

# PSCI 3061: State Government & Politics

## Spring 2020 • Tu/Th 11:00-12:15 • HLMS 267

Professor: Nancy Billica

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:30-10:30 am; 2:30-3:30 pm | Thursdays 9:30-10:30 am; 1:00-2:30 pm

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

How do political institutions, practices and policies vary across states? While we are often more focused on and knowledgeable about national politics, it turns out that our day-to-day lives are typically more directly affected by decisions and programs adopted at the state and local levels. We will compare across states, identifying both patterns and differences, and draw conclusions about the nature of American politics more generally. Among other goals, this course is designed to stimulate inquiry into the following questions: What are key differences across states and communities, and what difference do these make? Why do policy issues, choices and outcomes differ across states and groups within those states? How do state and local political, organizational and institutional mechanisms influence policy developments and results? What are the options for advancing political and policy change at state and local levels?

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- gain knowledge of the constitutional division of powers between the federal government and the state governments, and the evolution of those relationships over time.
- learn about the main state government institutions and their roles in (a) the making and implementation of public policy; and (b) the reconciliation of conflicts and demands among and between competing interests.
- practice using the states to comparatively study broader topics in political science, including how variations in institutions and political behavior affect concepts such as power, representation, and political responsiveness.
- develop critical thinking, analysis and writing skills.

### OVERVIEW OF COURSE ASSESSMENT & ASSIGNMENTS

Date Due	Assignments	Grading
Thurs, Feb 27	In-class midterm exam; review sheet to Canvas 1 week prior.	25%
Tues, Mar 17	Research Paper A: analyzing & comparing state characteristics & institutions. Guidelines on Canvas, and due to Canvas before class.	25%
Tues, Apr 21	Research Paper B: comparative state political & policy analysis. Guidelines on Canvas, and due to Canvas before class.	25%
Wed, May 6, 11:59 pm	Take-home final exam; requirements posted to Canvas one week before the due date.	25%

## **COURSE READINGS**

The following book is required:

Virginia Gray, Russell Hanson & Than Kousser, eds., *Politics in the American States: A Comparative Analysis*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (CQ Press, 2018). Note that another recent edition of the same text may be substituted.

Other readings and materials listed in the schedule or announced in class will be made available via Canvas or online.

## **RESEARCH & WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

Assignments will involve use of a variety of source materials for examining key questions related to state politics. Goals: To guide and motivate individual research and investigation; to stimulate critical thinking and writing; and to spark class discussion and learning from shared findings.

Student research will be the subject of in-class discussion (be prepared to share what you are finding) as well as in-depth individual inquiry. The two research paper assignments are related but will focus on different questions involving state comparison and analysis. Research Paper A focuses on both descriptive features (including demographics) and institutional arrangements (such as state constitutions and state legislatures) across several states. What similarities and differences can be observed, and what difference do these appear to make? Research Paper B, due at the end of the semester, focuses on public policy and related state political actors and processes (such as party politics and the role of interest groups) across several states. Issues and characteristics identified in part A should be quite helpful and relevant to the analyses undertaken in assignment B.

Detailed assignment guidelines are posted to Canvas. Be sure to review assignment requirements early and allow yourself sufficient time to fully and successfully complete the work.

## **MIDTERM EXAM (Tuesday, Feb 18<sup>th</sup>):**

The midterm will cover the whole range of course concepts considered in class, including lectures, readings and discussion. Note that the lecture material will not necessarily appear in the readings, and not all readings will be discussed in class. Thus, good preparation means being in class and completing all of the assigned readings. The exam will include a mixture of multiple choice and short answer questions (to motivate mastery of key information and concepts), and at least one essay designed to stimulate synthesis and critical analysis. A review sheet will be posted to Canvas approximately one week before the exam.

**TAKE-HOME FINAL EXAM (due to Canvas Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, no later than 11:59 pm):** This final assignment (will focus on review and application of course concepts from across the semester. Like the midterm, it will draw on the whole range of materials introduced in class, readings, and assignments. Requirements will be posted to Canvas approximately one week before the due date.

