

# **Political Science (POS) 216**

## **State and Local Government**

### **Syllabus**

**Instructor:** J.D. Mesnard

**Phone:** 480-650-4509 (this is my personal cell phone; please reserve for emergencies)

**Email:** Message through Canvas (Or, if necessary: [javan.mesnard@asu.edu](mailto:javan.mesnard@asu.edu))

**Format:** Online, 3 credit hours

**Semester:** Fall, Spring or Summer, all sections

### **Course Description**

This course provides students with a survey of the operations, problems, and policies of state and local governments in the United States. In short, the course will examine how local city/town, county and state governments work. You will explore the three branches of state government, the county and city-level positions and their respective functions, and learn about the budget, revenue and services provided by each. At various times you will take on the role of a state legislator or city mayor as they seek to address political issues. We will use real-world examples and even look at bills and legislation as we discuss different policies and ideas. Since this is an Arizona State University course, special attention will be given to Arizona State government.

### **Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes**

This course fulfills the ASU Social and Behavioral Sciences General Studies requirement. Students completing a Social and Behavioral Sciences course will be able to:

1. Utilize behavioral or social science approaches, qualitative or quantitative, to examine aspects of human experiences or explain social or behavioral phenomena.
2. Describe the strengths and limitations of behavioral or social science methods in predicting or understanding human behavior.
3. Communicate coherent arguments using evidence drawn from qualitative or quantitative sources.

In addition, students who successfully complete this course should be able to:

1. Explain federalism and discuss how the balance of power between the Federal and state governments has changed over time.
2. Discuss examples of direct democracy (such as initiative, referendum and recall) that have been incorporated into state constitutions.
3. Discuss each branch of state government and how it interacts with the others.
4. Understand the various structures of sub-state level governments.

5. Understand the way that states and local governments raise and spend money to further their priorities.
6. Discuss and analyze the development of policy making in the areas of education, health and welfare, and public safety.

## Required Text

The latest edition of:

Smith, Kevin B., and Alan Greenblatt. Governing States & Localities Washington, DC: CQ Press

## Course Components

### **Syllabus & Respondus Quizzes** *30 + 10 points*

The purpose of the Syllabus Quiz is to make sure you are familiar with the syllabus since it will be serving as your guide throughout the course. It is also meant to help get your grade off to a good start in this course. There is no time limit with this quiz, and you can take it as many times as you like until you get all answers correct. I suspect that if you spend 10 minutes reading through this syllabus, you should get all the questions correct on the first try. The Respondus Quiz just verifies that you have downloaded the Respondus LockDown Browser, which is required for the Final Exam. Both of these quizzes are meant to be “gimmie points” while setting you up to be successful in the class.

### **Homework**

The predominant amount of the time required for this course will be dedicated to working through the material I’ve posted in Canvas (including any instructor-guided research/analysis that you must conduct), exploring government websites as I direct in order to become familiar with government departments and agencies, reading the appropriate material in the textbook, and working on your class projects. It will generally be independent work except where noted otherwise.

### **Class Participation** *150 points*

Since this is an internet course, we will rely on on-line discussions for class interaction. In lieu of an attendance grade you will be graded on participation in these discussions. I do not expect you all to be logged on at a set time. Instead, we will maintain an on-going conversation about topics in the course which you can join at your convenience. These discussions can involve questions about the material or opinions on the course content or current events. Such discussions will only work if everyone participates and if everyone follows proper rules of decorum. Regular and active participation will be crucial for the quality of the class both for yourself and your classmates. Specific instructions on how the discussions will be conducted can be found in Canvas, but important to your success here will be active engagement, posts that make a unique contribution to the class discussion and maintaining proper “netiquette.”

**Quizzes 210 points (7 quizzes @ 30 points each)**

There will be a lot of reading, internet exploring and independent but guided research in this class which will be measured via online quizzes. By the very fact that this is an internet course, all quizzes will be open note. They are meant to be relatively easy and to simply verify that you have read the material I have assigned and/or explored the areas of government as I have directed (nearly all government is online now, which makes it easy).

**Legislature Analysis Project 200 points**

Because I believe that the best way to learn is to experience, you will experience for yourself proceedings of the Arizona Legislature. The specific [instructions in Canvas](#) contain more detailed information, but in short, you will attend/observe some proceedings at the Arizona Legislature, become familiar with the issues that are being discussed, write about the experience and then analyze how it fits with what you have learned in this course.

