennial “long session” (also called its “budget session”), which will likely last into April. Some interesting and important measures are being considered. POLS 226 students will be encouraged to pay attention to Indiana state government and Greencastle and Putnam County local governments as a way to put some flesh-and-blood on POLS 226’s treatment of sub-national government(s).

## II. OUTLINE OF TOPICS TO BE TREATED IN THE COURSE

- Part 1 Introduction: theoretical, conceptual, and historical matters
- Part 2 State politics: the three branches of state governments, “direct democracy,” variations among the states, and related matters
- Part 3 Local politics: general-purpose and special-purpose local governments (“special districts”) and what they do
- Part 4 Policies, issues, and problems in sub-national government(s) in the American political system
- Part 5 Concluding reflections on American sub-national governments

### III. READINGS

I have ordered one book ordered through Eli's Books for POLS 226.

Bruce Stinebrickner, ed., *State and Local Government*, 16<sup>th</sup> edition (Dubuque, IA: McGraw-Hill, 2014).

I strongly encourage students to purchase a copy.

As I shall explain in the first week in class, I have not ordered a textbook, although about a half-dozen textbook chapters posted on Moodle will be assigned.

Readings for each part of the course will be provided in a separate set of course materials. Information about which readings are required and which are recommended, and exactly when particular reading and writing assignments are due, will be provided in class and/or electronically during the semester. .

Besides the one book ordered through the bookstore and the textbook chapters to be posted on Moodle, other good sources on state and local governments include the following:

*Governing*, published monthly by Congressional Quarterly. Unbound issues starting with April 2016 are held on reserve in R.O.W. Library.

Gray, Virginia, Russell L. Hanson, and Thad Kousser, editors, *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, tenth edition (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2013). Copy on reserve in R.O.W.

Indiana Chamber of Commerce, *Here Is Your Indiana Government*, 2015-16 edition (Indianapolis: Indiana Chamber of Commerce, 2013). Copy requested for reserve in R.O.W.

*State Legislatures*, published monthly by the National Conference of State Legislatures. Available online through R.O.W. Library.

Stinebrickner, Bruce, editor, *State and Local Government*, 1<sup>st</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> editions (1984-2014). One or two copies of most editions are on reserve in R.O.W.

### IV. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES; GRADING

Students will be expected to come to class having completed assigned readings, thought about them, *and* prepared to discuss and analyze them. In this context, please read or reread the six points, especially #3, under "Academic Expectations

for DePauw Students” in the “Academic Life” part of the *Student Handbook* that is available on the DePauw website. Most classes will consist partly of lectures and partly of discussion, and class discussion will usually relate to assigned readings.

Students are responsible for being familiar with and abiding by DePauw’s “Academic Integrity Policy,” which appears in the “Academic Life” part of the *Student Handbook*.

DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university administered activities with reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA). Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact the Director of Student Disability Services and ADA Coordinator, for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Student Disability Services is located in Suite 200 in the Memorial Student Union Building and the relevant phone number is [765-658-6267](tel:765-658-6267).

Unless there is a specific announcement to the contrary, the use of laptops, cell phones, and other similar electronic devices in POLS 226 classes is prohibited. Cell phones should, of course, be turned off so that they do not serve as distractions during class.

What appears below is an indication of how much different components in the course will count, subject to (almost surely minor) modifications that would, of course, be announced to the class and posted on Moodle.

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| A. | Contributions to class discussions, including attendance, evidence of preparation for class, ‘nuggets,’ etc. | about 20%   |
| B. | One test, one final exam*  | about 42.5% |
| C. | Medium-length essay/paper/project  | about 20%   |
| D. | Public meeting attendance and report   | about 17.5% |

\*The final exam will be given in the time period specified in the University’s final exam schedule. Please CAREFULLY bear this in mind when making plans to leave campus at the end of the semester. The POLS 226A final exam is scheduled for Thursday, 18 May 2017, 1-4 p.m. The POLS 226B final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, 17 May 2017, 1-4 p.m.

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