## **CLASS ATTENDANCE & ACTIVE PARTICIPATION**

Students are expected to be in regular attendance and actively engaging with the material. Regular attendance means arriving on time, remaining for the entire class session, and avoiding unnecessary absences. Active engagement means being attentive and fully participating in all aspects of classroom activity, including asking and answering questions in the classroom and regularly participating in group discussions. Discussion and sharing of state comparison research findings is also expected. No points for just making it to class, but points lost for more than 2 classes missed.

## Class & University Policies & Expectations

- **Classroom etiquette:** The basic rule is one of respect. The goal is to create a community where all feel free to participate in classroom discussion and are open to the ideas and contributions of others. We should expect to disagree with each other on at least some issues of debate, but discussion and disagreement must be expressed in a manner that recognizes the dignity of all and is open to learning from other perspectives. Disrespectful language and/or behavior will not be tolerated.
- **Use of technology in the classroom:** Laptop computers and other electronic devices distract from the classroom learning environment and thus are not to be routinely used in class without the prior consent of the instructor.
- **Assignment submissions and due dates:**
  - Students are responsible for ensuring that assignments are successfully submitted to Canvas on time and in accessible format (.doc, .docx or .pdf). Be sure to check your document after submission to see that it is readable and that the correct document was uploaded. Back-up copies of assignments may be submitted via email if you're not sure Canvas is working.
  - Assignments are due on the due dates. Students with legitimate, documented reasons for missing an exam or assignment deadline should consult with the professor *prior to* the due date for alternative arrangements and exemption from late penalties.
  - In the absence of a pre-approved exception or documented emergency, late penalties apply, with deductions, as follows: Same day, after class begins: -10%; next day: -20%; each day thereafter, an additional 10% deduction, with papers 4 or more days overdue accepted at 50% credit.
- **Grading:** While most assignment grades will be posted on Canvas, the complete set of grading records will be maintained by the professor (and may not be fully reflected on Canvas). This includes any deductions related to class attendance and participation.
- **Accommodation for Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.
- **Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- **Honor Code:** All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct

will be reported to the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu)); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

- **Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation:** The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

- **Religious Holidays:** Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please let me know as soon as possible of any schedule conflicts – before missing class or assignments. See [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

## Schedule of Class Lecture Topics, Readings & Assignments

\*\*\* Class schedule subject to change \*\*\*

Note: Readings listed as “PAS” refer to the text, *Politics in the American States* (Gray, Hanson & Kousser, eds.)

Week	Dates	TOPICS & ASSIGNMENTS
<b>1</b>	Jan 14, 16	<b>Introduction to state politics</b> Rdg: PAS, Chap 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mooney, Christopher (2001), “State Politics &amp; Policy Quarterly and the Study of State Politics: The Editor’s Introduction,” <i>State Politics &amp; Policy Quarterly</i> 1(1):1-4 – on Canvas</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Jan 21, 23	<b>Federal-state relations</b> Rdg: PAS, Chap 2 Take a look at: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Council of State Governments (<a href="http://www.csg.org/">http://www.csg.org/</a>)</li> <li>▪ Governing, a magazine covering politics, policy and management for state and local government leaders (<a href="http://www.governing.com/">http://www.governing.com/</a>)</li> <li>▪ Fiscal Federalism Initiative, The Pew Charitable Trusts (<a href="http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/fiscal-federalism-initiative">http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/fiscal-federalism-initiative</a>)</li> <li>▪ Rockefeller Institute of Government, with research on Federalism &amp; Intergovernmental Relations (<a href="http://www.rockinst.org/federalism/">http://www.rockinst.org/federalism/</a>)</li> </ul>

