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FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: Do not contact the instructor. Instead, call 1-877-947-HELP or 207-581-4591 or e-mail dlltechhelp@maine.edu

Technical support office hours:
8am to 4:30pm (M-F) during May Term, Summer & Breaks
8am to 6pm (M-TH) & 8am to 5pm (F) during Fall & Spring semesters
Limited Email Support Nights, Weekends, School Breaks & Holidays

Course Format

This is an on-line course that uses the Blackboard system. There is no physical classroom meeting space or time. All course materials (except for the required books), including lecture notes and videos, discussion questions, your responses and questions, examinations, and all other assignments will be posted to Blackboard. You can of course e-mail me individually with any questions and/or concerns that you wish to raise privately, but all material meant to be engaged by the class as a whole should be posted to Blackboard. If you are having any trouble accessing or using Blackboard, please contact technical assistance through the avenues listed above.

Course Objectives and Focus

The subjects of this class are the fifty state governments and over 90,000 local governmental units (US Census Bureau) in the United States. Study of American politics and government often means an intense focus on the national level. While the federal government is most certainly important and worthy of study, the same is true for state and local governments as well. Indeed, one could (and we will) make a case that state and local governments have far greater impact on the day-to-day lives of most American than does the national government. In this course we will examine the primary elements of the governments and politics of the American states and take a look at the basics of local government in the US. We will use examples from Maine when and where appropriate.
As a result of successfully completing this course, students will be able to:

- Understand the basic organization and structure of state and local government in the US.
- Comprehend the role of the states in America’s federal arrangement.
- Make sense of the constitutional design of American states.
- Knowledgably discuss the fundamentals of state and local government budgeting and public policy making.
- Identify and understand the ways in which state and local governments affect their lives on a day-to-day basis.

Course Requirements

I have attempted to structure this course so that there will be many opportunities for students to perform well. Below is a list of the components that will determine a student’s final course grade, along with a brief description of each.

**Student Postings:** This course is organized around the reading and viewing materials for each of our class sessions. It is imperative that you complete all of the assigned materials for this course. In addition to forming the shared foundation for our discussions in this course, completing all the required materials in a timely fashion will be essential for your grade. For each of our 13 substantive class sessions, each student will have to submit **two postings**. The first will be an **initial reaction** to the materials assigned for that particular session. The second posting will be a **response** to the initial reaction of at least one other student in the class. The initial reaction is due by **noon** on the day of each session, and the response is due by **8:00pm** on the same day. Submit your postings to the posting area for each session. The postings for each session will be worth 15 total points, with the initial reaction worth 10 and the response worth 5. An initial reaction posting should be approximately 2-3 paragraphs in length, and a response should be approximately 1-2 paragraphs in length. Please note the use of the word “approximately” in both of the previous two sentences. **The postings are worth 60% of a student’s final course grade.**

Some additional information about the format and content of the postings is provided below:

1. Postings should clearly show that you have completed the assigned materials, but they **should not** be summaries of the materials. Your postings should present an argument or point of view regarding the assigned material. The position presented in your postings should always be clear, well argued, and supported by evidence and concise reasoning. As a student at a distance, it is important that you know about the University of Maine policy on academic integrity. Violations of student academic integrity include any actions which attempt to promote or enhance the academic standing of any student by dishonest means (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, and academic misconduct). Students may be accused, charged, and penalized for any violations as appropriate. Please refer to the University of Maine Student Conduct Code for definitions and procedures. The University of Maine Student Conduct Code can be viewed at: [http://umaine.edu/handbook/policies-regulations/student-conduct-code/](http://umaine.edu/handbook/policies-regulations/student-conduct-code/)

2. All postings must be your own words and thoughts. First and foremost, we are engaging in an intellectual dialogue here. Using the thoughts and words of others, with proper attribution, to support your own points is a valuable contribution to this dialogue. Claiming others’ thoughts and words as your own is not. In addition, plagiarism is strictly prohibited by University of Maine policy, and such academic dishonesty will be
dealt with harshly in this course. More is said on plagiarism under “Student Responsibilities” below.

3. All postings should be carefully edited for content, style, punctuation, and grammar before being posted to the class. Purchase a style guide (if you do not already own one) and use it as you compose your postings. Make sure to use standard English, proper grammar, and an academically rigorous writing style, not the sloppy, informal electronic language that we all sometimes fall into when composing e-mail, exchanging texts, or contributing to online chat rooms or social media. This is a college course, and one of its central purposes is to further develop your skills as writers. Postings will be evaluated on both substance and writing quality.

4. Perhaps most important, all postings must show respect for the ideas and opinions of others in this course. This class is a community where all have the right to feel comfortable to freely express their ideas and contribute to the community dialogue. It is the responsibility of all of us to insure that this is the case. This does not mean that criticism of others’ ideas is unacceptable. On the contrary, critiquing the thoughts of others (and of ourselves) is absolutely essential for real learning to occur. However, critiques must always be offered in a professional, courteous, and respectful way. Personal attacks and ridicule should be avoided at all costs, and will not be allowed in this course.

All postings must be submitted on time, or they will subject to a late-penalty of 1 point per hour of lateness for both initial reaction postings and response postings. Extensions to the posting deadline must be requested in writing (e-mail is acceptable) at least 12 hours in advance, and will be granted only in extreme situations. The only exception on this matter will be if there is a failure with the University’s network or with the Blackboard system. The Student Postings will be worth 60% of the student's final course grade.

Midterm Examination: There will be a midterm examination for this course. It will be completely open-book and open-note, and the material on the exam will be mixture of short and long essay questions. Students must work on the final examination independently. The midterm examination will be posted by 6:00pm on Thursday, June 14 and will be due to the midterm examination assignment submission area in Blackboard by 9:00pm on Sunday, June 17. There will be a late-penalty of 10 points per hour for late exams, with the same exceptions noted above. Your responses to the midterm examination will be evaluated on both content and writing quality. The final examination is worth 15% of a student's final course grade.

Final Examination: There will be a final examination for this course. It will be completely open-book and open-note, and the material on the exam will be mixture of short and long essay questions. Students must work on the final examination independently. The final examination will be posted by 6:00pm on Friday, June 22 and will be due to the final examination assignment submission area in Blackboard by 9:00am on Monday, June 25. There will be a late-penalty of 10 points per hour for late exams, with the same exceptions noted above. Your responses to the final examination will be evaluated on both content and writing quality. The final examination is worth 15% of a student's final course grade.

State and Local Public Official Biography Project: Each student will be required to produce a biography of one current state or local public official. The student should use this biography to get an overall sense of what the public official does on a day-to-day basis, as well as to come to
understand why this person serves in her or his position. **STUDENTS SHOULD ATTEMPT TO CHOOSE THEIR SUBJECT AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.** The biography project will culminate in a paper that should be between 4-6 pages in length and will be due to the biography project submission area in Blackboard by **5:00pm on Tuesday, June 19, but may of course be submitted prior to that deadline.** There will be a late-penalty of **5 points per hour** for late interview projects, with the same exceptions noted above. The interview project will be worth 10% of the student's final course grade.

**Summary of Course Grade Components:**

- Initial Reaction and Response Postings: 60%
- Midterm Examination: 15%
- Final Examination: 15%
- Public Official Biography Project: 10%

All assignments will receive a numerical score on a scale of 0 to 100. After calculating your numerical score based on the formula above, a letter grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

- 93-100 = A
- 90-92 = A-
- 87-89 = B+
- 83-86 = B
- 80-82 = B-
- 77-79 = C+
- 73-76 = C
- 70-72 = C-
- 67-69 = D+
- 63-66 = D
- 60-62 = D-
- below 60 = F

I do not curve nor do I offer extra credit.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE**

In the event of disruption of normal course activities, the format for this course may be modified to enable completion of the course. In that event, you will be provided an addendum to this syllabus that will supplement, modify, and/or supersede this version.

**Student Responsibilities**

As noted earlier in this syllabus, students are expected to complete all readings assigned for a particular class session before making their initial reaction posting for that day. As you will notice in the course schedule outlined below, there is a good deal of assigned material for this course. If for any reason you think that you may be unable to complete all of the assigned material on time, I suggest you drop the course now. Students who have not done the assigned reading will be hard pressed to contribute to our discussions in a constructive manner. Failure to
do the reading will also negatively affect your performance on exams. I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of completing the assigned material for each class session.

The web-based format of this course provides us with some challenges, but also with some unique opportunities as well. We will all have more time to develop our thoughts more fully before presenting them, and consider others’ thoughts prior to responding. Also, those students who find it awkward or difficult to be full contributors in a regular classroom setting should not face such obstacles here. We should be able to establish a thoughtful and energetic online community. But the responsibility for doing so lies with each of us.

In addition, I expect each student to be aware of what is going on in American politics and society. In other words, I expect you to follow the news. At a minimum, this should entail watching a national news broadcast or listening to the national news on NPR once a day. Ideally students will read a good national newspaper such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, or The Wall Street Journal every day. Those publications that carry a cost can be accessed free of charge via Fogler Library.

**Academic Honesty Statement:** Academic honesty is very important. It is dishonest to cheat on exams, to copy term papers, to submit papers written by another person, to fake experimental results, or to copy or reword parts of books or articles into your own papers without appropriately citing the source. Students committing or aiding in any of these violations may be given failing grades for an assignment or for an entire course, at the discretion of the instructor. In addition to any academic action taken by an instructor, these violations are also subject to action under the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. The maximum possible sanction under the student conduct code is dismissal from the University. This policy can be found in the University of Maine Student Handbook, [http://umaine.edu/handbook/academics/academic-integrity/](http://umaine.edu/handbook/academics/academic-integrity/)

**Assistance**

My contact information is listed on the first page of this syllabus. If you are having difficulty with the course material or need help with any other facet of the class, please do not hesitate to come and discuss the matter with me. E-mail is generally the best way to get in touch with me. If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Student Accessibility Services (formerly Disability Support Services) via telephone at 581-2319, TTY 581-2325, e-mail at um.sas@maine.edu, or in person at 121 East Annex as early as possible in the term.

