PPA 319: U.S. State and Local Politics

Fall 2026

Updated: November 19, 2026

Professor: Taylor Trummel
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Office Location: 305G Knapp Hall
Office Hours: W 12:30-2:30 pm or by appointment
Class Time: MW 3:00-4:20 pm
Class Location: 303 Knapp Hall

Course Description

Does the government closest to the people govern best? This course examines politics in American states and cities by focusing on institutions, processes, and policy. We look at the demographic and economic environments of states and cities, as well as state constitutions and federalism. We examine political participation and the conduct of elections in subnational governments. The course investigates the structure, function, powers, limitations, and ongoing challenges facing local government in the United States.

We will evaluate state and local policy, including land use, economic development, transportation, the environment, housing, health, immigration, welfare, taxation, and more. The readings cover ongoing debates over ethnoracial diversity, police discretion, urban development projects, and suburban sprawl. Students will gain direct experience engaging with these issues through two data-driven research projects comparing policy outcomes and their consequences in real U.S. states and cities.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand the powers and limitations state and municipal governments face
- Debate different perspectives on policy design and outcome prioritization
- Explain the transformation of power in state and local governments over time
- Develop analytical and argumentative writing skills for political science and related disciplines
- Identify key institutional factors that influence state and city governance quality and efficiency

Grading

Component	Weight
In-class quizzes	25%
Project 1	20%
Project 2	20%
Participation	10%
Final Exam	25%

In-Class Participation

Your participation grade is based on engagement and contribution in class. Participation cannot be made up through alternative assignments.

Quizzes

There will be four in-class, prospective quizzes on the assigned readings. There will be two short answers for each quiz. The quizzes should take about 15 minutes. These quizzes test your engagement with assigned readings. To prepare, students should be able to summarize the core arguments and evidence used in the noted readings. Quizzes are not open-note.

Quizzes are graded as A/B/C or no credit. At the end of the semester, your lowest quiz grade will be dropped from your overall score. A missed quiz can count as your lowest grade and be dropped. Alternatively, there is one optional make up quiz offered at the end of the semester. Quizzes will start promptly at the start of class on the dates indicated.

Final Exam

The final exam will be an in-person, blue book exam. It will cover all course material. It will consist of five short answers and one essay.

Research Projects (2)

The research projects are data-driven projects in which you will analyze a state or city policy. The data for this project will be provided for you, and we will use several class periods to progress on the project before the final product is due. You will write a 6-8 page double-spaced memo for each project. You must also include a reference page at the end. Additional instructions and examples will be provided.

Project 1: Students will analyze a matched pair of California cities where one city has adopted a "pro-marijuana" stance and the other has not. The task will be to explain why two otherwise similar cities have chosen to follow different paths when it comes to marijuana regulation.

Project 2: Students will analyze two neighboring U.S. states of their choice where one state has adopted more "pro-immigrant" policies and the other has not. The task will be to explain why the states differ in their response to immigration.

Required Readings

A required textbook is needed:

- Kevin Smith and Alan Greenblatt. *Governing States and Localities*. 10th Edition.

Notes about the book:

- Available as an eBook or physical copy.
- Obtain access to a copy as soon as possible.
- Other editions of the book are acceptable to reduce costs.

A free supplemental textbook on Ohio state and local politics is available here:

- Wukich, R. Clayton. *An Ohioan's Guide to State & Local Government*. Michael Schwartz Library, Cleveland State University, 2024. https://pressbooks.ulib.csuohio.edu/statelocalgov/

All other readings will be posted to the course page.

Classroom Policies

Laptop and tablet use for notetaking is permitted if students are on task. Phone use is not permitted. Recording lectures or taking pictures is not permitted without prior approval. Slides will usually be posted at the end of the week. However, the expectation is that students will attend class to see the slides in the context of lecture. Attendance is required and will be occasionally tracked.

Students will treat classmates with mutual respect. This is a place of learning and I welcome questions on the material. However, respect is a two-way street: I ask that students do their best to be conscientious of how their words may impact others, as well as that we assume questions or comments come from good intentions rather than malice. If it is clear that malice is intended, students will be removed from the class.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in your written assignments. Denison's Community Standards and Policies regarding academic integrity reads:

> "Students must clearly cite any sources consulted - not only for quoted phrases but also for ideas and information that are not common knowledge. Neither ignorance nor carelessness is an acceptable defense in cases of plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to follow the appropriate format for citations… Unauthorized use of technology (including, but not limited to, artificial intelligence sites and translation programs) in the preparation or submission of academic work can be considered a form of cheating and/or plagiarism."

