

## Political Science 322: State Politics

University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
Department of Political Science

**Section: 01**

**Day: Monday and Wednesday**

**Time: 2:00-3:15**

**Room: 334 Curry Building**

**Instructor: Dr. Thomas H. Little**

**Office: 309 Curry**

**Office Hours: 12:30-2:00 M-W**

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### Course Objectives

Do you wonder why (and thank God that) politics is different in California than elsewhere? Do you ever wonder why Minnesota spends so much on education and Mississippi so little? How about why interest groups and political parties are more important in Ohio than Wisconsin? Why did some states eagerly establish Obamacare health exchanges, while others sued to stop the law? Why do some states allow voters to pass laws, while others don't? Why are gas taxes higher in North Carolina than other places? What difference can a strong governor make?

These are the kinds of questions we will discuss in this class. By the end of the semester, I expect you will have mastered the following:

- The importance of state government and the policies they pass.
- The changing balance between state and federal governments.
- An understanding of the key institutions that make up state government, their purposes and structures.
- A basic understanding of the similarities and differences between the processes, structures and policies across the fifty states.
- An understanding of the linkage between historical, economic and political environments of a state and the policies produced by that state.

### Text Books

*Why States Matter: An Introduction to State Politics* (2013). Gary Moncrief and Peverill Squire (New York: Roman & Littlefield) ISBN 978-0-7425-7038-2.

### Student Responsibilities

**Attendance and Participation (5%).** Students are expected to attend class regularly participate in class discussions. The format of the class will be interactive discussion with some exercises and small group discussions. I will not take attendance on a regular basis, but will keep a record of participation. If you expect to be out for a week or more, please inform me.

**Exams (20% and 30%).** Your grade will be based upon two exams, each covering a separate section of the course. The exams will be a combination of subjective (essay and short answer) and objective (multiple choice) questions and will focus on both the notes and the text book. The final exam will NOT be cumulative. If you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time, you must contact the instructor at least 24 hours before

class, or within 24 hours of missing the exam. Students must present a medical excuse in order to reschedule an exam they missed and **make-up exams will be scheduled at the convenience of the instructor.**

**Discussion Questions (15%):** I have posted five discussion questions on Blackboard. You will be expected to participate in each one. We will also discuss them in class, but you will be graded on your contributions on Blackboard.

**Campaign Paper or Powerpoint (15%).** Select a state other than North Carolina and gather information on its geographic differences, economic strengths and political/ electoral history. Then, create a real or fictional candidate for governor of that state, describing key characteristics of the candidate and the issues/ themes/ strategies of the campaign. Be sure and explain how the qualities you describe reflect the characteristics of the state. Paper should be 5-8 pages. Powerpoint should be 15-20 slides. **(Due February 23)**

**Politics and Policy Paper (15%).** The purpose of this paper is to examine the link between the demographic, historic, economic, geographic and political contexts and the public policies that are passed or considered in a given state. In this paper, you will build on all of the information gathered for the first paper or powerpoint (Campaign assignment) and use that information to predict policies likely passed relative to some “hot button” public policy issues: abortion, immigration, voter restrictions, marriage equality, gun control and education reform. **(Due April 22)**

### **Student Evaluation(\*)**

<b>Participation</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Discussion Questions</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Campaign Paper</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Budget Paper</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Final Exam</b>	<b>30%</b>

\* I reserve the right to add extra points for attendance or Apop quizzes if necessary.

### **Websites of Interest**

<http://www.stateline.org> (Stateline.org)

Governing.com (Governing Magazine)

US Census Bureau

<http://www.iandrinstitute.org/> (Initiative and Referendum Institute)

ncsl.org- National Conference of State Legislatures

[http://www.iandrinstitute.org/-](http://www.iandrinstitute.org/) Initiative and Referendum Institute

## Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignments</u>
January 11	Introduction: Why Do States Matter?	Chapter 1
January 12	What are the Contexts of State Politics?	Chapter 5
January 18	No Classes	
January 20	What are the Contexts of State Politics?	
January 25/27	What roles do the states play in the federal system?	Chapter 2
February 1	Who votes and does it matter?	Pages 101-121
February 3	No Class	
February 8/10	Who wins and why?	Blackboard
February 15/17	Direct Democracy: What do the people want?	Blackboard
February 22-29	Political Parties: Where's the Party?	Pages 121-130
	<b>Campaign Paper or PowerPoint Due February 22</b>	
March 2	Midterm Exam	
Mach 7, 9	No Class	Spring Break
March 14/16/21	Interest Groups	Blackboard
March 23-30	State Legislatures	Pages 37-41; 63-68
April 4/8/11	Governors: Whose Running the Show?	Pages 41-48; 55-63
April 13	Show me the money?	Chapter 7
April 18/20	The Judiciary: Is justice blind?	Pages 48-53; 68-71
	<b>Politics and Policy Paper Due April 22</b>	
April 25	Where Do We Go From Here?	Chapter 8
April 27	Reading Day	
May 4, 12:00-3:00	FINAL EXAM	

