# PSCI 6324 Syllabus, August 16, 2019

**Course** | PSCI 6324, Local and State Government and Politics  
**Professor** | Robert Lowry  
**Term** | Fall 2019  
**Meetings** | Wednesday, 1:00-3:45. JO 4.708.

## Professor’s Contact Information
- **Office Phone**: 972-883-6720  
- **Office Location**: Green Hall 3.533  
- **Email Address**: robert.lowry@utdallas.edu  
- **Office Hours**: Tuesday 2-4, Wednesday 4-5 or by appointment

## General Course Information

| **Course Description** | The course takes a comparative approach to the study of local and state government and politics in the United States. We will focus primarily on areas where local and state government and politics is distinct from national government and politics, or where there are important differences between different states and metropolitan areas. We will also address intergovernmental relations and areas of public policy where state and local governments are particularly important. |
| **Learning Objectives/Outcomes** | On completing this course, students should:  
- Be familiar with the political science literature on local and state government and politics in the United States.  
- Understand the major variations in political behavior, organizations and institutions across state and local jurisdictions and their possible effects.  
- Be able to evaluate competing explanations for differences in policy outputs and government performance across state and local jurisdictions. |
| **Required Texts & Materials** | The following books should be purchased from the campus bookstore or your favorite alternative supplier:  

Additional readings are listed at the end of the syllabus and indicated in the assignments by numbers in brackets. The list of readings may be revised as we proceed. |
## Academic Calendar

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Assignments</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 21</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
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<td>Aug. 28</td>
<td>States’ Socioeconomic and Political Context</td>
<td>GH&amp;K ch. 1, 2, 18; [1], [2]</td>
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<td>Sept. 4</td>
<td>Federalism and inequality</td>
<td>Franco &amp; Witko, ch. 1-4, 6-8</td>
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<td>Sept. 11</td>
<td>Parties and Interest Groups</td>
<td>GH&amp;K ch. 3, 4; [3], [4], [5], [6]</td>
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<td>Sept. 18</td>
<td>Elections and Direct Democracy</td>
<td>GH&amp;K ch. 5, 6; [7], [8], [9], [10]</td>
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<td>Sept. 25</td>
<td>State Legislatures <strong>Paper Topics due</strong></td>
<td>GH&amp;K ch. 7; [11], [12], [13], [14], [15]</td>
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<td>Oct. 2</td>
<td>State Governors and the Bureaucracy</td>
<td>GH&amp;K ch. 8, 17; [16], [17], [18], [19]</td>
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<td>Oct. 9</td>
<td>State Courts and Judges; Corrections Policy</td>
<td>GH&amp;K ch. 9, 10; [20], [21], [22], [23]</td>
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<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAM</td>
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<td>Oct. 23</td>
<td>Local Government in a Federalist System</td>
<td>[24], [25], [26], [27], [28]</td>
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<td>Oct. 30</td>
<td>Local Elections</td>
<td>Oliver</td>
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<td>Nov. 6</td>
<td>More on Local Politics</td>
<td>[29], [30], [31], [32], [33], [34]</td>
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<td>Nov. 13</td>
<td>Fiscal and Economic Policy</td>
<td>GH&amp;K ch. 11,16; [35] [36], [37]</td>
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<td>Nov. 20</td>
<td><strong>STUDENT PRESENTATIONS</strong></td>
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<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td><strong>NO CLASS- FALL BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>Dec. 11</td>
<td><strong>RESEARCH PAPERS DUE</strong></td>
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<td><strong>TAKE HOME EXAM DUE</strong></td>
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### Course Policies

| **Grading Criteria** | Grades will be based on the following four factors, each weighted equally: (1) class participation; (2) a midterm exam in class on October 16; (3) a research paper on a topic of the student’s choosing; (4) a take-home final exam. Paper topics are due September 25. Students will make in-class presentations of their papers-in-progress on November 13. Completed papers are due the last day of class, December 4. The take-home final will be handed out then and is due December 11.

