Graduate Colloquium: State Politics
Columbia University

Spring 2011
Thursday, 2:10-4:00pm
International Affairs Building Rm. 418

Professor Justin Phillips
(212) 854-0741
jhp2121@columbia.edu
733 International Affairs Building
Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 pm
& by appointment

Course Description

This seminar is designed as an overview of the major debates in the comparative study of U.S. state politics. The primary goals of the course are to familiarize students with the principal questions being asked by scholars in this subfield, the methodological approaches employed, and the avenues available for future research. Students will be asked to critically evaluate the existing literature. Throughout the course, special emphasis will be placed on states as laboratories for the empirical examination of political institutions, behavior, and the policy-making process.

Course Requirements

Reading & Discussion
This course is conducted in a discussion format so it is essential that all students complete the required readings prior to the class section in which they will be discussed. Our seminar discussions will sacrifice scope for the rigorous examination of each of the week’s readings. In particular, we will focus on the nature of the contribution that each makes to the study of state politics as well as its theoretical and empirical shortcomings. All students must be prepared to participate in these discussions. Participation grades are determined by the quality of informed commentary contributed during our discussions. Students need only complete those readings labeled “required.”

Assignments
Students are required to complete, during the course of the semester, five short (4-5 pages) review papers reacting to the week’s readings. Students are free to write papers for the weeks of their choosing. However, these papers must be turned in (via e-mail) no later than 5 p.m. on the Wednesday prior to class. No late papers are accepted. These papers must address each of the week’s readings. Furthermore, students should avoid lengthy summarization and instead present critical analysis.

High quality papers will discuss the following:

1) Questions addressed by the readings
2) Contributions of the readings (i.e., what have we learned?)
3) Critiques of the authors’ theoretical arguments, research design, evidence, and conclusions
4) Avenues for future research
Grades for the seminar will be based upon performance in two areas:

- Class Participation: 50%
- Review Papers: 50%

**Week 1 (January 20th): Introduction & Overview**

**Week 2 (January 27th): State Elections & Electoral Institutions**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**Week 3 (February 3rd): Direct Democracy I**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**


**Week 4 (February 10th): Direct Democracy II**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


**Week 5 (February 17th): Public Opinion**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


**Week 6 (February 24th): Interest Groups**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


**Week 7 (March 3rd): States as Legislative Laboratories**

*Required:*


**Recommended:**


**Week 8 (March 10th): Legislative Professionalization**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**

Week 9 (March 24th): Term Limits

Required:


Recommended:


Week 10 (March 31st): Class canceled (Midwest)

Week 11 (April 7th): Governors

Required:


Recommended:


**Week 12 (April 14th): Judicial Politics**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


**Week 13 (April 21st): Race, Gender & Sexual Orientation in State Politics**

*Required:*


Recommended:


**Week 14 (April 28th): Policy Innovation, Diffusion, & Competition**

Required:


Recommended:


