

POLA 3110
State and Local Politics
Fall 2024

Professor: Josh Basseches (he/him/his)
jbasseches@tulane.edu
504-862-8319

Class Meets: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00pm-3:15pm

Classroom: Norman Mayer, Room 200B

Office Hours/Location: Tuesdays, 10:00am-12:00pm or by appointment, Norman Mayer Building 305¹ (or via Zoom)

Course Catalog Information

Credit Hours: 3

Course Description and Goals

In the United States, state and local governments are at the core of public policymaking. In areas ranging from criminal law to election law to energy law and many more, the vast majority of the laws that govern our lives are made not in Washington, D.C. but in state capitals, and often implemented or carried out at the local or municipal level, in city and town halls. Behind these policies are politics every bit as important as those at the national level.

Unfortunately, however, the majority of media and public information we consume is focused at the national level, on a tiny slice of policies that attract mass attention, and on politics more often centered on personalities, and who said what outrageous thing, than on policymaking.

This means that a course like this one is critical to being an informed member of American society and may quite possibly be your only exposure to the intricacies of state and local government and politics, unless you pursue further studies or a career in these fields (which I will always encourage but never pressure you to consider!).

This course proceeds in five thematic units. In Unit 1, we discuss why studying state and local politics is worthwhile. In Units 2 and 3, we discuss the constitutional basis for state and local politics and policy, and provide some useful background on these subnational levels of government. In Unit 4, we examine a few case studies of state-level policy, one of which (you

¹ Regrettably, the upper floors of the Norman Mayer building are inaccessible for persons with certain physical disabilities. I'm always happy to meet you on Zoom if my office is not accessible to you.

choose) will be the basis for your final paper in the class. Finally, in Unit 5, we take a critical look at the health of subnational democracy.

A caveat up front: given my own expertise and research interests, this course will be somewhat imbalanced, emphasizing *state*-level politics and policy more so than municipal/local. I will try to give some coverage to municipal/local, too, but I just wanted to be up front about that imbalance. If you were taking this course in hopes of a strong focus on municipal/local level (as opposed to state level), you may be disappointed.

Learning Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to:

- Understand how U.S. federalism results in power-sharing, and sometimes competition, between national, state and local levels of government.
- Understand why subnational politics and the policies they create are important, and be able to explain this to friends or family.
- Develop a critical, analytical perspective about the health of subnational democracy as well as some ideas about how it might be improved.
- Refine and expand your critical thinking skills, reading comprehension (and efficiency) skills, analytic writing and communication skills.
- Assess the strength and weaknesses of others' claims and arguments and construct strong ones of your own.

Course Materials:

There is one required book for this course, *Laboratories Against Democracy: How National Parties Transformed State Politics* (2022, Princeton University Press) by Jacob M. Grumbach, which is available for purchase from the campus bookstore, or online vendors such as Amazon.com.

All other reading materials will be scanned as PDFs and made available to you on the course Canvas page. Regarding the scanned materials, however, please keep in mind that these are copyrighted materials and it is unlawful to distribute them outside of the class.

Regarding the book purchase, I am sensitive to the fact that some students are more financially secure than others, and I would invite you to contact me confidentially if you cannot afford to purchase the requisite book. In such circumstances, I will be happy to make alternative arrangements so that you can access the material free of charge.

Course Requirements and Grading Policies:

There are five elements of the final grade you will receive in this course:

Questions on Canvas (15% of final grade): Once per week, you are asked to make a short (1 paragraph max.) post on Canvas, asking a question or two based on one or more of the readings assigned for a given class. I will sometimes incorporate these questions into our class discussions. These question posts are an opportunity to demonstrate that you've completed the reading and have thought about it critically. Questions must be posted by no later than the midnight before class meets. Each student will be allowed one "make-up" Canvas post; that is, if you miss a post in a given week, you will be permitted to post twice in one future week and receive credit for both posts, thus recovering the lost points from your missed or incomplete post in a prior week.

Pop Quizzes/Attendance Checks (10% of final grade): An undisclosed number of times throughout the semester, class will begin with a "pop quiz" that will also serve as an attendance check, to motivate you to attend class regularly and arrive on time. The degree to which you answer the pop quiz question(s) correctly will NOT affect your grade, as its main purpose is to encourage attendance without my having to take attendance each class. That said, your answers will also serve as an indication to me as to whether or not you are keeping up with and properly comprehending the course material, enabling me to identify and provide extra support to students who may be struggling with the course material. Each student is permitted one "unexcused absence," meaning you can miss one of these pop quizzes without any negative repercussions for your grade.

