



Independent Study | in **Idaho**

**POLS 275
American State and
Local Government**

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Course Guide

Independent
Study | in Idaho

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Political Science 275 American State and Local Government

University of Idaho
3 Semester-Hour Credits

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Welcome!

Whether you are a new or returning student, welcome to the Independent Study in Idaho (ISI) program. Below, you will find information pertinent to your course including the course description, course materials, course objectives, as well as information about assignments, exams, and grading. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the ISI office for clarification before beginning your course.

Policies and Procedures

Refer to the ISI website at www.uidaho.edu/isi and select *Students* for the most current policies and procedures, including information on setting up accounts, student confidentiality, exams, proctors, transcripts, course exchanges, refunds, academic integrity, library resources, and disability support and other services.

Course Description

American state and local politics from a comparative perspective; focus on parties, interest groups, voting behavior, legislative and executive government, judiciary, intergovernmental relations, and public policies. U-Idaho students: May be used as general education credit in J-3-d, social science.

Required: Internet access

14 graded lessons, 1 graded project, 3 proctored exams

Course Materials

Required Course Materials

- Donovan, Todd, Christopher Z. Mooney, and Daniel L. Smith. *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform*. 2nd ed. Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2009.
ISBN: 0-495-80223-9
- Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, and Margaret Weir. "Federalism." Chap. 3 in *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009.
ISBN: 0-393-93266-4

NOTE: Chapter 3 is available through online course reserve at the University of Idaho Library. For access information see the *University of Idaho Library Resources* section in this course guide and your *Registration Confirmation Email*.

Additional Course Materials

- Internet access is required to be successful in this course.
- Students will need access to the University of Idaho Library resources to do the required reserve reading (see *Course Materials*) and to access scholarly sources for the interview project course paper (see *University of Idaho Library Resources* and *Lessons*).

Students may submit up to 2 assignments at a time/4 per week. Before taking exams, students MUST wait for grades and feedback on assignments, which may take up to three weeks after the date of receipt by the instructor.

ALL assignments and exams must be submitted to receive a final grade for the course.

University of Idaho Library Resources

Reserve Reading

To access the course reserve reading (Chapter 3 of the Ginsberg textbook; see *Course Materials*) copy the following link into an Internet browser:

- http://db.lib.uidaho.edu/ereserve/show_course.php?pointer=2743
- Click on the reserve document: Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, and Margaret Weir. "Federalism." Chap. 3 in *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*.
- Input the username and password for this course; these are available in your *Registration Confirmation Email*. You may also check with your instructor for the most current username and password.

Access to Scholarly Sources for the Interview Project Course Paper

University of Idaho Library resources are available to ISI students at lib.uidaho.edu, including electronic journal databases and eBook collections. To gain access to these resources, students can use their BbLearn username and password. Students who are Idaho residents and nonresidents who live within a 50 mile radius of the University of Idaho may visit the library to obtain a guest card that is good for one year. Students who cannot visit the UI Library should contact their local library for information about borrowing materials through interlibrary loan.

Course Delivery

All ISI courses are delivered through BbLearn, an online management system that hosts the course lessons and assignments and other items that are essential to the course. Upon registration, the student will receive a *Registration Confirmation Email* with information on how to access ISI courses online.

Course Introduction

I am pleased to join you on your journey into the realm of political science as concerns American state and local government. In this course, we will examine state and local politics from a comparative view, meaning that, with the help of our textbook, we will compare how state and local governments interact with each other and how they differ across the country.

This course is an overview of the political process particularly as concerning how governments at different levels interact with each other. We will begin with an examination of state and local government politics and policies, and then take a look at federalism from a historical perspective and in its present form. Next, we will examine the electoral process and the question of a *democratic* electorate. Once we have an understanding of what democracy in America is, and how it applies to the American citizenry in general, we can then examine political parties, interest, state legislatures, and state executive and judiciary—how they affect the political process and state politics.