**Sexual Discrimination Reporting**

The University of Maine is committed to making campus a safe place for students. Because of this commitment, if you tell a teacher about an experience of sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, relationship abuse (dating violence and domestic violence), sexual misconduct or any form of gender discrimination involving members of the campus, your teacher is required to report this information to the campus Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention or the Office of Equal Opportunity.

If you want to talk in confidence to someone about an experience of sexual discrimination, please contact these resources:
For confidential resources on campus: Counseling Center: 207-581-1392 or Cutler Health Center: at 207-581-4000.
For confidential resources off campus: Rape Response Services: 1-800-310-0000 or Partners for Peace (formerly Spruce Run): 1-800-863-9909.

Other resources: The resources listed below can offer support but may have to report the incident to others who can help:

For support services on campus: Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention: 207-581-1406, Office of Community Standards: 207-581-1409, University of Maine Police: 207-581-4040 or 911. Or see the OSAVP website for a complete list of services at http://www.umaine.edu/osavp/

Required Readings

Two books are required for this class. They are:

David B. Magleby, Paul C. Light, and Christine L. Nemacheck, State and Local Politics: Governments by the People, 16th edition, Boston: Pearson/Longman, 2013. This is referred to in the syllabus as "Magleby et al."


These books are available through both the UMaine Bookstore. The contact information for the bookstore is listed below:

UMaine Bookstore Telephone: 207-581-1700
UMaine Bookstore Fax: 207-581-1132

There may also be some required readings (all readings are required) that are not in the books listed above. These readings are listed as (reserve) in the following course schedule and are available at Fogler Library via hard copy reserve (one copy only) and e-reserve (password: pos203brewer) and are also available in Blackboard. E-reserves are accessible from the “Services and Forms” link off of the Library’s main page (http://www.library.umaine.edu/). E-reserves are available as pdf files, meaning students will need Adobe Acrobat Reader to view them. Acrobat Reader can be downloaded free of charge at: http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html

Course Schedule

The following will be our agenda for the next three weeks. Remember, you are expected to complete the readings listed below prior to the class session for which they are assigned. This schedule is subject to change by the instructor, depending on the progress we make in covering course material.
Session 1: Monday, June 4  
Introductions  

We will begin by introducing ourselves and further organizing ourselves for our course. Please post a personal introduction to the Session 1 folder by 5:00pm on this day. Please include a little information about yourself such as where you are from, where you currently reside, what your academic plans are, and why you are taking this course. Take the time to read your colleagues’ introductions before our session on Tuesday. This is also an opportunity to raise any questions about the syllabus or the course in general. Please include your full e-mail address in the body at the end of your introductory posting.

Session 2: Tuesday, June 5  
State and Local Government in Context: An Overview  

- Magleby et al., Introduction and Chapter 1  
- Gray et al., Chapter 1

Session 3: Wednesday, June 6  
Federalism: Theory and Development  

- Magleby et al., Chapter 2 pp. 24-38  
- Gray et al., Chapter 2 pp. 28-31  
- The Federalist, No. 1, 9, 14, and 15—available: https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers  

Session 4: Thursday, June 7  
Federalism: Evolution and Practice  

- Magleby et al., Chapter 2 pp. 38-53  
- Gray et al., Chapter 2 pp. 32-56

Session 5: Friday, June 8  
State Constitutions and Local Charters  

- Magleby et al., Chapter 3  
- Lawrence Keller, "Municipal Charters" (included in Session 5)

Session 6: Monday, June 11  
Political Parties and Elections  

- Magleby et al., Chapter 4  
- Gray et al., Chapter 3
Session 7: Tuesday, June 12
State and Local Public Officials

- Malia Wollan, "How to Run for Local Office,"
- NCSL, "How to Become a Candidate for State Legislator,"
- Seth Motel, "Who Runs for Office? A Profile of the 2%,"

After completing these readings student should have their biography project subject nailed down.

Session 8: Wednesday, June 13
Interest Groups

- Gray et al., Chapter 4

Session 9: Thursday, June 14
State Legislatures

- Magleby et al., Chapter 5
- Gray et al., Chapter 7

MIDTERM EXAMINATION POSTED BY 6:00PM

Session 10: Friday, June 15
Governors and the Executive Branch

- Magleby et al., Chapter 6
- Gray et al., Chapter 8

Sunday, June 17

MIDTERM EXAMINATION DUE BY 9:00PM

Session 10: Monday, June 18
State Court Systems

- Magleby et al., Chapter 7
- Gray et al., Chapter 9

Session 11: Tuesday, June 19
Direct Democracy
STATE AND LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY PROJECT DUE BY 5:00PM

Session 12: Wednesday, June 20
Local Governments
  • Magleby et al., Chapter 8

Session 13: Thursday, June 21
Finance and Budget
  • Magleby et al., Chapter 10
  • Gray et al., Chapter 11

Session 14: Friday, June 22
Public Policy
  • Magleby et al., Chapter 9

FINAL EXAMINATION POSTED BY 6:00PM

Monday, June 25

FINAL EXAMINATION DUE BY 9:00AM

ENJOY THE REST OF YOUR SUMMER