Proper citation and original work are essential. AI can be a useful tool, but it has limitations and can stunt your learning. We will discuss appropriate and inappropriate use of AI for this class during the first week. Suspected instances of plagiarism will be reported for possible action.

Late Policy and Extensions: Due dates are given well in advance. Use your time wisely. Assignments submitted late will lose 10% for each day it is late, beginning immediately after the deadline. I allow a 10-minute grace period to accommodate possible tech malfunctions and delays. However, late work following the grace period will be penalized. Assignments more than four days late will not be accepted. Students may ask for extensions for reasonably unexpected events. Extensions are not guaranteed and will be given on a case-by-case basis. Students should be prepared to provide documentation to justify the need for an extension.

Disclaimer: This syllabus may be updated throughout the semester to add or remove readings, change due dates, and/or add additional information as needed. The professor will communicate about any changes.

University Resources

Mental Health and Wellness: Students are encouraged to reach out to the DU Cares Program or the Hoaglin Wellness Center, which can connect students with available campus and community well-being resources. The Hoaglin Wellness Center provides medical care, counseling services, and wellness programming. Please visit Student Life for more information about student support services.

Denison's Hoaglin Wellness Center provides confidential counseling and psychological services, medical care, nutrition counseling, and wellness education to support students' physical and mental health. Students are encouraged to seek support whenever they need it. If circumstances begin to affect your academic work, please communicate with your professor. Students should be aware that University employees are required by University policy to report allegations of discrimination based on sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, or pregnancy to the Title IX Office. Additional information about student wellness services is available here.

Academic Support: Students with general academic support needs are encouraged to utilize the Academic Resource Center (ARC) early and often. The ARC offers tutoring, academic coaching, study skills support, peer learning strategies, writing assistance, and academic advising to help students succeed throughout their time at Denison. Learn more about student support here.

Students with Accommodations: Students who anticipate needing accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility & Disability Services within the Academic Resource Center as early as possible. The office works with students to determine reasonable accommodations and coordinate their implementation with faculty. Additional information is available here.

Course Schedule

Week 1. Introduction and Federalism
August 31 to September 4

Required

- Chapter 1: Introduction to State and Local Politics
- Chapter 2: Federalism
- Enduring Debate Ch 3 [Online]

Research Project 1 Assigned. Due week 5 (Sept 25). Sign up by Sept 6 @ 11:59 pm

In-class debate: Students will respond to this statement: "The U.S. federal government has become too powerful. More power should be returned to the states." Students are encouraged to read and take notes with this premise in mind. You will be assigned your position (agree vs disagree) day of debate.

Week 2. Constitutions, The Limited City, and Varieties of U.S. Local Governments
September 7 to 11

Required

- Chapters 3 and 11: Constitutions, Local Government
- Peterson, Paul. "The Interests of the Limited City." Chapter 2 in *City Limits.* University of Chicago Press, 1981. [Online]
- Howell-Moroney, Michael. "The Tiebout Hypothesis 50 Years Later: Lessons and Lingering Challenges for Metropolitan Governance in the 21st Century," *Public Administration Review,* 2008. [Online]

Recommended

- Wukich, R. Clayton. Foundations of Ohio Government, Chapter 4 [Online]

Quiz 1 on Monday on Week 2 material.

Week 3. City Politics, Machine Politics, and Reforms
September 14 to 18

Required

- Chapter 12: Metropolitics
- Riordon, William. *Plunkitt of Tammany Hall*, 1963. [Online]
- Judd, Dennis and Annika Marlen Hinze. *City Politics: Cities and Suburbs in 21st Century America*, 2022. Chapters 3 and 4 [Online]
- Schaffner, Brian, Matthew Streb, and Gerald Wright. "Teams Without Uniforms: The Nonpartisan Ballot in State and Local Elections." *Political Research Quarterly*, 2001. [Online]

Recommended

- Caro, Robert. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. Alfred A. Knopf, 1974.

Quiz 2 on Monday on Week 3 material.

Class Guest (Monday): Representative Crystal Lett, OH-11

Week 4. Finance and Transportation Policy
September 21 to 25

Required

- Chapter 4: Finance
- Bomey, Nathan and John Gallagher. "How Detroit Went Broke." *Detroit Free Press*, 15 September 2013. [Online]
- Malanga, Steven. "The Real Reason the Once Great City of Detroit Came to Ruin." *Wall Street Journal*, 28 July 2013. [Online]
- Nall, Clayton. *The Road to Inequality: How the Federal Highway Program Polarized America and Undermined Cities.* Cambridge University Press, 2018. Chapters 1 and 2 [Online]

In-class workshop time for Project 1. Due Sept 25, 11:59 pm.