Guest Speaker Memo (10% of final grade): During the semester, we will have guest speaker(s) join our class. For this assignment, you will choose any one speaker and write a 1-2 page (double-spaced) memo analyzing the speaker's comments in relation to the material we have read for class. More specific guidelines will follow separately.

Midterm Exam (30% of final grade): This will be an in-class, "closed-book" assessment on the course material covered to date. The questions will be a combination of multiple choice questions and open response questions.

Final Paper (35% of final grade): This will be a 10-12 page (double-spaced) paper in which you will write in greater detail – and with a modest amount of outside research – about one of the policies covered in the case study unit (Unit 4) of the course (you choose which one). You will be expected to draw both on the materials assigned in class and on a modest amount of other outside sources to make an argument about whether the policy issue would be better addressed at the state or federal level of government. More specific guidelines will follow separately.

The numerical score-to-letter-grade conversion used for your final grade in this course is:

A: 93-100
A-: 90-92
B+: 88-89
B: 83-87
B-: 80-82
C+: 78-79

C: 73-77
C-: 70-72
D: 60-69
F: 0-59

ADA/Accessibility Statement:

Tulane University is committed to offering classes that are accessible. If you anticipate or encounter disability-related barriers in a course, please contact the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility to establish reasonable accommodations. If approved by Goldman, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. I will never ask for medical documentation from you to support potential accommodations needs.

Goldman Center Contact Information:

Email: goldman@tulane.edu; Phone: (504) 862-8433; Website: <https://accessibility.tulane.edu>

Code of Academic Conduct:

The Code of Academic Conduct applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, in Tulane University. Tulane University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations (i.e. [Code of Academic Conduct](#) and [Code of Student Conduct](#)) and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive.

Academic Integrity: You are expected to produce work that is entirely your own (unless otherwise indicated, such as a group project). Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated under any circumstances. All student work in this class may be analyzed electronically for violations of the University's Code of Academic Conduct and may also be included in a database for the purpose of testing for plagiarized content. Students who plagiarize will automatically fail the course and be referred to the Dean's office for consideration of further disciplinary action.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use: In general, I strongly discourage the use of these tools for pedagogical reasons we will discuss in class. They have the potential to undermine the value of your liberal arts education. That said, some of you may find a place for their use in limited circumstances that would not violate course policies. Any use of such tools must be consistent with the University's Code of Academic Conduct. Three fundamental principles apply at all times: 1) all work submitted must be your own; 2) when you use the work, the words, or the ideas of others – including online sites – you must give full credit through accurate citations; and 3), if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment or exam, you must ask for clarification. Any “take-home” writing assignments will include a reflective “process statement” in which you must transparently describe your process for completing the assignment, whether or not Generative AI tools played a role in that process.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Statement:

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are important Tulane values that are key drivers of academic excellence. I hope and expect that the students enrolled in this class will come from a variety of backgrounds, and have a variety of views about the topics we will discuss. All students must feel comfortable and safe expressing their perspectives in class. Any student who feels disrespected due to the views they choose to express in class, or on the basis of their race/ethnicity, religion, gender identity and/or expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, or socio-economic status, is strongly encouraged to reach out to me to discuss their concerns confidentially.

Religious Accommodation Policy:

Per Tulane’s religious accommodation policy as stated at the bottom of Tulane’s academic calendar, I will make every reasonable effort to ensure that students are able to observe religious holidays without jeopardizing their ability to fulfill their academic obligations. Excused absences do not relieve students from responsibility for any course work required during the period of absence. Students should notify me within the first two weeks of the semester about their intent to observe any holidays that fall on a class day or during the final exam period.

Title IX:

Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available; you can learn more at <https://allin.tulane.edu>. Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either “Confidential” or “Private” as explained in the chart below. Please know that if you choose to confide in me I am required by the university to share your disclosure in a Care Connection to the Office of Case Management and Victim Support Services to be sure you are connected with all the support the university can offer. The Office of University Sexual Misconduct Response and Title IX Administration is also notified of these disclosures. You choose whether or not you want to meet with these offices. You can also make a disclosure yourself, including an anonymous report, through the form at <https://tulane.edu/concerns>.