The grade for the paper project will be based on the final paper. Paper presentations will be factored into the class participation score. |
| **Late Work and Make-up Exams** | Late papers and take-home exams will be penalized 20% for each day they are late without an excuse. If for any reason you will have trouble being in class for the midterm exam or student presentations, notify me in advance. Make-up midterm exams will be allowed only in the case of unforeseen circumstances beyond your control. |
| **Class Attendance** | Attendance is mandatory at student presentations November 20. Attendance on other days is expected, and unexcused absences will affect your class participation score. |
| **Comet Creed** | *This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.” |
| **Other UTD Policies** | Additional UTD policies regarding student conduct and discipline, academic integrity, email use, withdrawing from class, grievance procedures, incomplete grades, disability services, religious holy days, and resources to help you succeed can be found at [http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies](http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies). |

*These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.*
Notes on the Research Paper

For the research paper, you have the choice of writing a critical analysis of the literature, a case study, or a design for an empirical research project. A one-page statement of your proposed topic is due in class September 25. Presentations of work-in-progress will occur in class November 20. Final papers are due December 4. Papers should not exceed 15 double-spaced pages of text and footnotes (minimum 11-point font; standard margins), plus a list of references and any appendices, tables or figures.

Below are a few thoughts on each of the options:

**Critical Analysis**

A critical analysis of the literature is not just a summary. The goal is to draw on existing research to analyze and answer an important question about subnational government and politics.

The paper should start by identifying a research question and explaining why it is important. Examples of the kinds of questions that might be asked include:

- Are ballot initiatives as a form of direct democracy a good idea?
- What are the pros and cons of “professional” vs. “amateur” legislatures?
- Can states have their own economic policy?
- Does subsequent research support Paul Peterson’s main argument in *City Limits*?

It should then summarize existing research that is relevant to the question, identify the strengths and weaknesses of different arguments, and seek to come to a conclusion. If further research is required on a specific topic in order to answer the larger question, identify the topic and state how the answer could influence your final conclusion.

**Case Study**

A case study seeks to answer a research question through a detailed examination of one (or perhaps more) real political systems or events. Interesting case studies often are those that test a theory by applying it to a situation where it may seem counterintuitive, or explain why some cases may be exceptions to the general rule.

A well-written case study must do at least two things in addition to analyzing the case itself: (1) explain why the case to be studied is an interesting and important one for the development of theories about democracy; (2) address the issue of generalizability. Is this a “representative” case that gives us insights into other situations and if so, how do you define the population that this case represents? Is it an exceptional case and if so, how does it limit the extent to which the theory can be generalized?

It is often useful to contrast two or more cases that represent different variations, but the tradeoff is that the more cases you address, the less detail you can present on each one.

A few possible topics:
• Why did Texas voters reject a constitutional amendment that would have authorized statewide ballot initiatives?
• What has been the impact of California’s “top two” primary system?
• How does the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) work, and why aren’t there any comparable liberal organizations?

**Empirical Research Design**

The goal for this option is to develop a plan that could be used to conduct an original, empirical investigation. It should include the following elements:

1. A statement of the research question. Why is it an interesting/important question? What contribution will be made to the academic literature or contemporary policy debates?
2. A brief summary of previous research on this question.
3. One or more testable hypotheses to be explored. Explain the reasoning behind each hypothesis.
4. Identification of the relevant dependent, independent, and control variables to be studied.
5. A plan for operationalizing key variables and collecting data.
6. Identification of techniques for analyzing the data and testing the hypotheses, to the extent you can.
7. Discussion of problems that you might encounter.

The project should be one that a graduate student might actually complete. Possible research questions might include:

- What are some of the implications of legislative term limits for representation?
- How do differences in state campaign finance laws affect public policy?
- Does it matter whether public schools are governed by special districts or are part of general purpose municipal government?

**Style**

The paper should begin with a short (no more than 150 words) abstract.

Papers should be well organized and use subheadings to denote major sections.

Pages should be numbered.

You don’t have to use either footnotes or endnotes, but if you do I prefer footnotes.

For citation style, consult “The Chicago Manual of Style Online” (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html) and use the author-date system.
Additional Readings

In addition to the books by Gray, Hanson and Kousser, Oliver, and Franco and Whitko, the following readings are also required. Those designated eLearning are posted on the class eLearning page. The others are generally available through the UTD library website.


