

BROWN UNIVERSITY

Taubman Center for Public Policy and American Institutions

State and Local Government

• Fall 2014 • September 2, 2014 Update

PPAI 1700Z: Seminar

Meeting time: Fridays 9:30 A.M. Until Noon.

Location: Taubman Center Seminar Room, Ground Floor, 67 George Street

Instructor: Dr. Richard Kerbel

Adjunct Lecturer of Public Policy, Taubman Center for Public Policy

Contact information – e-mail: Richard_Kerbel@brown.edu>

Office hours – Wednesdays 4:00-5:30 pm. / Location – Taubman Center 2nd Floor Seminar Room

Brief Course Description from the Brown Course Catalog: Examines state and local politics and government in the United States. The first part of the course examines the historical underpinning and division of power of the major political actors, institutions, and processes through both institutional perspectives. The second part focuses on the role of states in shaping significant policy areas including civil unions, education, health-care, welfare, and the environment. Enrollment limited to 20.

Course Description: The American system of governance is federated which means that several different levels of government have jurisdiction over one specific territory. These various governments affect the daily lives of citizens and make decisions about important issues ranging from taxation and services to civil rights and the environment. How are these different levels of government structured? Are there differences in the institutions that decide on policy across states and localities? How do levels of government interact with each other? The purpose of this class is to introduce students to how states and local governments are organized and how policy is made at the sub-national level. We will study the institutions of state governments including the role of legislatures, governors and courts and the role that they play in decision-making and policy. The course will focus on the similarities and differences that characterize state and local governments across the country both in terms of structures and in terms of policy preferences. We will also look at the relationships between the federal and the sub-national governments and discuss the benefits and limitations of a federal system in terms of policy outcomes. Rhode Island and local governments in the state will be our key case studies for the course and a number of guest speakers will come in to discuss politics and policy in the state. As part of the course and in order to be able to interact effectively with our guest speakers, you will be expected to read up on political developments in the state and understand the key issues that effect state and local government. Coverage can be found in the Providence Journal (www.projo.com) and at Go Local Prov (<http://www.golocalprov.com/>) and you are expected to read them daily. You can also look at conservative and liberal websites on their take about Rhode Island politics. On the right, check out <http://oceanstatecurrent.com/> and on the left check out <http://rifuture.org>. Since this is a year in which there will be elections for General Officers in Rhode Island and Mayor of Providence. Students are expected to be familiar with the candidates and the issues in each of the races.

Student Assessment

Major assignments and participation assessment for this course are as follows:

- **Midterm examination (take-home)** – 200 points or 20% of the semester grade
 - **Final Policy Paper**– 400 points or 40% of the semester grade. The final is due no later than Friday December 12 @ 9:00AM ET
 - **Debate and position paper** (20%): Students will be assigned to a debate team and also to a proponent or opponent position group for the issue. The size of each debate team will depend on the number of students in the class. There will be four debates in the class and each side in each debate will consist of 2-3 students. Your grade will depend on the position paper that you and your group members put together (this is a group paper) and on your group's performance in the debate. Position papers are to be 8-10 pages long and structured as policy memos. The position paper is due in class the day of the debate.
 - **Participation and attendance** – 200 points or 20% of the semester grade (50 points per absence)
- This is a seminar course. Students will be expected to lead discussions on the readings and participate in the discussions. There is no grading "curve" or set quotas of As, Bs, Cs, etc. for this course. This course follows the operating principles of the policymaker community. Products (assignments) are expected to be delivered (submitted) NO LATER than the set deadline; earlier submission is beneficial. The value of work submitted late

for reasons other than medical or family emergency will be penalized no less than 10%.

Attendance Policy

This course meets just once per week so any absence represents a significant loss of class time. Each unexcused absence will yield a 5% reduction in the final grade for the semester.

Readings

Course readings are selected to provide a diversity of viewpoints. Readings include works from academic authors, policymakers, business writers, think tanks, regional and international institutions, and case study materials.

Required books:

- State and Local Government, 9th Edition
Bowman/Kearney
ISBN10: 1-4354-6268-8
ISBN13: 978-1-4354-6268-7

Important note: *Due to the constantly changing public policy environment, course topics and readings are subject to change as events warrant.*

The instructor encourages students submit readings via email (whole text, .pdf files, or links) that are relevant to course topics.

September 5 – Week 1: Overview

Class Theme: What will we accomplish in the class?

Questions: Why are there differences across the states both in institutions and in policy? How do we explain these differences? Are these differences a good thing or a bad thing for the United States?

Readings: Providence Journal, Go Local Providence, Ocean State Current and RI Future

September 12 – Week 2:

Class Theme: Federalism and the States State Constitutions

Questions: What does “E Pluribus Unum” mean? Is there a resurgence of state authority and is that a good thing or a bad thing for the United States? Is this resurgence reflected in Rhode Island politics? Is there any evidence of it in the ProJo coverage of state politics?

Readings:

Bowman Chapters 1-3
The United States Constitution (can be found on-line)
Federalist papers, No. 10, 17, 45 (also can be found on-line)

September 19 – Week 3:

Class Theme: Citizen Participation and the Role of Political

Questions: Should elections be all about one person? Should parties have more control over candidates? How does gerrymandering affect representation? How does the Citizen United v. FEC decisions change the playing field for campaigns and elections? What is the role of parties and interest groups in state politics?

