The state politics and policy field in political science examines the wide range of subjects of interest to most political scientists, including the political development and redesign of institutions and their effects on processes and outcomes; citizen participation in the form of litigation, voting, and group activities to influence government; elite behavior, decision making, and processes within institutions; inter-branch relations in a separation-of-powers system; and the policies produced by state governments and explanations for these results. Generally speaking, the field consists of two primary areas of specialization: 1) state institutions and processes and 2) public policy. While both of these specializations historically were somewhat removed from the political science mainstream, in recent decades scholars have moved well beyond the unsystematic case studies of the past to theoretically rich and technically cutting edge designs, including those that use the American states as a comparative laboratory for testing propositions about the contextual nature of politics.

This seminar is designed to familiarize graduate students with the literature in state institutions and processes and to facilitate independent research in the field. This seminar will not include public policy, which is covered extensively in other Department courses.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

There are several basic requirements for this seminar: weekly papers on the assigned readings, a research paper, and active weekly seminar participation, including the various presentations listed below. All written assignments are to be prepared in accordance with the style manual of the American Political Science Review and are to be delivered as email attachments (WORD or PDF files) to the professor by noon (12:00 p.m.) on the dates specified.

For the sessions with assigned readings, each student will prepare a paper (approximately five to six pages) evaluating all of the required readings for that week. These papers should not merely summarize the studies but rather should describe the major theoretical and methodological approaches embodied in the works, discuss the major findings, offer criticisms of the literature, and make suggestions for future research. These papers are due each Monday preceding the Wednesday afternoon seminar. Except in the rare case of a medical emergency or other such serious circumstance, late papers will not be accepted. The various articles to be evaluated are listed below in chronological order to help students follow the intellectual development of each topic.

Each student also will prepare a research paper in any area of the state politics field that in some way involves subnational institutions and processes. These papers should be the
equivalent of a conference paper at a major political science meeting. Topics for these papers must be approved by the professor. For this purpose, a brief proposal, including a preliminary bibliography and a list of the data sources to be utilized, is due on Monday, January 30. A fully completed research design paper is due on Monday, February 27, and will be presented in class on Wednesday, February 29. These papers should be sent to all members of the class, and students will serve as discussants for papers other than their own in the February 29 class session. Drafts of the course papers reporting the fully executed projects are due on Monday, April 16, and should be sent to all members of the class. These papers will be presented and discussed in class on Wednesday, April 18 and Wednesday, April 25. The final papers are due on Wednesday, May 2. Late papers will not be accepted except in the rare circumstance of a medical emergency or other such serious circumstance. Under no circumstance will extensions be granted beyond Wednesday, May 16, 2012.

Finally, each student is expected to be present at each seminar meeting and to highly conversant about the assigned readings. Seminars are not lecture courses and this seminar is no exception. In this regard, students will alternate the responsibility for serving as discussion leader for the class sessions. The discussion leader has the responsibility to conduct the seminar by organizing and focusing the discussion around the major theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and findings in the readings. Also, as mentioned above, each student will serve as discussant for other students’ research designs and final papers during the sessions in which these papers are presented. Each student will read all papers prepared for the class and will provide critical reviews, including suggestions for improvement.

Course grades will be assigned on the following basis:

- 30% Weekly papers
- 25% Weekly contributions to seminar discussions, including discussant duties and formal presentations of research designs and course papers
- 15% Research design paper
- 30% Course paper

IMPORTANT ARCHIVES AND WEBSITES

http://www.uky.edu/~rford/stateideology.html : Berry et al. state ideology scores.


http://php.indiana.edu/~wright1/ : Erikson, Wright, and Mclver’s public opinion data.

http://www.icpsr.umich.edu : ICPSR at the University of Michigan, an extensive archive of datasets about politics; see the Department ICPSR representative for additional information.


POLICY ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated in this class. Students should be particularly diligent in the preparation of the papers. Paraphrases as well as direct quotations must be properly cited, and credit for theories, hypotheses, and findings generated by others must be acknowledged. In addition, while it is permissible for students to discuss among themselves the weekly papers and course papers, these assignments are to be the work of each individual. The penalty for any violation of academic integrity will be the grade of 0.0 in the course and a recommendation by the professor for formal disciplinary action by the Department and University.

WEEKLY TOPICS AND ASSIGNED READINGS

JANUARY 11: Introduction to State Politics and Comparative Research


Also recommended:


JANUARY 18: State Courts and Judicial Politics


Also recommended:


JANUARY 25: Judicial Elections and Electoral Politics


Also recommended:


FEBRUARY 1: State Legislatures


Also recommended:


**FEBRUARY 8: State Legislative Elections and Electoral Politics**


Also recommended:


FEBRUARY 15: Governors and State Executive Politics


Also recommended:


**FEBRUARY 22: Gubernatorial Elections and Electoral Politics**


Also recommended:


FEBRUARY 29: Presentation and Discussion of Research Designs

MARCH 14: State Political Party Politics


Also recommended:


MARCH 21: Direct Democracy in the States


Also recommended:


**MARCH 28: Organized Interests in the States**


Also recommended:


Response from Gray and Lowery, pages 1302-1308.


APRIL 4: Public Opinion, Political Ideology, and Political Culture in the States


Also recommended:


APRIL 11: Reading Day: Preparation of Course Papers

APRIL 18: Presentation and Discussion of Course Papers

APRIL 25: Presentation and Discussion of Course Papers