

**STATE AND URBAN POLITICS  
POLS 2220-01**

**Professor:** Robert Cropf, PhD

**Office:** 154 McGannon Hall

**Email:** [robert.cropf@slu.edu](mailto:robert.cropf@slu.edu) (preferred)

**Phone:** (314)977-3936

**Office Hours:** Thursday 5:00—6:00 or by appointment

**Course Description**

Politics and government at the national level receives the lion's share of media attention leaving state and local governments to feel like the forgotten stepchildren of American politics. However, in recent years, it has been states, like California and some local governments, that have taken the lead in major policy areas including health care, criminal justice reform, drug policy, environmental policies and others. If you want to fully understand American politics, then you must turn to state and local governments. The purpose of this course is to study the political institutions, actors, and burning issues at the American state and local levels. As part of our examination, we will scrutinize federalism, political culture, state campaigns and elections, political parties, public policies, constitutional provisions, and state government branches (legislative, executive, and judicial). Taking an Introduction to American Politics and Government course is not necessary but familiarity with national politics and government helps a lot!

This course provides students with an introduction to the important concepts and theories relating you need to know to understand sub-national governments. States have been described as "laboratories of democracy." Despite general similarities in terms of structures, procedures, and norms, there still exists tremendous variation in the policies and practices of state governments. Examining state governments allows us to see where public policy has been successful or a failure. What works in one state might work in another. Effective public policy at the state level arises from many sources and one important source is potentially inspired from other states or municipalities.

**Required Texts:**

Donovan, Todd, Daniel A. Smith, Tracy Osborn and Christopher Z. Mooney (DSOM). 2015. *State & Local Politics: Institutions & Reform: The Essentials*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston, MA. Wadsworth Publishing.

Kettl, Don (K), *Divided States of America*, Princeton University Press.

**Weekly Reading Assignments (Date is Thursday of each week. The date that assignment is due can be found on Canvas):**

Week 1: 8/25

Week 2: 9/1 (DSOM: Introduction and Ch.1; K: Preface)

Week 3: Sept. 8 (DSOM: Chapter 2; K: Ch.1)

Week 4: Sept 15 (DSOM: Chapter 3; K: Ch.2)

Week 5: Sept. 22 (DSOM: Chapter 4; K: Ch.3)

Week 6: Sept. 29 (DSOM: Chapter 5; K: Ch.4)

Week 7: Oct. 6 (DSOM: Chapter 6; K: Ch.5)

Week 8: Oct. 13 (DSOM: Chapter 7; K: Ch. 6)

**Week 9: Oct.18 (midterm review), Oct. 20 (midterm due by 11:59 pm)**

Week 10: (DSOM Chapter 8; **Oct. 28 Fall Break No Class**)

Week 11: Nov. 3 (DSOM: Chapter 8; K: Ch.7)

Week 12: Nov. 10 (DSOM: Chapter 9; K: Ch. 8)

Week 13: Nov. 17 (DSOM: Chapter 10; K: Ch.9)

Week 14: Nov. 22 (DSOM: Chapter 11)

**Nov. 24 Thanksgiving No Class**

Week 15: Nov. 30 (DSOM: Chapters 12 and 13; K: Ch.10)

Week 16: Dec. 8 (DSOM: Chapter 14 and 15; K: Ch.11)

**Final Exam (online due Dec.15 by 11:59 pm)**  
-----

**Breakdown of Assignment Grading:**

1. **Attendance:** students must attend every class but I assume you know that. Participation in class discussion: Besides showing up, getting involved in class discussions helps you engage with the material and learn better. (5%)
2. **Online Discussion Board:** several times during the semester, I will post a question on Canvas. You will have a few days to respond to my questions and the responses of 2 fellow students. Your ability to post on the Discussion Board intelligently and insightfully based on the lectures, the assigned text,

and outside media coverage will give you full credit for this requirement.  
(10%)

3. **5 Online quizzes:** Multiple-choice quizzes on Canvas (25%)
4. **Exams:** Mid-term exam will be on Canvas and consist of multiple-choice questions and short essay questions (25%). On-line Final exam consisting of short-essay questions. Once you open the exam you will have 2 hours to complete the exam before Canvas kicks you out. (35%)

**Grading Scale:**

<u>Letter Grade:</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	60-69
F	<60

-----

**Course Administration:**

**Attendance Policy:**

Your success in this course will depend on your ability to complete the daily reading and weekly writing and discussion assignments as well as the your ability to read the biography of Benjamin Franklin as if you were having a conversation with the author each day. (The last is just to make sure you're paying attention!) Absence in three classes without a reason that is out of the control of the student will result in a one level drop in the final grade (i.e. illness, work conflict, medical emergency, etc.)

**Courtesy Expectations:**

Students will treat their classroom obligations as they would treat any serious professional engagement. That includes:

- 1) Preparing thoroughly for each session in accordance with the instructor's request;
- 2) Adhering to deadlines and timetables established by the instructor;
- 3) Providing constructive feedback to faculty members regarding their performance.

**Honor Code:**

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its

judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or ordering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to me and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. Please refer to the university policy at <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>.

### **Expectations and Procedures:**

#### Technology

Put your phone on mute. You do not need to use your laptop for this course but you will probably bring it to class anyway. Avoid the temptation to browse the web, check e-mail, and frequent social networking sites during lecture. Show a little will power for goodness sake! I will upload all lecture powerpoints to Blackboard.

#### Communication:

I will post grades, send class e-mails, etc. through Blackboard. Be sure that you can access the e-mail address listed. I will only send e-mail out to your SLU e-mail accounts listed on the course roster in Banner. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses you may use. Be sure to check the class' Blackboard announcements.

#### Disabilities:

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

\_ Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.

\_ University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at the Student Success Center.

Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter

### **University Writing Services:**

I encourage you to take advantage of University Writing Services; getting feedback benefits all writers! Trained writing consultants can help with any writing, multimedia project, or oral presentation. During one-on-one consultations, you can work on everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. *These services do fill up*, so please make an appointment! Also, bring your assignment description, and a few goals, to the consultation! For more information, or to make an appointment, visit [www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml](http://www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml) or call 977-3484.