Readings:

Bowman Chapters 4 & 5
Burstein Paul and April Linton.2002. “The Impact of Political Parties, Interest Groups and Social Movements Organizations on Public Policy,” Social Forces Vol 81, Issue 2
Nownes, Anthony and Patricia Freeman.1998.” Interest Group Activity in the States.” The Journal of Politics, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Feb. 1998), pp. 86-112

TOPIC OF FINAL POLICY MEMO DUE

September 26 – Week 4:

Class Theme: The Governor

Questions: What should be the role of a state governor? How do we evaluate the performance of Governor Chafee? What are the characteristics of a strong governor?

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 7

Chafee Earns Mixed Grades on Mid Term Report Card. <http://www.golocalprov.com/news/chafee-earns-mixed-grades-on-mid-term-report-card/>

National Governor's Association web page www.nga.org

Debate 1: Should Rhode Island have a professional legislature?

October 3 – Week 5:

Class Theme: State Legislature

Guest Speaker – Jack Revens – Attorney, Member Rhode Island House of Representatives 1969- 1974, Member of Rhode Island State Senate 1974- 1988, 1990 – 2009

Questions: Do we want to have professional or citizen legislators? What is best for representing the people's interest? What is best for devising sound public policy? Are legislators influenced more by interest groups or by public opinion? Is Rhode Island an outlier? If so, in what ways?

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 6

Jeffrey Toobin (2003) « The Great Election grab », The New Yorker

(http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2003/12/08/031208fa_fact)

New York Times (2006) “The Texas gerrymander” (<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/03/01/opinion/01wed2.html>)

The Public Mapping Project: <http://www.publicmapping.org>.

Barrilleaux, C., et .al. (2002) « Electoral Competition, Legislative Balance, and American State Welfare Policy,” American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 46, No. 2, April 2002, pp. 415-427

October 10 – Week 6:

Class Theme: The Judiciary

Guest Speaker: To be determined

Questions: Are state courts overstepping their bounds? What should be the proper role of the state judicial branch? Do they tend to be liberal or conservative?

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 9

MIDTERM EXAMINATION HANDED OUT

October 17 – Week 7:

Class Theme: The Bureaucracy

Questions: Who has the most important role in developing the state budget in Rhode Island? Has Civil Service outlived its useful life? What has been the impact of Collective Bargaining on State and Local Government?

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 8

Other readings to be added.

Debate #2: Should the Governor have the ability to appoint more of the state's management employees?

MIDTERM EXAMINATION RETURNED

October 24 – Week 8:

Class Theme: Local Government

Questions: What is the role of local governments in the American political system? What is their relationship with state governments? How do efforts to redesign state governance affect local governments and the services they provide? Do urban machines still exist?

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 10 & 12

[The Best and Worst Run Cities in America - 24/7 Wall St. http://247wallst.com/2012/01/05/best-and-worst-run-cities-in-america/#ixzz2liEQ9o1W](http://247wallst.com/2012/01/05/best-and-worst-run-cities-in-america/#ixzz2liEQ9o1W)

National League of Cities Web Site www.nlc.org

DEBATE #3 – What is the best form of local government – Strong Mayor/ Council vs. Council / Manager.

October 31 – Week 9:

Class Theme: Local Government Form and Leadership

Guest Speaker: Stephan A. Alfred, Town Manager, Town of South Kingstown, Rhode Island

Elected Official: to be determined

Questions: What are the attributes of a Council Manager vs. Mayor Council form of government? Who is the community leader in a Council Manager form of government? Why does the Commission form of government still exist? How often does the form change?

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 11

International City/County Management Web Page www.icma.org

U.S. Conference of Mayors Web Page www.usmayors.org

November 7 – Week 10:

Class Theme: Election Debriefing and Policy Issue Pension Reform

Questions: Who was to blame? Should the State Pension Reform bill have included locally administered plans? What are the policy impact of defined benefit vs. defined contribution plans? Is the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) issue being addressed?

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 13 & 14

Legal Constraints on Changes in State and Local Pensions; <http://slge.org/publications/legal-constraints-on-changes-in-state-and-local-pensions>

State & Local Pensions: An Overview of Funding Issues and Challenges; <http://slge.org/publications/state-local-pensions-an-overview-of-funding-issues-and-challenges>

There should be some significant legal decisions made on the pension reform initiatives during the semester. You should keep up with those articles.

Debate 4: Should pension benefits be an item of collective bargaining?

November 14 – No Class – Class will be rescheduled.

November 21 – Week 11:

Class Theme: Policy Issue – Local Government Finance and the Blame Game

Guest Speaker: Karen S. D. Grande Esq. Partner Edwards, Wildman, Palmer LLC.

Questions:

Readings:

Bowman Chapter**

November 28 – No Class Thanksgiving Break**December 5 – Week 12:**

Class Theme: Planning and Economic Development

Guest Speaker: Thomas E. Deller AICP, Director of Development Services for the City of Hartford, Ct.

Questions: Should Cities and States compete with each other to attract development? How much seed money is enough? What is the proper way to develop a vision for the future of a community? The role of appointed boards vs. elected officials.

Readings:

Bowman Chapter 14. There will be articles added to the readings for this class.

December 12 – Week 13:

Class Theme: Semester Close out – Brief Presentation of Final Papers

Questions: What have you learned?

Readings: None

*****FINAL POLICY MEMO DUE *****

Please inform me if you have a disability or other condition that might require some modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, contact Students and Employee Accessibility Services at [401-863-9588](tel:401-863-9588) or SEAS@brown.edu

If English is not your first language, please inform me if you feel that you might need additional support. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information about services available, contact Ashley Ferranti, the ESL Coordinator, at [401-863-5148](tel:401-863-5148) or ESL_Writing_Center@brown.edu