Course Overview

Have you ever been in an airplane and tried to judge your speed? On take-off or landing, it is easy to judge the difference between the slow taxiing on the runway and the high-speed lift-off or touch-down. But what about at cruising altitude; not so easy to "feel the speed" then, is it? This is the concept your textbook attempts to address—comparing the "speeds" or, functionalities of the state and local governments. Usually, this comparison in functionality is made between the state and local governments and the federal government. While it is necessary to make such a comparison, the textbook we are using allows you to examine and make comparisons between the states themselves: just open the front cover and you can judge your state's comparative "speed" with that of the other forty-nine, using key variables. Are you interested in ballot initiatives? Again, a study is presented that uses a state-to-state comparison so

we can judge different states' comparative "speeds" on the issue. In each lesson, you will be asked to find real comparisons that give the lesson an "added value" for the issue(s) covered.

For further course information, peruse the preface of your textbook. Does this textbook really center around the importance of institutions, the possibility of reform, and how comparative state and local political examples forward and promote political comprehension? I believe it does, and that is why you are using it to enhance your understanding of Political Science 275: American State and Local Government.

Course Objectives

The basic goal of this course is to provide you with knowledge and understanding of state and local government and politics.

- By gaining this knowledge you should be able to understand, analyze, and evaluate political events such as elections, legislative sessions, and city council meetings that occur in your state and community.
- You should also have a better understanding of the major policy issues and policies confronting your state and community and should formulate your own opinion on existing and proposed policy solutions to them.

Lessons

Overview

Each lesson includes the following components:

- lesson objectives
- reading assignments
- important terms and/or concepts
- written assignment

Written Assignments

The written assignments consist of terms/concept questions and essays. All answers are to be written in essay form using complete sentences. *Students should write in their own words when referencing authorities and all quotations must include complete citations of the work from which they are taken.* While it is recommended that students do not quote from the textbook or any other book, the reality is that some terms are initially explained succinctly in your textbook or by other **scholarly** sources; however, excessive quotation is generally discouraged and will affect your grade. Do your best to use your own thoughts and impressions wherever possible.

Interview Project Course Paper

The interview project course paper is due before the final exam, but it can be turned in at any time during this course. Start researching this paper as soon as you start this course, if possible. For paper guidelines, see *Interview Project Course Paper Assignment* toward the back of this course guide.

Study Hints

- Complete **all** assigned readings.
- While obviously you do not attend a lecture seminar *per se*, the lecture section in the lessons serves to provide a centering mechanism for maximizing main points in the lesson. Maximization does not equal iteration. *Read the entire chapter indicated in your lesson plan.*
- Set a schedule allowing for completion of the course one month prior to your desired deadline. This is a very important step in your educative process and should not be overlooked.

Exams

Overview

- You must wait for grades and comments on assignments prior to taking each subsequent exam.
- For your instructor's exam guidelines, refer to your *Registration Confirmation Email* and the *Exam Information* sections in this course guide.

See *Grading* for specific information on assignment/exam points and percentages.

Choosing a Proctor/Scheduling Exams

All exams for this course require a proctor.

To submit your *Proctor Information Form* online, visit the ISI website and select *Forms, Proctor Information Form*. Submit this form at least two weeks before your first exam. Refer to *About ISI Policies* on the ISI website for information on acceptable and unacceptable proctors.

Grading

There are 700 points possible in this course.

1. Lesson Writing Assignments = 300 points
2. Exams: 3 worth 100 points each = 300 points
3. Interview Project Course Paper= 100 points

TOTAL = 700 points

Grading is university scale:

A = 90–100% = 630–700 points

B = 80–89% = 560–629

C = 70–79% = 490–559

D = 60–69% = 420–489

F = Anything below 60% = 419 or less

The final course grade is issued after all assignments and exams have been graded.

Acts of academic dishonesty, including cheating or plagiarism, are considered a very serious transgression and may result in a grade of F for the course.

About the Course Developer

Your course developer is Shawn Moore, an instructor of political science at the University of Idaho. He received his Masters in Public Administration from the University of Idaho. Besides teaching and tutoring political science on the UI campus, he also instructs three sections of political science for the Independent Study program. Shawn received his B.A. from Southeastern Oklahoma State University and completed his paralegal studies at Blackstone School of Law, Dallas, Texas.