Confidential	Private
<i>Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one’s self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.</i>	<i>Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.</i> ▪ Case Management & Victim Support Services (504) 314-2160 or srss@tulane.edu

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) (504) 314-2277 ▪ The Line (24/7) (504) 264-6074 ▪ Student Health Center (504) 865-5255 ▪ Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE) (504) 654-9543 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tulane University Police (TUPD) Uptown - (504) 865-5911 Downtown – (504) 988-5531 ▪ Office of University Sexual Misconduct Response and Title IX Administration (504) 865-5611 or titleix@tulane.edu ▪ Student Affairs Professional On-Call (24/7) (504) 920-9900
--	---

Emergency Preparedness and Response:

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS: TU ALERT	SEVERE WEATHER
<p>In the event of a campus emergency, Tulane University will notify students, faculty, and staff by email, text, and/or phone call. You were automatically enrolled in this system when you enrolled at the university.</p> <p>Check your contact information annually in Gibson Online to confirm its accuracy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow all TU Alerts and outdoor warning sirens ▪ Seek shelter indoors until the severe weather threat has passed and an all-clear message is given ▪ Do not use elevators ▪ Do not attempt to travel outside if weather is severe <p>Monitor the Tulane Emergency website (tulane.edu/emergency/) for university-wide closures during a severe weather event</p>
ACTIVE SHOOTER / VIOLENT ATTACKER	EVERBRIDGE APP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RUN – run away from or avoid the affected area, if possible ▪ HIDE – go into the nearest room that can be locked, turn out the lights, and remain hidden until all-clear message is given through TU ALERT ▪ FIGHT – do not attempt this option, except as a last resort ▪ For more information or to schedule a training, visit emergencyprep.tulane.edu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Download the Everbridge app from the App Store or Google Play store ▪ The Report feature allows you to silently and discreetly communicate with TUPD dispatchers ▪ The SOS button allows you to notify TUPD if you need help ▪ The Safe Corridor button serves as a virtual escort and allows you to send check-in notifications to TUPD

Other Course Policies:

Attendance: I expect you to attend every class meeting unless formally excused. Excused absences can be due to reasons that include religious observances, university-sponsored athletic competition, and family emergencies and health. Please let me know if you are unable to attend class, and keep in mind that it is your responsibility to make up anything you have missed.

Assignment Deadlines: You are expected to submit all written work on time. Submitting writing assignments late will result in a five-point grade drop (out of 100 possible points) for each day the assignment is late, and no assignments will be accepted more than three days late. Extensions are discouraged but possible in extenuating circumstances, and must be negotiated with me **in advance of the deadline**, on a student-by-student basis, **and through written (email) communication**.

Electronic Devices: Please use them only for class-related purposes. I reserve the right to ask you not to use them (unless required as a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability).

Office Hours and Appointments: My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus, and I'm also available by appointment if they do not work with your schedule. In general, I would appreciate you letting me know in advance via email if you plan to attend my office hours on a given day. If multiple students plan to visit office hours that day, letting me know in advance can also minimize your wait time. Please keep in mind that, while I am happy to meet outside of office hours if my office hours do not work for your schedule, it is important that you request such a meeting as far in advance as possible to ensure we are able to find a mutually convenient time to meet.

Tweaking the Readings: Unless otherwise stated, you are responsible for completing all of the required readings listed on this syllabus. However, it is important to note that, in the case of certain readings, I am only asking you to read selected pages rather than the whole thing—even if the whole thing is available on Canvas. Therefore, it is important that you read the syllabus carefully before setting out to complete the reading. In addition, while I will not add readings, I *may* remove readings, based on how the course is going and feedback I receive throughout the semester. If/when readings are removed, this information will be announced during class—another reason why coming to class is important!

Important Dates:

August 23: Last Day to Confirm Enrollment

August 30: Last Day to Register/Add; Last Day to Drop with 100% Tuition Refund

September 5: No Class, Still Reading

September 6: Last Day to Drop with 75% Tuition Refund

September 13: Last Day to Drop with 50% Tuition Refund

September 20: Last Day to Drop with 25% Tuition Refund; Last Day to Drop without Record, Last Day to Change Grading Rules to “Audit”

September 24: Guest Speaker; State Senator Mike Barrett

October 1: Midterm Exam

October 3: No Class—Fall Break

October 8: No Class, Still Reading

October 17: Guest Speaker; Ellen Palmintier

October 19 and 20: Designated make-up days (only used in event of University closure)

November 5: Election Day!