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>TOPICS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</b>
<b>3</b>	Jan 28, 30	<p><b>State constitutions</b></p> <p>Rdg: “Constitutions: Operating Instructions,” Chap 3 in Kevin Smith &amp; Alan Greenblatt (2014), <i>Governing States &amp; Localities</i>, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (CQ Press) – on Canvas</p> <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Constitution of the State of Colorado (<a href="https://leg.colorado.gov/colorado-constitution">https://leg.colorado.gov/colorado-constitution</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	Feb 4, 6	<p><b>State legislatures</b></p> <p>Rdg: PAS, Chap 7</p> <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Conference of State Legislatures; located in Denver, CO (<a href="http://www.ncsl.org/">http://www.ncsl.org/</a>)</li> <li>▪ Stateline, an initiative of the Pew Charitable Trusts, provides daily reporting and analysis on trends in state policy (<a href="http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline">http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline</a>)</li> <li>▪ Ballotpedia, providing links to information on state legislatures, policy proposals and elections (<a href="https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page">https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page</a>)</li> <li>▪ Colorado General Assembly, the bicameral state legislature of the state of Colorado (<a href="http://leg.colorado.gov/">http://leg.colorado.gov/</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	Feb 11, 13	<p><b>State legislatures, and policy priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For Feb. 13: Be prepared to discuss findings to date on the legislatures you are examining for Research Paper A, and related policy interests being advanced in those states; come to class with notes to support your discussion</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	Feb 18, 20	<p><b>Governors &amp; state executives</b></p> <p>Rdg: PAS, Chap 8</p> <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Governors Association (<a href="https://www.nga.org/cms/home">https://www.nga.org/cms/home</a>)</li> <li>▪ National Association of Attorneys General (<a href="http://www.naag.org/">http://www.naag.org/</a>)</li> <li>▪ Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper (<a href="https://www.colorado.gov/governor/">https://www.colorado.gov/governor/</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	Feb 25 Feb 27	<p><b>Review of state politics and government to date</b></p> <p><b>In-class MIDTERM EXAM</b></p>
<b>8</b>	Mar 3, 5	<p><b>State judicial systems</b></p> <p>Rdg: PAS, Chap 9</p> <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National Center for State Courts (<a href="http://www.ncsc.org/">http://www.ncsc.org/</a>)</li> <li>▪ Court Statistics Project, a joint project of the National Center for State Courts and Conference of State Court Administrators (<a href="http://www.courtstatistics.org/">http://www.courtstatistics.org/</a>)</li> <li>▪ Colorado Judicial Branch (<a href="https://www.courts.state.co.us/Courts/Index.cfm">https://www.courts.state.co.us/Courts/Index.cfm</a>)</li> </ul>
<b>9</b>	Mar 10, 12	<p><b>State bureaucracy</b></p> <p>Rdg: PAS, Chap 17</p> <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ American Society for Public Administration, professional organization for those involved in public management (<a href="http://www.aspanet.org/">http://www.aspanet.org/</a>)</li> <li>▪ National Association of State Budget Officers, which provides analysis of state budget policies and proposals (<a href="https://www.nasbo.org/home">https://www.nasbo.org/home</a>)</li> </ul>