Week 5. The Politics of Urban Infrastructure and Economic Development
September 28 to October 2

Required

- Sen, Conor. "Few Cities Could Accommodate Amazon's New Headquarters," *Bloomberg*, 7 September 2017. [Online]
- Easterbrook, Gregg. "How Taxpayers Keep the NFL Rich," *The Atlantic*, 2015. [Online]
- "The Cost to Keep the Home Team at Home May Not Be Worth It," 13 December 2013. [Online]
- Jenkins, Simon. "An Olympic-Sized Rip-Off," review of *Circus Maximus* by Andrew Zimbalist, *The Guardian*, 22 May 2015. [Online]

Recommended

- Barringer, Felicity. "Thirsty for power and water, AI-crunching data centers sprout across the West." Stanford University's Bill Lane Center for the American West, 8 April 2025. [Online]
- Documentary about urban renewal; 30 mins: *Metropolis: Creator or Destroyer? Three Cures for a Sick City*. National Educational Television and Radio Center. 19 April 1964. [linked online]
- Short video on Chicano Park (San Diego), the community's reclamation of land beneath the Coronado Bridge and Interstate 5 (the highway and bridge displaced thousands). [linked online]

Week 6. Political Opinion and Participation
October 5 to 9

Required

- Chapter 5: Political Attitudes and Participation
- Anzia, Sarah. "Election Timing and the Electoral Influence of Interest Groups." *Journal of Politics,* 2011. [Online]
- Hajnal, Zoltan, Nazita Lajevardi, and Lindsay Nielson. "Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes." *Journal of Politics*, 2017. [Online]
- Grimmer, Justin, Eitan Hersh, Marc Meredith, Jonathan Mummolo, and Clayton Nall. "Obstacles to Estimating Voter ID Laws' Effect on Turnout." *Journal of Politics*, 2018. [Online]
- Lax, Jeffrey and Justin Phillips. "The Democratic Deficit in the States." *American Journal of Political Science*, 2012. [Online]

Recommended

- Cantoni, Enrico and Vincent Pons. "Strict ID Laws Don't Stop Voters: Evidence from a U.S. Nationwide Panel, 2008-2018." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2021. [Online]

- Goel, Sharad, Marc Meredith, Michael Morse, David Rothschild, and Houshmand Shirani-Mehr. "One Person, One Vote: Estimating the Prevalence of Double Voting in U.S. Presidential Elections." *American Political Science Review*, 2020. [Online]
- Bush, Sarah and Lauren Prather. "Healthy Democracy Requires Trust: These 3 Things Could Start to Restore Voters' Declining Faith in US Elections." *The Conversation*, 1 December 2022. [Online]
- Lax, Jeffrey and Justin Phillips. "Gay Rights in the States: Public Opinion and Policy Responsiveness." *American Political Science Review*, 2009. [Online]

Quiz 3 on Monday on Week 6 material.

In-class debate on voter ID laws. Students will respond to the following statement: "Voter ID laws are essential for maintaining electoral integrity." Students will be assigned their position.

Week 7. Legislatures and Executives
October 12 to 16 (Fall Break 15-16)

Required

- Chapters 7 and 8: Legislatures, Governors and Executives [skim for bolded terms]
- Handan-Nader, Cassandra, Andrew C. W. Myers, and Andrew B. Hall, "Polarization and State Legislative Elections," *American Journal of Political Science*, 2026. [Online]

Recommended

- Wolak, Jennifer and Srinivas Parinandi, "Does the Public Hold Governors Accountable for Policy Outcomes?" *Political Research Quarterly*, 2021. [Online]
- Rogers, Steven. "Electoral Accountability for State Legislative Roll Calls and Ideological Representation." *American Political Science Review*, 2017. [Online]
- Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander. "Who Passes Business's 'Model Bills'? Policy Capacity and Corporate Influence in U.S. State Politics." *Perspectives on Politics*, 2014. [Online]

Week 8. Bureaucracy: Principal-Agent Problems in Cities, The Police as a Case Study
October 19 to 23

Required

- Chapter 10: Bureaucracy [Skim]
- McCubbins, Mathew, Roger G. Noll, and Barry R. Weingast. "Political Control of the Bureaucracy" [Online]
- Moe, Terry. "Political Control and the Power of the Agent," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization,* 2006. [Online]
- Wilson, James. *Varieties of Police Behavior.* Harvard University Press, 1968. Chapters 1–3 [Online]

Recommended

- Potts, Monica. "What Are Cops Really Good For? A Brief History," *Talking Points Memo*, 4 February 2015. [Online]
- Walker, Jesse, "Centralized Policing Is the Wrong Solution," *Reason*, 17 December 2014. [Online]
- Ebbinghaus, Mathis, Nathan Bailey, and Jacob Rubel. "The Effect of the 2020 Black Lives Matter Protests on Police Budgets: How 'Defund the Police' Sparked Political Backlash." *Social Problems*, 2024.