**City Council Analysis Project 200 points**

This will essentially be the same as the Arizona Legislature project except at the City Council. Again, check out the [instructions in Canvas](#), but it will involve attending city/town council meetings (where you currently reside or elsewhere) and writing about the experience.

**Final Exam 200 points**

There will be one exam consisting of multiple choice, short answer and/or essay questions. It will cover material from the lectures and content, important points brought up in the class discussions, homework and the text.

**Late & Make-up Assignments**

The deadlines set for course assignments are very real. An assignment is considered late if it is not completed by the day and time set for it. Quizzes, discussions, and the exam will earn a zero if late, while the projects or other assignments will automatically be dropped **10% per day they are late**. Only a medical emergency accompanied by a doctor's note will exempt you from late penalties.

**Extra Credit**

I am a strong believer in extra credit because I really am less concerned with how you learn, as long as you do. As such, I will likely post some extra credit options in Canvas for those wishing to boost their grade. Just keep in mind that **you must have turned in all projects (though not the quizzes or discussions), even if late, in order to have extra credit points counted!**

**Academic Integrity**

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. Please review the Student Academic Integrity Policy for more information: <https://provost.asu.edu/academic-integrity>.

One common way that cheating takes place is through **plagiarism**. Plagiarism occurs when someone incorporates the words or ideas of someone else into their own work—by summarizing, paraphrasing or quoting it—without giving credit to the originator of those words or ideas. Plagiarism is the same thing as stealing. When someone tries to pass another's work off as their own, they are stealing intellectual property. They are attempting to improve themselves by taking away from others. It is false representation. Plagiarism is like lip-synching to your favorite musical artist, but claiming the performance as your own.

You should be aware that Canvas provides for submitted assignments to be reviewed by a plagiarism detection tool. This tool shows instructors to what extent a student's submitted assignment copied another student or plagiarized material from an online or literary source. The simple key to avoiding plagiarism is to give credit where credit is due. That is, if you do incorporate the words or ideas of someone else into your work, which may be entirely appropriate or even necessary, make sure to cite the author(s) of those words or ideas. APA format is generally the best format for citations, but I am not really a stickler on format for references/citations. As long as you reference the material in a way that gives the author proper credit and allows me to verify it, that will suffice. The consequences of not doing so (that is, plagiarism), range from rewriting or failing an assignment, to failing a course.

## Student Support

Arizona State University (ASU) provides a range of free, live online academic support options to currently enrolled ASU students. Using Adobe Connect, an Adobe product, ASU students can receive support with course concepts, their writing, or academic skills by interacting in real-time with peer tutors—ASU students who have successfully completed the courses they tutor—or with peer academic mentors. Currently enrolled ASU students can access tutoring sessions from anywhere with just a reliable internet connection.

*Tutoring Resources:* <https://tutoring.asu.edu/>

*Peer Mentors:* ASU has peer academic mentors if you want to ask questions about how to be successful in college courses: <https://tutoring.asu.edu/student-services/academic-mentors>

*Tech Support:* The instructor will answer questions related to course content and grading, but not technical difficulties. Tech support can be found at: <https://uto.asu.edu/>

*Emergencies:* Students may find help for dire or personally challenging medical, family, or other personal issues through the **Student Advocacy Services** office: <https://eoss.asu.edu/dos/srr/StudentAdvocacyandAssistance>. This office provides guidance, resources, and support to students in resolving educational and personal challenges that may impede their academic progress. If you have a family or personal emergency please first contact the Office of Student Advocacy immediately, before contacting me, so they can provide assistance.

## Special Needs

ASU endeavors to make reasonable adjustments in its policies, practices, services and facilities to ensure equal education programs and activities. Students requesting accommodation

for a disability must be registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and submit appropriate documentation from the DRC. *Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verification of eligibility from the DRC is required. Disability information is confidential.* Faculty is not authorized to independently provide any accommodations without DRC approval. Qualified students with disabilities who require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests to me at the beginning of the course. Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class, but have not registered with the DRC should contact DRC immediately. Eligibility and documentation policies can be viewed at: <https://eoss.asu.edu/drc>.

## Online Intensive Course

It is crucial to point out that being an online course, the time period is condensed. Therefore, students must keep up with the readings, videos, discussion posts, assignments, and online lectures under time constraints. Essentially, this will be an intensive course. Please do not take it unless you are willing to invest the appropriate time into the course. Also, because it is an online course there are no face-to-face meetings. You can log into your course via MyASU.