Week	Dates	TOPICS & ASSIGNMENTS
10	Mar 17  Mar 19	<p><b>Analyzing &amp; comparing state political characteristics and institutions</b></p> <p><b><u>DUE Tuesday, Mar 17 (submit to Canvas before class): RESEARCH PAPER A, analyzing &amp; comparing state political characteristics &amp; institutions</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be prepared to share and discuss interesting findings, comparisons, similarities, differences and lingering questions arising from your state comparison research</li> </ul> <p><b>State fiscal policy</b> Rdg: PAS, Chap 11</p>
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>		
11	Mar 31, Apr 2	<p><b>State party politics &amp; organization</b></p> <p>Rdg: PAS, Chap 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Karl Kurtz (2017), “Polarized, Not Paralyzed: Why states can get things done when Congress can’t,” <i>State Legislatures</i>, July/Aug 2017, National Conference of State Legislatures – on Canvas</li> </ul> <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vote Smart, providing unbiased information on candidates and elections (<a href="https://votesmart.org/">https://votesmart.org/</a>)</li> <li>Follow the Money, National Institute on Money in State Politics, with reporting on both campaign and lobbying expenditures (<a href="https://www.followthemoney.org/">https://www.followthemoney.org/</a>)</li> </ul>
12	Apr 7, 9	<p><b>Interest group power across the states</b></p> <p>Rdg: PAS Chap 4</p> <p>Take a look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State comparison, lobbyist activity report requirements, National Conference of State Legislatures (<a href="http://www.ncsl.org/research/ethics/50-state-chart-lobbyist-report-requirements.aspx">http://www.ncsl.org/research/ethics/50-state-chart-lobbyist-report-requirements.aspx</a>)</li> </ul>
13	Apr 14, 16	<p><b>Public opinion &amp; state citizen action</b></p> <p>Rdg: PAS, Chaps 5 &amp; 6</p>
14 15	Apr 21, 23 Apr 28, 30	<p><b>State policymaking and state policy comparisons:</b></p> <p>Class discussion in the final two weeks of class will focus on a range of state policy issues, dependent on student interest and topics chosen for Research Assignment B. Be prepared to share and discuss interesting findings, and to consider new options for addressing state policy issues.</p> <p><b><u>DUE Tuesday, Apr 21 (submit to Canvas before class): RESEARCH PAPER B, analyzing &amp; comparing state politics &amp; public policy</u></b></p> <p><b>Readings:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select two chapters from the text covering a range of policy issues addressed by the states for in-depth consideration. See below for state policy issues and additional policy resources</li> </ul>
<b>Take-home FINAL EXAM: due to Canvas no later than 11:59 pm on Wednesday, May 6</b>		

## **State Policy Issues and Additional Policy Resources**

### **State corrections policy, PAS Chap. 10**

- Bureau of Justice Statistics, a component of Office of Justice Programs in the US Department of Justice, the primary source for criminal justice statistics (<https://www.bjs.gov/>)
- The Sentencing Project, an advocacy group promoting reforms in sentencing policy and efforts to address racial disparities in the criminal justice system (<https://www.sentencingproject.org/>)

### **State health & welfare programs, PAS Chap. 12**

- America's Health Rankings, United Health Foundation (<https://www.americashealthrankings.org/>)
- National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/index.htm>)
- Kaiser Health News, nonprofit news service covering health care policy and politics (<https://khn.org/>)

### **Politics of education, K-12, PAS Chap. 13**

- The Nation's Report Card, a congressionally mandated project administered by the National Center for Education Statistics within the US Department of Education (<https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/>)
- Education Commission of the States (<https://www.ecs.org/>)

### **Politics of higher education, PAS Chap. 14**

- National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, providing comparative state policy information; located in Boulder, CO (<http://www.higheredinfo.org/>)
- Higher Education Today, a blog by the American Council on Education (<https://www.higheredtoday.org/policy-research/>)
- Pew Center, "Two Decades of Change in Federal and State Higher Education Funding," Oct. 15, 2019 (<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2019/10/two-decades-of-change-in-federal-and-state-higher-education-funding>)

### **Environmental policy, PAS Chap. 15**

- Environmental Council of States (<https://www.ecos.org/>)
- State environmental policy for each state, from Ballotpedia, an encyclopedia of American politics ([https://ballotpedia.org/State\\_environmental\\_policy\\_pages](https://ballotpedia.org/State_environmental_policy_pages))

### **Economic development and infrastructure policy, PAS Chap. 16**

- Pew Center, research on "Economic Development Tax Incentives" (<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/projects/economic-development-tax-incentives>)

### **Economic and political inequality across the states, PAS Chap. 18**

- "Mapping Poverty in America," *The Economist*, 16 Oct 2018: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pUhViiNtxg>