
POLI 242 State and Local Government

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point, Spring 2024

Instructor	Dr. Saemyi Park
Class Location & Time	12:30 PM – 1:45 PM @ SCI D230
Office Hours	<i>In Person:</i> 9:30 AM – 10:30 AM (T/TH) @ SCI D335 <i>Online:</i> 2 PM – 4 PM (M) via Zoom or by appointment
Email	spark@uwsp.edu (please do NOT use the Canvas inbox.)
Important Note	Please keep in mind that this syllabus, along with course assignments and due dates, is subject to change. Any changes will be clearly noted in a course announcement in Canvas and through email.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

While many people are somewhat familiar with the issues, institutions, and actors that define our national government and politics, many are unaware of what goes on at the state and local levels. It is at these lower tiers of the American federal system where the majority of decisions that most directly affect our daily lives are made. In POLI 242, students will learn how the state and local political framework is structured within the American federal system and how it functions as a system comprised of various individual and group interests. This course examines political institutions, actors, and issues within American state and local governments. Among other topics, our class will discuss federalism, political culture, state campaigns and elections, public policies, constitutional provisions, and state government branches (legislative, executive, and judicial). At some points, we will closely look at the politics that are relevant to the state of Wisconsin, while at other times we will examine political matters in other states. Overall, this class introduces students to a plethora of important concepts and theories relating to sub-national governments.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the constitutional division of powers between the federal government and the state government, and the evolution of that relationship over time
- Analyze the structure and functions of the institutions of state and local government
- Identify the varying roles of the decision-makers at each level of government
- Explain key issues that consistently impact the activities of state and local government
- Measure factors to explain variations in policy-making process across the states

REQUIRED READINGS

The following books have been ordered at University Bookstore for textbook rental:

- Title: ***“Governing States and Localities”*** (8th Edition)
- Authors: **Kevin B. Smith and Alan Greenblatt**
- Year: **2022**
- Publisher: **Sage & CQ Press**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

	Weight	Due Date
Exam I	20%	Feb. 27 (T)
Exam II	20%	April 9 (T)
Exam III	20%	May 14 (T)
Research Project	20%	On your scheduled dates
In-Class/Online Activities	15%	Throughout the semester
Attendance	5%	Every class
Total:	100%	

Note: Students are required to complete all assignments in order to be eligible to receive a passing grade in the course. **Please note that students do not have the option to “take a zero” on exams and research project**, and students need to complete at least 30% of in-class/online activities. Not submitting all required work will result in either an F for the course or in a final grade of incomplete until the work is submitted (however, this “I” option is rarely permitted to students). Late submission is not accepted unless you receive permission from the instructor in advance. Please read the attendance policy on page 4 for more information about the excusable absence.

GRADING SCALE

Outstanding	A	94-100	A-	90-93		
Above average	B+	87-89	B	83-86	B-	80-82
Average	C+	77-79	C	73-76	C-	70-72
Below average	D+	67-69	D	63-66		
Unsatisfactory	F	Below 62				

Grades will be determined according to the university’s standard scale. There is no curve.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

A. Exams (20% each)

There are three exams, which will take place on the course site in Canvas. It means that they are online exams, and exams are not cumulative. Each exam will be open at 9 AM and close at 11:59 PM on the scheduled exam day. You will be given two hours to take the test. Once you start the test, you cannot take a break to return. If you are given accommodation for the exam, please talk to me with your DRC letter (Disability Resource Center) within the first two weeks of the semester. The format of exams is a combination of multiple-choice questions, true-or-false questions, fill-in-the-blank questions, multiple-answer questions, and/or matching questions. A study guide will be distributed one week before each exam.

Because it is an online exam and is open for a day, students would not have a make-up exam opportunity. Only extraordinary circumstances can excuse your absence on the exam day. You must have instructor approval BEFORE the exam. Please keep in mind that it is extremely rare for students to have a make-up exam opportunity. A make-up exam will be all essay questions, and you need to take it on the last day of class in my office.

