

Bergen Community College
Division of Business, Social Sciences & Public Services
Department of Social Sciences

Departmental Policy Syllabus

POL-104 STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Basic Information about Course and Instructor

Semester and year:
Section Number:
Meeting Times and Locations:

Instructor:
Office Location:
Phone:
Departmental Secretary: [optional]
Office Hours:
Email Address:

Course Description

State and Local Government is the study of state, county and municipal political systems. The course examines the making and enforcement of public policy and the political roles of the people, political parties, political machines, and pressure groups. Intergovernmental relations and evolving patterns of metropolitan government are analyzed with an emphasis on New Jersey and Bergen County government. 3 lectures, 3 credits
General Education Course-Social Science Elective

Student Learning Objectives

Key objectives of the course include enabling the student orally and in writing to:

1. identify and define basic concepts of political science, e.g., power, politics, government, administration, separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism;
2. identify and distinguish between the various branches and levels of government and their respective powers;
3. compare and contrast the constitutional aspects of government in different states and communities, e.g., strong mayor and weak mayor systems, long and short-ballot states, variations in appointment and removal powers of executives, etc.;
4. identify and contrast the various methods for citizen participation, e.g., elections and voting, lobbying, and political parties;
5. analyze the decision making process, formal and informal; and
6. identify these factors in their own political systems, especially New Jersey

In pursuit of the foregoing goals, the course is based on the reading and analysis of required texts, contemporary newspapers and other media sources. Students are given the opportunity and are encouraged to participate actively in class discussions; and students are required to do a substantial amount of expository and critical writing in response to the material presented in the course.

The Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in this course are intended to be aligned with as many of the college's Core Competencies and General Education Goals as possible. In addition, student progress in reaching the course's SLOs is to be assessed through a variety of assessment types (tools) and on the basis of a variety of assessment criteria. Assessment types may include any combination of classroom discussion, objective tests and examinations, essay tests, papers, short essays, book reports, student classroom presentations, etc., utilizing current (technological and traditional) techniques of social science research and writing.

Course Content

The course is intended to introduce students to the basic principles, values, structures and operation of the current **state and local governmental and political systems**. Sample course syllabi can be viewed on the website of the American Political Science Association (APSA) at http://www.apsanet.org/content_3807. The topics included on the sample course syllabus (below) should be covered.

Special Features of the Course (if any) [to be designated by the instructor]

Along with traditional sources students are expected to **use the Internet** to access sources for their research on current issues.

Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

A variety of suitable texts exist from major publishers. Choice of a textbook is a department-wide decision.

Bowman and Kearney, *State and Local Government*, 6th edition, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston.

Web Site: www.college.hmco.com is a course specific website linked to the text.

Other study materials are available such as *The New York Times*-Online: www.nytimes.com , *The Star Ledger* (for state level coverage) www.nj.com/starledger, the *Bergen Record* (for county coverage). www.bergenrecord.com

Writing and Critical Thinking Requirement(s)

Because POL-104 is a General Education course, it requires students to complete a variety of critical thinking and writing assignments. These assignments may include class discussions and debates requiring the application of critical thinking skills, short in-class essays, out-of-class writing projects (journals, research papers, argument-analysis papers, book reviews, etc.), tests and examinations containing essay components, and so forth. Instructors will respond to and comment on students' writing in detail.

Sample Assignment: PORTFOLIO-ESSAY:

This written essay is designed to focus on one, relevant, current topic based on articles from current newspapers, and other computer accessible sources, such as Web sites. Besides getting students to become expert in one specific area of government and politics, the newspaper research will introduce the student to the wide range of issues, controversies and problems that affect us all. Basically, this assignment requires the student to **read the newspaper**, select and follow an approved **topic** as it develops during the first two months of the semester. Collect and **save the articles**, either by downloading them to your word processor or clipping them from the newspaper, and then organize them with a commentary (**essay**) explaining the development over the period and offering your own observations and conclusions. **Two articles and one paragraph will be handed in each week**

identifying and justifying your topic. Without the early research and topic approval the final essay will not be accepted. Due date: 11th week.

Grading Policy

A student's final grade for the course is based primarily on his or her performance on the required work for the course (writing assignments, examinations, class presentations, etc.) and on his or her overall mastery of the material covered in the course. A student's class participation may also be evaluated, and the grade thereon may be used as a factor in determining the student's final grade for the course.

Sample: Consistent with the Attendance Policy grades will be earned through a series of **three tests** (70%), a written **portfolio-essay** described above (20%), and **class participation** which includes participation, lateness and attendance among other things (10%).

Attendance Policy

BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

Sample Attendance Policy in this Course:

It is expected that students will attend all class meetings. If a student misses more than three weeks worth of classes throughout the semester he/she will not pass the course. **For example, if the course meets twice a week, no more than six absences are tolerated, for any reason. The student will not pass the course for reasons of absence alone.** For a course that meets once a week, the maximum number of absences tolerated is three. Three latenesses equal one absence; classes when tests are held are included as classes. Illness, accidents and business emergencies sometimes occur; therefore it behooves everyone to **anticipate these emergencies by being in class routinely.** Look upon absences as your sick days and personal days on a job: use them when necessary; take too many and you lose the job! (If you are late be sure to see the Professor that class lest it be counted as an absence.)

Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements [optional but recommended]

Examples:
Statement on plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty.
ADA statement.
Sexual Harassment statement.
Statement on acceptable use of BCC technology.
Statement on the purpose and value of faculty office hours.