## Course Communication

Please communicate with me through Canvas and send email only if you are having issues with Canvas. Likewise, I will generally communicate to you through Canvas, either through direct message or by posting a class announcement. Students are expected to read and act upon messages in a timely fashion. Students bear the responsibility of missed messages and should check Canvas and their ASU-assigned email regularly. I will make every effort to answer all messages within 48 hours M-TH; a response for those sent F-SU may be the following Monday. You may call my cell phone if facing an emergency or a timely/pressing issue.

## Student Rights

Title IX is a federal law that provides that no person be excluded on the basis of sex from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. Both Title IX and university policy make clear that sexual violence and harassment based on sex is prohibited. An individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual violence or harassed on the basis of sex can seek support, including counseling and academic support, from the university. If you or someone you know has been harassed on the basis of sex or sexually assaulted, you can find information and resources at <https://sexualviolenceprevention.asu.edu/faqs>.

As a mandated reporter, I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. ASU Counseling Services, <https://eoss.asu.edu/counseling> is available if you wish to discuss any concerns confidentially and privately. ASU online students may access 360 Life Services, <https://goto.asuonline.asu.edu/success/online-resources.html>.

## Threatening Behavior

All incidents and allegations of violent or threatening conduct by an ASU student (whether on-or off campus) must be reported to the ASU Police Department (ASU PD) and the

Office of the Dean of Students. If either office determines that the behavior poses or has posed a serious threat to personal safety or to the welfare of the campus, the student will not be permitted to return to campus or reside in any ASU residence hall until an appropriate threat assessment has been completed and, if necessary, conditions for return are imposed. ASU PD, the Office of the Dean of Students, and other appropriate offices will coordinate the assessment in light of the relevant circumstances.

## Disclaimer

Course content may vary from this outline to meet the needs of this particular group. Students will be notified in a timely manner of any syllabus changes via the Announcements section in Canvas.

## Course Summary

Point Summary		Grade Breakdown*		
Syllabus & Respondus Quizzes	40 pts	A+	98 - 100%	980 - 1000
Class Participation/Discussions	150 pts	A	90 - 97%	900 - 979
Chapter Quizzes (3 @ 60)	210 pts	B+	88 - 89%	880 - 899
Legislature Project	200 pts	B	80 - 87%	800 - 879
City Council Project	200 pts	C+	78 - 79%	780 - 799
Final Exam	200 pts	C	70 - 77%	700 - 779
Total:	1000 pts	D	60 - 69%	600 - 699
		E	0 - 59%	0 - 599

\*Note: I only use the + aspect of the +/- grading system.

## Course Calendar

<b>Week 1 (Partial week):</b> Aug 21 – 26 (Thur – Tues)	Topics: Introduction / Federalism Reading: Smith, Ch 2 (Ch 1 Optional) <b>Assignments Due:</b> Syllabus & Respondus Quizzes, Quiz #1
<b>Week 2:</b> Aug 26 – Sept 2 (Tues – Tues)	Topics: State Constitutions / Financing Reading: Smith, Ch 3-4 <b>Assignments Due:</b> Quiz #2, Discussion #1
<b>Week 3:</b> Sept 2 – 9 (Tues – Tues)	Topic: Legislature Reading: Smith, Ch 7 <b>Assignments Due:</b> Quiz #3, Discussion #2
<b>Week 4:</b> Sept 9 – 16 (Tues – Tues)	Topic: Governor / Executive Bureaucracy Reading: Smith, Ch 8, 10 <b>Assignments Due:</b> Quiz #4, Discussion #3
<b>Week 5:</b> Sept 16 – 23 (Tues – Tues)	Topics: Judiciary / Crime & Punishment Reading: Smith, Ch 9, 14 <b>Assignments Due:</b> Quiz #5, Discussion #4, Legislature Project

<b>Week 6:</b> Sept 23 – 30 (Tues – Tues)	Topics: Education / Health Care Reading: Smith, Ch 13, 15 <b>Assignments Due:</b> Quiz #6, Discussion #5
<b>Week 7:</b> Sept 30 – Oct 7 (Tues – Tues)	Topic: Local Government Reading: Smith, Ch 11-12 <b>Assignments Due:</b> Quiz #7, Discussion #6, City Council Project
<b>Week 8 (Partial week):</b> Oct 7 – 10 (Tues – Fri)	Topic: N/A; Reading: N/A <b>Assignments Due:</b> Exam

*Grades will be submitted as soon as the class ends.*