B. Research Project & Oral Presentation (20%)

You are asked to conduct in-depth research on one of the topics covered after Exam I. You will apply the concepts, theories, and perspectives to analyze what is happening in two or more states you choose. Comparison analysis is the main method of research. On the second week of the semester, you will sign up for up to three topics and I will try to respect your preference when assigning your presentation topic/date. Your research project will be presented as a Narrated PowerPoint presentation or any other form of video recording. You can use the voice/video recording function in PowerPoint or the screen recorder program "ScreenPal," which is free and easy to use. Your oral presentation should be less than 7 minutes long, and you must use PowerPoint slides to show your research. More detailed information will be posted on the course site.

C. In-Class and/or Online Activities (15%)

Your participation is critical to enhancing the quality of education you will have in the classroom. Everyone is expected to attend the class regularly and contribute to the class discussion. Throughout the semester, you will be invited to complete a variety of learning activities for each subject. Examples of learning activities are debate, data analysis, news briefing, and/or a small group discussion, and these activities will be graded. In addition, the film analysis is a part of this assignment that is scheduled for Feb. 29 and April 11. Reviewing in-class learning resources will be enough to complete these tasks. You don't need to do extra research for these activities.

Please understand that the subjects and/or dates for in-class/online activities are subject to change. You will receive a verbal and email announcement before each activity is distributed. Any schedule change will be clearly communicated to you via email and in person. If you miss one of these activities for excusable reasons, you will be allowed to complete it early or have an extension. Please read the next section to know what excusable absences will be.

D. Attendance and Participation (5%)

You are expected to attend all class sessions. It is in your best interest too. Students who regularly attend class generally enjoy the course more, learn more, and get the most out of their education with higher grades. In addition, you are expected to enrich the learning experience of fellow students and teachers through regular attendance and active participation in class. For most class times, you will be invited to complete a brief activity that help you better understand the topic of American Politics. These activities will promote in-depth class discussion and will be graded. We will have about 28 class sessions throughout the semester. 7 OR MORE unexcused absences will result in the automatic F in the course. Please make sure to be aware of this policy.

Please keep in mind that only few cases are considered as the excusable absences:

1. UWSP-sponsored activities (ROTC, sport game, organization events, etc.)
2. The university-recognized religious holidays
3. The serious and extraordinary circumstances of your medical issues or your immediate family members

In the above-mentioned cases, you are required to submit the proof of evidence to the instructor in advance. For the 1st and 2nd case, you are supposed to know the schedule already or by the beginning of the semester. Please check your schedule and the course calendar to see if any conflicts occur. Make sure to submit the official documents (letters, emails from the coach, etc.) by the second week of February. For the 3rd case, you should inform your instructor immediately and provide the documentation within 48 hours of the event occurs. I reserve the right to review the document and determine if your absence is excusable.

If you are simply sick or under the weather, that is not considered excusable. But, you do not need to email me about it. I will give you **TWO free tickets** on your attendance record.

COURSE POLICIES

Readings: Students are asked to complete each week's required textbook chapter before that lecture. You need to bring your book, assigned readings, and lecture notes to each class.

Excused Late Work: For extremely rare cases, your late submission may be excused without penalty. If you face extraordinary circumstances that would distract you from the course work, please explain what happens and request a make-up opportunity in writing with proof of document. Then, I will verify your request on a case-by-case basis and notify you of my permission for a late submission. If your proof of document contains private information when you encounter unforeseen medical and/or personal emergencies, you may want to contact UWSP DRC and/or the Dean of Student to submit your document. Then, the office will verify your excuse for me. Then, I will determine if you will be granted excused late submission.

Unexcused Late Work: I understand that you may encounter unforeseen circumstances that prevent you to complete the module activities on time. To ease your burden with the dues, I will accept your late submission **within 4 days** from its original deadline. Unexcused late submission of course work will incur **a 10% deduction per day**. Non-major sicknesses that do not require surgery and/or hospital admission will be an example of unexcused late submission. In this case, I will NOT require proof of document so that you can simply complete the module activity when it is possible within 5 days from its original due.

Canvas: This course will have a site on Canvas. The site will be used to share course materials including, but not limited to, lecture note, and additional readings. Make sure that you check this site before every class.

