

Political Science 4122
State Government and Politics
Dr. Todd Makse
Spring 2023

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 2:00-3:15pm in PC 214
Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:30pm (on Zoom*) and Thursdays 12:00-1:30pm (in person)
Office: SIPA 405; Phone: 305-348-8451; Email: tmakse@fiu.edu

TA Information: Ms. Maria Ovalle; Email: maovalle@fiu.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 12:00-1:00pm (on Zoom*)

*Please email Maria or me 30 minutes in advance to set up a meeting in case we're with another student.

Course Description:

The purpose of the course is to give a broad overview of politics and policymaking in the fifty states. The course will be comparative in nature, with an emphasis on the ways states vary in terms of lawmaking institutions, electoral institutions, and citizen involvement. We will be especially focused on how these different institutional arrangements affect policymaking and policy outcomes. The course will encourage students both to consider the source of our knowledge about state politics, utilize relevant data sources, and to apply that knowledge to analyze contemporary events in American politics.

Class sessions will involve a combination of lecture, discussion, and active learning. It is essential that you complete readings on time and come to class prepared to discuss them. You are expected to have an introductory-level knowledge of American politics (POS 2041). If you have concerns over whether you are sufficiently prepared for this class, please speak to me.

Textbook

The required textbook for this course is:

**State and Local Government*, 11th Edition, by Bowman, Kearney and Scavo

Grading options:

There will be two grading options for taking this course. If you select "Option A," you will be expected to attend class every day, participate in class discussions and engage in active learning with a group you work with throughout the semester. If you select "Option B," attendance and participation will not be required, and you will not be assigned to a permanent group for group activities. Students who select Option B will complete a larger amount of work outside of class. You will select one of these options during the first week of class; except under extenuating circumstances, you won't be able to switch options mid-semester. Depending on which option you select, the grading components will be as follows:

Grading Options

	Option A	Option B
Quizzes	15% (Two lowest scores dropped)	10% (Four lowest scores dropped)
Short Writing Assignments	20% (4 assignments X 5% each)	30% (6 assignments X 5% each)
Presentation	15% (Presented during class time followed by Q&A session)	30% (Recorded/submitted outside of class along with individual written reports)
Participation	20%	Not graded
Final exam	30%	30%

The grading scale for final grades will be as follows:

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-	59 and below F

Grading criteria:

Reading Quizzes: There will be eight reading quizzes completed during the first five minutes of class on the dates indicated in the syllabus. A list of ten key topics for each quiz is provided on Canvas—the six multiple-choice questions will be on these topics and will focus on major concepts, not on specific facts, dates, and names. Five correct answers will earn you full credit. **There will be no makeup quizzes for late or absent students.** The quizzes are closed book, but you may bring one 4x6 index card of hand-written notes. (I will provide the index cards if needed).

Presentation: During March you will be giving a 10-15 minute in-class presentation on politics and policymaking in a single state. Dates will be assigned before Spring Break. Complete instructions will be posted on Canvas.

Writing Assignments: There will be six assignments associated with in-class activities, typically involving problem solving, light research, and application of class concepts. These assignments are due, via Canvas submission, prior to class on the dates listed on Canvas. Option A students will be assigned four of six assignments (on the second week of class), while Option B students will complete all six. One assignment may be turned in up to a week late without penalty. Additional late submissions will receive half credit. More details can be found on the last page of the syllabus.

Participation (Option A students only): If you select Option A, you must participate in class discussions and group activities on a regular basis. Quality of participation will be assessed holistically and graded on a letter scale. Any student who does not receive at least a B-minus participation grade will receive a five-point deduction from their final class grade (i.e., a B- is worth 16/20, while a C+ is worth 11/20).

Attendance (Option A students only): You have three “free” absences, no questions asked. Each additional absence (unless documented; see below) will result in a one-point deduction (out of 20) from your participation grade.

Final Exam: The final exam will be closed-book and will draw mostly on material covered in class lectures, discussions, and activities. A study guide will be posted a few weeks before the final and a review session will be held during the last day of class.

The grading scale for exams (which is different from the scale for final grades), is as follows:

90-100 A	85-89 A-	80-84 B+	75-79 B	70-74 B-	65-69 C+
60-64 C	55-59 C-	50-54 D+	45-49 D	40-44 D-	39 and below F

Class Policies

Absences: Absences are only considered documented if you provide documentation (within one week of the absence) of either: (a) obligations such as athletic, military, or university-sponsored program obligations; (b) medical reasons for your absence. I understand that you may have to miss the occasional class session for other legitimate reasons (i.e., family issues, job interviews), but you have three non-documented absences without penalty, so you are responsible to manage these situations accordingly. Absences for religious holidays will also be deemed documented absences; please inform me if you plan to miss any classes for this reason.