**Discussion Questions**  
**PSC 322**  
**Spring 2015**

1. Do states still matter? In the past century or so, the federal government has gotten increasingly bigger and more invasive, moving into areas once reserved for the states, from voting rights to education to health care. Based on this trend, do state still matter? Does the tenth amendment (state's rights amendment) have any relevance at all in the 21st century? **Complete by January 25.**
2. Should efforts be made to improve turnout in midterm elections? Turnout is lower in midterm elections and we know the make up of voters is different than in Presidential years. While Barack Obama and Democrats picked up Congressional seats in 2008 and 2012, Democrats lost big in 2010 and 2014. Bush and Republicans won big in 2004, but lost big in 2006. Should special efforts be made to increase turnout in off years or is this just part of politics? **Complete by February 1.**
3. Are political parties good or bad? Although explicitly warned against in the Federalist Papers, political parties have been a part of the US political landscape since its beginning. Some people suggest that blind partisan loyalty is the reason for the gridlock that defines US politics today. Others suggest that strong political parties is the only way to get things done and hold government accountable in a system with a strong legislative and executive branch. Where do you stand? Where do you stand? **Complete by February 22.**
4. Who Wins- Professional or citizen legislatures? Some state legislatures are like little Congresses- with low turnover, high salaries and full-time staffs. Others are like big city councils, with limited sessions, low pay and parttime staff. Which do you think is best? **Complete by March 23.**
5. How should we choose a judge? Some states elect judges just like they elect governors and legislators. Others appoint judges in a manner similar to the national government. Others do a combination of both- appointment with retention elections. Which do you think is best? **Complete by April 18.**

## **Paper #1: Campaign Paper or Power Point**

**Due Febraury 22**

Select a state other than North Carolina and gather information on its geographic differences, economic strengths and political/ electoral history. Then, create a real or fictional candidate for governor of that state, describing key characteristics of the candidate and the issues/ themes/ strategies of the campaign. Be sure and explain how the qualities you describe reflect the characteristics of the state. Paper should be 5-8 pages. Powerpoint should be 15-20 slides.

Should Include the following:

I. Characteristics of the state: Demographic (racial, economic, religious, etc. make up of population) context

Economic (key resources and industries) context

Geographic (regions) context

Political (party and ideology) context

II. Personal Characteristics of the candidate (include picture).

III. Three key issues of the candidate's campaign (include campaign slogan).

IV. Target groups of the Campaign and how candidate and issues will appeal.

V. Identify winning coalition within regional, racial, ideological and racial groups.

Paper should be at least 5-8 pages; PowerPoint should be 15-20 slides.

**Paper #2: Politics and Policy in the States**  
**5-8 Pages**  
**Due April 22**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the link between the demographic, historic, economic, geographic and political contexts and the public policies that are passed or considered in a given state. In this paper, you will build on all of the information gathered for the first paper or powerpoint (Campaign assignment) and use that information to predict state policies relative to the following public policy issues.

- Abortion (Access/ Restrictions)
- Immigration (limitations, access to services, etc.)
- Voter Access (Voter ID, early voting, voter registration)
- Marriage Equality (Constitutional Amendments, DOMA, etc.)
- Gun Rights/ Control (Background checks, access to weapons, protection of gun rights).
- Education reform (charter schools, tenure, teachers unions)

For example, based on the economics, geography, history and politics of your state would you predict that the state would make it easier or difficult to obtain an abortion relative to other states? Likewise, based on those same factors, would you predict that your state would make it easier or more difficult than other states to register to vote and to vote?

Once you have made and explained your predictions about the six policy areas relative to the nature of the state you have chosen, then present the actual policy positions in the state.

Paper Should include the following:

1. Title Page (Paper title, name, date, class)
2. Introduction (one or two paragraphs) with name and brief summary of state chosen.
3. Discussion of Contexts- most of first paper with revisions (3-4 pages).
4. Predictions about expectations regarding the 6 policy areas- explain your predictions (1-2 pages)
5. Policy relative to the 6 policy areas- current or recent action on these policies (if there is nothing on one or two of them, then let me know). (2-3 pages)
6. Conclusion- were your expectations met? (1 page or less)