Lectures: Before we begin a topic in class, I will post an outline of the lecture material on the course website. The outlines give you the framework of the lecture but do not give you the entire script. If you wish, you can print these outlines and bring them with you to class to use as a base for note taking. You will learn and remember better when you write things down yourself. Regarding note taking, make sure you take notes that will be meaningful to you later when you are reviewing your notes, rather than focusing only on transcribing the slides verbatim. Please note that I will not share the PowerPoint slides with students. All learning materials (data, figures, tables, etc.) will be shared on the course site.

Office Hours: I will have regular office hours *in person* as well as *virtually*. I will be in my office (Science Building D335) every Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM. You can also reach out to me via Zoom on every Monday from 2 PM to 4 PM. If my regular office hours do not work for you, you can certainly schedule a meeting for a different time and date. Just email me to set up the appointment. The Zoom link will be posted in the course site.

Technology Policy: Technology devices EXCEPT cellphones are allowed in class for note taking. Out of respect for your fellow students, your professor, and the educational process, all other technology devices must be powered down and put away, not on the desk or in your hoodie pocket, or on your lap, during class. If you feel you have an emergency situation that requires your phone to be on vibrate, please clear this with the professor before class begins.

Email Communication: Email is a convenient way to continue contact between professor and student outside of class. Email is best for 1-2 sentence responses, and conceptual questions do not lend themselves well to email. If you have any questions regarding your assignments, please visit my office hours for an in-depth consultation. While students should take advantage of this email communication opportunity with me, you should also do so in a professional manner. I will NOT reply to emails that do not include a salutation (“Dear Prof. ...” or “Hello Dr. ...”) and please avoid calling me by the first name or “hey”.

When you email me, please follow **the professional email format** shown in the picture below:

In parenthesis,
include the course
number and a brief
topic of your inquiry
in the subject line

A proper salutation

Indicate your name

Brief contents

I will also not respond to emails that ask for answers to questions that can easily be found on the syllabus or the lecture notes. If you have a question regarding lectures or assigned material that you just cannot seem to master, then ask a question in class, or come to me during office hours. I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours during weekdays (not weekends), but please email me again if you do not receive my response within 48 hours.

Respect: I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. I am intolerant of disruptive behavior in the classroom, including talking during lectures, doing something else not related to the class, frequently going to use a restroom, and especially playing with digital devices. Students engaging in disruptive behavior may be asked to leave the classroom in order to preserve the learning environment for other students. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of others’ opinions. Please do not intimidate, patronize, or ridicule anyone else during the course of classroom activities. This course is open to a variety of ways of interpreting history, theories, and policies. Students are encouraged to share their questions and ideas in lectures. Since there will be differences and disagreements, students are expected to show respect to the comments and positions of fellow students and me.

Honesty: Any instance of academic misconduct will be taken seriously and may result in failure of the course. Misconduct will result in notification to the Dean of Students. If you are having a

problem, it is much better to talk to me about it. Do not struggle by yourself. I want you to learn and do well in this course, not punish you with a lower grade. Talk to me if you are having a problem so I can try to help you work out a solution.

Course Calendar

(Topics, readings, films, schedule, and class modality are subject to announced change by instructor.)

Topic	Dates	Readings
Introduction to POLI 242	Jan. 23	None
Introduction to State and Local Government	Jan. 25	Ch. 1
Federalism	Jan. 30 & Feb. 1	Ch. 2
Constitutions	Feb. 6 & Feb. 8	Ch. 3
Legislatures	Feb. 13 & Feb. 15	Ch. 7
Governors and Executives	Feb. 20 & Feb. 22	Ch. 8
Exam I	Feb. 27	
Film Presentation I	Feb. 29	
Courts	March 5 & March 7	Ch. 9
Local Government	March 12 & March 14	Ch. 11
Finance	March 26 & March 28	Ch. 4
Political Attitudes and Participation	April 2 & April 4	Ch. 5
Exam II	April 9	
Film Presentation II	April 11	
Education Policy	April 16 & April 18	Ch. 13
Crime and Punishment	April 23 & April 25	Ch. 14
Health and Welfare Policy	April 30 & May 2	Ch. 15
Environmental Policy	Mat 7 & May 9	Ch. 16
Exam III	May 14	