November 13: Guest Speaker Memo Due

November 16 and 17: Designated make-up days (only used in event of University closure)

November 26 and 28: No Class—Thanksgiving Break

December 3: Rachel Stein, Scholarly Engagement Librarian, Presentation

December 11: Final Paper Due

Class Schedule:

Unit I: Why Study State and Local Politics?

Week 1:

Tuesday, August 20: Introduction to the Course

Readings Due: None

Assignments Due:

- Find (and be prepared to share with the class) a news article related to state or local politics or policy.

Thursday, August 22: Why State and Local Governments Matter

Readings Due:

- Newport (2022), “Americans’ Views on Federalism as States Take on More Power.” *Gallup*.
- Anzia (2019), “Looking for Influence in All the Wrong Places.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Savitch and Vogel (2004), “Suburbs Without a City: Power and City-County Consolidation.” *Urban Affairs Review*.

Week 2:

Tuesday, August 27: State Policy Diffusion

Readings Due:

- Karch (2007), “Emerging Issues and Future Directions in State Policy Diffusion Research.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*.

Unit II: Federalism and Multi-Level Governance

Thursday, August 29: What is U.S. Federalism?

Readings Due:

- Rosenthal and Joseph (2021), “Foundations of U.S. Federalism.” *Judicature*.
- Karch and Rose (2019). *Responsive States*, Introduction.

Week 3:

Tuesday, September 3: What is Intergovernmental Relations?

Readings Due:

- Wright (1974), “Intergovernmental Relations: An Analytical Overview.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*.

Thursday, September 5 (No Class; Still Reading): State-Federal Interaction

Readings Due:

- Bromley-Trujillo and Dichio (2024), “The State of American Federalism 2023-2024: Judicialization of Gridlocked Politics.” *Publius: Journal of Federalism*.

Week 4:

Tuesday, September 10: State-Local Interaction

Readings Due:

- Zuñiga and Méndez (2023), “The Emergence of Environmental Justice in General Plans: Lessons from California’s Senate Bill 1000.” *Urban Affairs Review*.
- National League of Cities (2020), “Principles of Home Rule for the 21st Century,” p. 7-27.

Unit III: Mechanics of State and Local Policymaking

Thursday, September 12: Legislative Organization

Readings Due:

- Rosenthal (2009), *Engines of Democracy*, p. 195-209.

Week 5:

Tuesday, September 17: Legislative Professionalism

Readings Due:

- SKIM: Squire (2017), “A Squire Index Update.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*.

- Rocca, Krebs, and McArthur (2023), “The Consequences of Legislative Professionalism in U.S. State Legislatures: A Review.” *State and Local Government Review*.
- Rosenthal (2009), *Engines of Democracy*, p. 47-56.

Thursday, September 19: Legislative Institutions

Readings Due:

- Rosenthal (2009), *Engines of Democracy*, p. 249-258.
- Anzia and Jackman (2013). “Legislative Organization and the Second Face of Power: Evidence from U.S. State Legislatures.” *Journal of Politics*.

Week 6:

Tuesday, September 24: Governors and the Executive Branch

Guest Speaker: State Senator Mike Barrett

Readings Due:

- Rosenthal (2009), *Engines of Democracy*. Chapter 8.
- Klarner and Karch (2008). “Why Do Governors Issue Vetoes? The Impact of Individual and Institutional Influences.” *Political Research Quarterly*.
- WATCH VIDEO: “Earth Day Colloquium: Decarbonizing Massachusetts,” until 48:00 minutes. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UYBdCBqyCjA>)

Thursday, September 26: Governor-Legislature Relations

Readings Due:

- Rosenthal (2004), *Heavy Lifting*. Chapter 9.

Week 7:

Tuesday, October 1: Midterm Exam

Readings Due:

- None

Thursday, October 3: NO CLASS, FALL BREAK

Week 8:

Tuesday, October 8 (No Class; Still Reading): Electoral Competition and Incumbency

Readings Due:

- Rosenthal (2009), *Engines of Democracy*, p. 109-116.