Student and Faculty Support Services [optional but recommended]

List support services, e.g., the Writing Center, the Math Lab, the Tutorial Center, Online Writing Lab (OWL), Office of Specialized Services, etc. Include information on the BCC Library.

Example:

Student and Faculty Support Services

The Distance Learning Office – for any problems you may have accessing your online courses	Room C-334	201-612-5581 psimms@bergen.edu
Smarthinking Tutorial Service	On Line at:	www.bergen.edu/library/learning/tutor/smart/index.asp
The Tutoring Center	Room S-118	201-447-7908
The Technology Assisted Learning Lab (Math and English)	Room C-110	201-447-7988
The Writing Center	Room C-110	201-447-7136
The Online Writing Lab (OWL)		www.bergen.edu/owl
The Office of Specialized Services (for Students with Disabilities)	Room S-153	201-612-5270
The Sidney Silverman Library – Reference Desk	Room L-226	201-447-7436

Sample Format for Course Outline and Calendar

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity	Learning Objectives	Assignments/Events
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				

See the (1) Sample Course Outline and (2) Sample Course Outline and Calendar below.

1. HOW TO THINK ABOUT STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Capacity and **POLITICS**

Needs and delivery systems

Political Cultures

SYSTEMS ANALYSIS: Inputs>Conversion>Outputs

Text: Chap. 1 and visit the website.

2. EXAMPLE: THE *POLITICS* OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

What are the input>conversion>output factors of police work?

Who gets what, when and how?

Elements *within* a political system

Patterns, problems and conflicts

Text: Chap. 16 and visit the website.

3. FEDERALISM AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS.

A complex system: what are the needs and who delivers the services?

Who makes policy?

Theories of Federalism: compact, dual, cooperative

Rediscovery of the 11th Amendment

The *Devolution Revolution* (Reagan Revolution)

Home Rule: Judge Dillon v. Judge Cooley

Community Control? (Neighborhood Government in big cities)

Text: Chap. 2 and pages on Dillon's Rule. Visit the website.

4. CONSTITUTIONS

The ground rules for politics

Distribution of powers, privileges and rewards

Politics and Constitutions

Constitutional change and stability: amendment and revision

Text: Chap. 3 and website.

1ST TEST: CHAPS. 1, 16, 2 AND 3 AND NOTES

5. ELECTORAL POLITICS

Democracy and Government: Linkages

Elections, Political Parties and Lobbies

Who gets what, when and how?

Direct Democracy: Initiative, Referendum and Recall

Money!

Text: Chaps. 4 and 5 and websites.

6. DECISION-MAKERS: THE LEGISLATURES

Functions, Powers and Limitations

The Legislative Process: idea>bill>law

Enduring Problems: gerrymandering, apportionment, length of sessions, salaries, leadership, unicameralism

Power Relationships between Legislatures and Governors: who makes law?

Text: Chap. 6 and website.

7. DECISION-MAKERS: GOVERNORS AND ADMINISTRATION

Roles, Powers and Limitations

The Modern Executive: leadership, appointment/removal, long/short ballots, budget powers, style and personality

Administration and Leadership: span of control, unity of command, persuasion

Text: Chap. 7 and websites.

2ND TEST: CHAPS. 4-7.

8. DECISION-MAKERS: THE COURTS

Functions, Powers and Limitations

Do Judges make law?

Structure of court systems

Judicial selection and politics

Administration and justice: cost, delay, plea bargaining

Text: Chap. 9 and website.

9. MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT: EVOLUTION AND COMPLEXITY

Origin and Evolution: the rise and fall of the city

A potpourri of government forms and styles!

People, business, services, costs and taxes: who gets what?

Charters

Forms of local government: mayor and council, manager, commission

Political Styles: Bossism and Reform

Who Governs?: Elitism v. Pluralism

Text: Chaps 10 and 11 and websites.

10. COUNTY, METROPOLITAN AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

The County: a rural unit of government to begin with...

Suburbs: the Dream and Dilemma

Demographics

Metropolitan Statistical Areas: where do you live?

Regionalism: search for a governable place

Structures and Powers

Text: Chap. 12 and website.

3rd TEST: CHAPS. 9-12

(2) SAMPLE COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

[with designation of Student Learning Objectives – by number – for each topic]

Note to Students: The following Course Outline and Calendar is tentative and subject to change, depending upon the progress of the class.

Week(s)	Date(s)	Topic/Activity/Assignments (See the Instructors' specific course outline for activity and the specific text in use for assignments. Activities may include any combination of classroom discussion, objective tests and examinations, essay tests, papers, short essays, book reports, student classroom presentations, etc., utilizing current (technological and traditional) techniques of social science research and writing.)	Student Learning Objectives
1-2		Introduction: Thinking about states and local governments; systems analysis: a framework for analysis.	1-6
3		The politics of the criminal justice system, as an example.	1-6
4		Federalism and intergovernmental relations	1-6
5		State Constitutions: purpose and functions. Test 1	1-6
6-7		Electoral Politics: elections, political parties and lobbies at the state and local level	1-6
8		Decision Makers: the Legislature- functions, powers and limitations	1-6
9		Decision Makers: Governors and their Administrations	1-6
10		Decision Makers: the Courts Test 2	1-6
11-12		Municipal Government: responsibilities, forms and powers Papers Due	1-6
13-14		County, Metropolitan and Regional Government: problems of suburbia	1-6
15		Optional Policy Topics Test 3	1-6