Lateness: If you arrive late but within the first 15 minutes of class, it will be treated as 1/2 of an absence. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late for class, it will be treated as an absence.

Classroom conduct: I'm pretty lenient about the classroom. You don't need to ask permission to eat, use the restroom, get a drink, or use a laptop. I do ask that you refrain from doing anything that is rude or clearly distracting to me or your classmates (e.g., excessive texting, sleeping, watching videos on a laptop, incessant chatting, and especially packing up before class is over) and if you flagrantly disregard this request, you will be marked absent for the day.

Makeup Exams: I do not offer makeup exams without prior notice, except in emergency situations. If you have non-emergency reasons for missing the final exam, please notify me at least one week ahead of time. If you have an emergency, please inform me as soon as you can afterwards. Also, note that the format of makeup exams may differ from the format of the regular exam.

Academic Misconduct: Florida International University is a community dedicated to generating and imparting knowledge through excellent teaching and research, the rigorous and respectful exchange of ideas, and community service. All students should respect the right of others to have an equitable opportunity to learn and to honestly demonstrate the quality of their learning. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to a standard of academic conduct, which demonstrates respect for themselves, their fellow students, and the educational mission of the University. All students are deemed by the University to understand that if they are found responsible for academic misconduct, they will be subject to the Academic Misconduct procedures and sanctions, as outlined in the Student Handbook. Violations include cheating, plagiarism, the use of AI to produce writing assignments, academic negligence or dishonesty. Plagiarism includes failure to acknowledge in footnotes, endnotes or other forms of documentation their use of the words and ideas of others. If you have questions about what constitutes proper citation, please speak to me.

Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities, as defined by law, have the right to receive appropriate accommodations if their disabilities make it difficult to perform academic tasks in the usual way or in the allotted time frame. However, in order to receive accommodation, students with

disabilities must register with the Disability Resource Center. This office will keep the student's written request, notify faculty who have a student with a disability enrolled in his or her class, and indicate what kinds of arrangements should be made. Please contact the DRC at the beginning of the semester.

Availability: Feel free to contact me by email with any concerns about the class or course material. I will make every effort to respond to all messages within 24 hours. Please send emails through your FIU email and check both your FIU email and Canvas daily.

Schedule for Class Topics, Readings and Assignments

Note: All readings need to be completed on the first day the topic is covered.

January 10-12: Class Introduction (Quiz #1 due January 12)

*Bowman, Chapters 1, 2

January 17-24: Federalism and State Constitutions (Quiz #2 due January 19)

*Bowman, Chapter 3

January 26-31: Participation in State Politics (Quiz #3 due January 26)

*Bowman, Chapter 4

February 2-7: Elections and Campaigns in State Politics (Quiz #4 due February 2)

*Bowman, Chapter 5

February 9-21: State Legislatures (Quiz #5 due February 9)

*Bowman, Chapters 6-7

February 23-March 9: Governors and State Executive Branches (Quiz #6 due February 23)

*Bowman, Chapters 7-8

March 14-16: In-Class Presentations

March 21-23: State Judiciaries (Quiz #7 due March 21)

*Bowman, Chapter 9

March 23-28: Direct Democracy

March 30-April 11: Policymaking and Policy Learning (Quiz #8 due March 30)

*Bowman, Chapter 12, 13

April 13: NO CLASS (Midwest Political Science Association Conference)

April 18-20: Course Wrap-Up

April 27: Final Exam (12:00pm)

Writing Assignment Grading Standards

All assignments should be submitted via Canvas prior to class on the due date. You should also bring a copy to class (either printed or digital is fine). Submit the assignment on Canvas as a .doc or .pdf file in the appropriate submission location.

Writing Assignments will be graded as follows:

A (5 points): All questions are addressed in sufficient detail, indicate thoughtful reflection on the activity, and accurately apply relevant class concepts.

A- (4.5 points): All questions are addressed fully and thoughtfully, but minor departures from instructions affect small parts of the assignment.

B (4 points): Most questions are addressed fully but one or two questions are partially incomplete, inaccurately reflect class concepts, and/or do not follow assignment instructions.

C (3.5 points): The assignment is nominally complete, but several questions are answered in a cursorily, inaccurately reflect class concepts, and/or do not follow assignment instructions.

Incomplete (no credit): Memos are so incomplete they do not meet the “C” standard. Such memos will be returned for resubmission. Upon resubmission, lateness penalties will apply.

Writing assignments will not be graded based on grammar or style as long as the writing is reasonably clear and the submission is organized enough to locate answers to questions. Do not feel the need to write answers in essay form—you can just answer the questions without introduction, thesis statement, conclusion, etc.

One assignment may be turned in up to a week late without penalty. Additional late submissions will receive half credit.