- Hogan (2004), “Challenger Emergence, Incumbent Success, and Electoral Accountability in State Legislative Elections.” *Journal of Politics*.
- OPTIONAL: Strickland (2023), “The Contingent Value of Connections: Legislative Turnover and Revolving-Door Lobbyists.” *Business and Politics*.

Thursday, October 10: Partisanship

Readings Due:

- Schaffner, Streb and Wright (2001), “Teams Without Uniforms: The Nonpartisan Ballot in State and Local Elections.” *Political Research Quarterly*.
- Jenkins (2006), “The Impact of Party and Ideology on Roll-Call Voting in State Legislatures.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

Week 9:

Tuesday, October 15: Interest Groups

Readings Due:

- Rosenthal (2009), *Engines of Democracy*, Chapter 5.
- Hall, Basseches, Bromley-Trujillo, and Culhane (2024), “CHORUS: A New Dataset of State Interest Group Policy Positions in the United States.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*. ONLY p. 1-2, p. 14-22.

Thursday, October 17: Partisanship-Interest Group Interaction

Guest Speaker: Ellen Palmintier, Director of State and Federal Relations, Tulane University

Readings Due:

- Finger and Reckhow (2022), “Policy Feedback and the Polarization of Interest Groups.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*.
- Lacombe (2022), “Trump is at the NRA Today, It Didn’t Used to Be a Republican Ally.” *Washington Post*.

Week 10:

Tuesday, October 22: Ballot Initiatives

Readings Due:

- LaCombe and Boehmke (2021), “The Initiative Process and Policy Innovation in the American States.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*.
- Schlozman and Yohai (2008), “How Initiatives Don’t Always Make Citizens: Ballot Initiatives in the American States, 1978-2004.” *Political Behavior*.

Unit IV: Case Studies in State-Level Policy

Thursday, October 24: Climate and Energy Policy

Readings Due:

- Rabe (2011), “Contested Federalism and American Climate Policy.” *Publius: Journal of Federalism*.
- Basseches et al. (2022), “Climate Policy Conflict in the U.S. States: A Critical Review and Way Forward.” *Climatic Change*.

Week 11:

Tuesday, October 29: Elections and Voting Rights

Readings Due:

- Bentele and O’Brien (2013), “Jim Crow 2.0? Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive Voter Access Policies.” *Perspectives on Politics*.
- Merriman (2019). *Conservative Innovators*, Chapter 4.

Thursday, October 31: Incarceration and Criminal Justice

Readings Due:

- Davis (2023), “State Incarceration Policy in the U.S. Federal System: Assessing Recent Approaches to Reducing Incarceration Rates.” *Publius*.
- Schoenfeld and Campbell (2023), “Early 21st Century Penal Reform: A Comparative Analysis of Four States’ Responses to the Problems of Mass Incarceration.” *Law and Policy*.

Week 12:

Tuesday, November 5 (Election Day!): Education Policy

Readings Due:

- James (2022), “Mea Culpa? The Role of Data Collection in Public Officials Acknowledging Policy Failure.” *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*.

Unit V: Evaluating the Health of State-Level Democracy

Thursday, November 7: Laboratories *Against* Democracy, Part 1

Readings Due:

- Grumbach (2022), *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Week 13:

Tuesday, November 12: *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Part 2

Readings Due:

- Grumbach (2022), *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Chapter 3.

Guest Speaker Memos are due November 13 at 5:00pm, Submit via Canvas.

Thursday, November 14: *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Part 3

Readings Due:

- Grumbach (2022), *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Chapters 4 and 5.

Week 14:

Tuesday, November 19: *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Part 4

Readings Due:

- Grumbach (2022), *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Chapters 6 and 7.

Thursday, November 21: *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Part 5

Readings Due:

- Grumbach (2022), *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Chapters 8 and 9.

Tuesday, November 26: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

Thursday, November 28: NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 15:

Tuesday, December 3: Course Wrap-Up
Rachel Stein, Scholarly Engagement Librarian, Presentation

Readings Due:

- TBD

Thursday, December 5: Course Wrap-Up

Readings Due:

- TBD

Final Papers are due December 11 at 5:00pm, Submit via Canvas