Week 9. The Politics of the Police, Continued: Evaluating the "Broken Windows" Theory
October 26 to 30

Required

- Wilson, James and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows," *The Atlantic*, 1982. [Online]
- Brook, Daniel. "The Cracks in 'Broken Windows,'" *The Boston Globe*, 19 February 2006. [Online]
- Bratton, William and George L. Kelling, "The Assault on Broken Windows Policing," *Wall Street Journal*, 18 December 2014. [Online]
- Sampson, Robert and Stephen Raudenbush, "Seeing Disorder," *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 2004. [Online]

Recommended

- PBS Frontline. "Policing the Police," 2020. [linked online]

Research Project 2 Assigned. Due week 13 (Nov 22, Sunday @ 11:59 pm).

Week 10. Ethnoracial Diversity and Attitudes
November 2 to 6

Required

- Putnam, Robert. "E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century," *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 2007. [Online]
- Abascal, Maria and Delia Baldassarri, "Love Thy Neighbor? Ethnoracial Diversity and Trust Reexamined," *American Journal of Sociology*, 2015. [Online]

Recommended

- Hopkins, Daniel. "Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition." *American Political Science Review*, 2010. [Online]
- Enos, Ryan D. "Causal Effect of Intergroup Contact on Exclusionary Attitudes." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2014. [Online]
- Hopkins, Daniel. "The Diversity Discount: When Increasing Ethnic and Racial Diversity Prevents Tax Increases." *Journal of Politics*, 2009. [Online]

Class Guest (Wednesday). Melissa Hartfield, Mayor of Granville.

Week 11. Subnational Immigration-Related Policy
November 9 to 13

Required

- Filindra, Alexandra and Anita Manatschal, "Coping with a Changing Integration Policy Context: American State Policies and Their Effects on Immigrant Political Engagement," *Regional Studies,* 2020. [Online]
- Wong, Tom K. "287(g) and the Politics of Interior Immigration Control in the United States: Explaining Local Cooperation with Federal Immigration Authorities." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 2012. [Online]
- Collingwood, Loren and Benjamin Gonzalez O'Brien. *Sanctuary Cities: The Politics of Refuge*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Intro and Chapter 1 [Online]

Recommended

- Thompson, Daniel M. "How Partisan Is Local Law Enforcement? Evidence from Sheriff Cooperation with Immigration Authorities." *American Political Science Review*, 2020. [Online]
- Fouka, Vasiliki. "State Policy and Immigrant Integration," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2024. [Online]
- Trummel, Taylor. "The Other Immigration Consensus." *Popular by Design*, 2026. [Online]
- Trummel, Taylor. "Inclusive State Policies, Stronger Identities: The Impact of Policy on Latino Immigrant Linked Fate." *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 2026. [Online]
- Gulasekaram, Pratheepan and S. Karthick Ramakrishnan. *The New Immigration Federalism*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Farris, Emily M. and Mirya R. Holman. "All Politics Is Local? County Sheriffs and Localized Policies of Immigration Enforcement." *Political Research Quarterly*, 2017. [Online]
- Jiménez, Tomás R., Deborah J. Schildkraut, Yuen J. Huo, and John F. Dovidio. *States of Belonging: Immigration Policies, Attitudes, and Inclusion*. Russell Sage Foundation, 2021.

In-class activity (Wednesday). We will do a walk-and-talk at the midpoint of class. Weather permitting, we will take a lap around the quad and informally chat about the readings or immigration in general.