Contacting Your Instructor

Instructor contact information is posted on your BbLearn site under *Course Rules*.

Assignment Submission Log

Readings

- Donovan, Todd, Christopher Z. Mooney, and Daniel L. Smith. *State and Local Politics: Institutions and Reform*. 2nd ed. Boston: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2009.
ISBN: 0-495-80223-9
- Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, and Margaret Weir. "Federalism." Chap. 3 in *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*. 7th ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 2009.
ISBN: 0-393-93266-4 (University of Idaho Library online reserve reading; see *University of Idaho Library Resources* in this course guide.)

Choose a proctor and send the completed *Proctor Information Form* to the ISI office at least two weeks prior to taking your first exam.

Lesson	Chapter/Reading	Written Assignment	Date Submitted
1	Donovan, Ch. 1, pp. 1–38	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
2	Donovan, Ch. 2, pp. 40–74; Ginsberg, pp. 63–90	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
3	Donovan, Ch. 3, pp. 76–108	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
4	Donovan, Ch. 4, pp. 110–148	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take Exam 1.			
5	Donovan, Ch. 5, pp. 150–185	Terms/Concepts and Essays; Start Considering Paper Topic	
6	Donovan, Ch. 6, pp. 188–223	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
7	Donovan, Ch. 7, pp. 226–281	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
8	Donovan, Ch. 8, pp. 284–332	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
9	Donovan, Ch. 9, pp. 334–383	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
10	Donovan, Ch. 10, pp. 386–424	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take Exam 2.			

Lesson	Chapter/Reading	Written Assignment	Date Submitted
11	Donovan, Ch. 11, pp. 428–463	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
12	Donovan, Ch. 12, pp. 466–502; Chap 13, pp. 504–546	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
13	Donovan, Ch. 14, pp. 550–587	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
13	Donovan, Ch. 14, pp. 550–587	Terms/Concepts and Essays	
14	Donovan, Ch. 15, pp. 590-621	Terms/Concepts and Essays Paper due before taking the Final Exam	
It is time to make arrangements with your proctor to take the Final Exam.			

Lesson 1

Introduction to State and Local Politics

Lesson Objectives

1. To understand the role and importance of state and local governments and their political leaders.
2. To understand the method and value of the comparative approach to studying politics.
3. To identify the major differences between and similarities among the states.

Reading Assignment

Donovan, et al., Chapter 1, pp. 1–38

Lecture

State and local governments play an increasingly important role in domestic policy in the United States.

The roles of government are similar, yet distinct among the several states. While the terms *government*, *politics*, and *public policy* are similar in definition among the states, their implementation varies at community, state, and regional levels.

While it is well understood that states and localities provide many of the most basic and essential services, such as water, roads, and education, it is not as well understood how regulation and distribution of those services control our daily lives. Because of the impact they have on the life of every American, it is important to study and understand state and local governments.

The **comparative** approach examines the similarities and differences in politics and policies among states and communities. It attempts (I suggest, most effectively) to determine the variables associated with those similarities and differences.

Written Assignment

Terms (5 points: 1 point each)

Define the following terms and explain how each term relates to state and local government (3–6 sentences per term).

public goods	divided government	local charter
retention election	political culture	

Essay Questions (10 points: 5 points each)

Answer each of the following questions in one page, double-spaced, 12-point, which equates to a minimum of 450 words. Define any relevant concepts and incorporate specific examples to illustrate the main points.

1. Define “political culture”—what it is, how it developed, and the effect it has on politics. Compare, briefly, political culture and political ideology. Regarding political culture, do not worry about listing certain states, but rather explain the general area of the U.S. affected by each variation, and how and why a certain variation of political culture developed in a region of the nation.
2. The textbook lists three illustrations of “differences in government”—judicial elections, political parties, and punishing convicted offenders that have committed capital crimes. Regarding judicial election of state judges, list the different methods used by the several states, and explain the different

considerations, value judgments and/or differences that the selection process reflects. Give a detailed explanation of which method of judicial election you see as more viable, and why. What is wrong with the method(s) you rejected? Again, elaborate.