Week 12. Housing: Residential Segregation and Gentrification
November 16 to 20

Required

- Marble, William and Clayton Nall. "Where Self-Interest Trumps Ideology: Liberal Homeowners and Local Opposition to Housing Development." *Journal of Politics,* 2021.
- Trounstine, Jessica. "Segregation and Inequality in Public Goods," *American Journal of Political Science*, 2016. [Online]

Recommended

- Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Liveright Publishing, 2017.
- Mummolo, Jonathan and Clayton Nall. "Why Partisans Do Not Sort: The Constraints on Political Segregation." *Journal of Politics,* 2017. [Online]
- Glaeser, Edward and Joseph Gyourko. "The Economic Implications of Housing Supply." *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 2018. [Online]
- Aaronson, Daniel, Daniel Hartley, and Bhashkar Mazumder. "The Effects of the 1930s HOLC 'Redlining' Maps." *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, 2021. [Online]
- Owens, Michael Leo, Arica Schuett, Nyron N. Crawford, and Andrea Benjamin. "Race and Perceptions of Revitalisation in the 'District of Gentrification.'" *Urban Studies*, 2024. [Online]

Quiz 4 on Week 12 material.

In-class activity (Wednesday). We will review a mock essay question for the final exam that spans the content of this week and integrates readings from previous topics. You'll have 5-8 minutes to outline your answer solo before reviewing in small groups.

Research Project 2 due Nov 22, Sunday @ 11:59 pm.

Week 13. Housing Issues, Continued: Debating Solutions
November 23 to 27 (Thanksgiving)

Recommended

- Danielson, Michael. "The Politics of Exclusionary Zoning in Suburbia," *Political Science Quarterly*, 1976. [Online]
- Cutler, Kim-Mai. "How Burrowing Owls Lead to Vomiting Anarchists (Or SF's Housing Crisis Explained)," *TechCrunch*, 14 April 2014. [Online]
- Dougherty, Conor. "In Cramped and Costly Bay Area, Cries to Build, Baby, Build." *The New York Times*, 2016. [Online]
- Zuk, Miriam and Karen Chapple. "Housing Production, Filtering and Displacement: Untangling the Relationships." Institute Of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2016. [Online]

No class this week.

Week 14. Environment and Climate Policy
November 30 to December 4

Required

- Chapter 16: Environment and Climate Policy
- Trachtman, Samuel. "Building Climate Policy in the States." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 2019. [Online]

Recommended

- Papp, Anna and Kimberly Oremus. "Plastic bag bans and fees reduce harmful bag litter on shorelines." *Science*, 2025. [Online]
- Taylor, Rebecca and Sofia Villas-Boas. "Bans vs. Fees: Disposable Carryout Bag Policies and Bag Usage." *Applied Economic Perspectives and Policy*, 2016. [Online]
- Egan, Patrick and Megan Mullin, "US Partisan Polarization on Climate Change: Can Stalemate Give Way to Opportunity?" *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 2024. [Online]
- Zacher, Sam. "The US Political Economy of Climate Change: Impacts of the 'Fracking' Boom on State-Level Climate Policies," *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 2023. [Online]

In-class activity (Wednesday). We'll have a "happy hour" to review this week's readings. You'll be up on your feet moving from small group to small group. Discussion questions and non-alcoholic drinks provided.

Week 15. Health: Abortion and Food
December 7 to 11

Required

- Chapter 15: Health and Welfare [Skim]
- Gardner, Graham, Kayleigh McCray, and Melissa K. Spencer. "Abortion ballot measures affect election outcomes." *Economics Letters*, 2015. [Online]
- Hartocollis, Anemona. "Calorie Postings Don't Change Habits, Study Finds." *The New York Times*. 6 October 2009. [Online]

Recommended

- Price, Austin. "Do Soda Taxes Work?" August 25, 2019. UC Berkeley Public Health. [Online]
- Felix, Mabel, Laurie Sobel, and Alina Salganicoff. "The Opportunities and Realities of Citizen-Initiated State Ballot Abortion Measures." KFF, 2024. [Online]

In-class activity (Monday). Comparing state policies using the "Interactive Map: US Abortion Policies" from the Guttmacher Institute.

In-class activity (Wednesday). Reviewing for the final exam. Study guide will be provided and we will workshop answers to mock questions.

Final Exam: Thursday, December 17 at 9:00-11:00 am.
*Optional missed quiz make up during final exam for one missed quiz for any reason.

Additional Information

Resources for Project 1

- City pairings and data spreadsheet, sign-up sheet (feel free to sign up now): [linked online]
- See news article readings on course page for additional background.

Resources for Project 2

- Source for the state policy data: https://www.urban.org/data-tools/state-immigration-policy-resource
- State-level immigration statistics: https://ohss.dhs.gov/topics/immigration/state-immigration-data/state-immigration-statistics
- Sign-up sheet to be shared after Project 1 is complete.