

COURSE INFORMATION:

Course: POLS 011-01: State & Local Government
Semester: Fall 2020
CRN: 81675
Location: Virtual
Time: 1:10-2:00PM
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

Name: Keneshia Grant, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Political Science
Office: Virtual
Office Phone: 954-282-1887
Office Hours: Monday, 12Noon-1PM
Wednesday, 3-5PM
Other times by appointment
Email: KENESHIA.GRANT@HOWARD.EDU
Twitter: @KeneshiaGrant
Text: 954-282-1887



COURSE DESCRIPTION:

- Comparison and analysis of government organization and operations, intergovernmental relations, political participation, policies, and fiscal management.

COURSE GOALS:

- Make students thoughtful and critical consumers of news and information about politics, especially at the state and local levels.
- Make students aware of their roles and responsibilities as participants in the American electorate.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

On completion of this course, each student should have an in-depth understanding of and be able to discuss the following:

- The responsibilities of state and local governments in the United States
- The role of federalism in the United States
- State constitutions
- State finances and tax policies
- Political attitudes and participation as they relate to state politics
- Political parties and interest groups
- Leadership at the state and local levels
- State-level legislative processes
- The power and role of bureaucracies
- The state role in education
- The state role in healthcare
- The state role in environmental protection

Additionally, students should be able to provide analysis of these topics as they relate to socio-demographics, topographical, and cultural differences, as well as examine arguments for logic and flaws.

COURSE REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Kevin B. Smith & Alan Greenblatt, *Governing States and Localities* (CQ Press, 7th edition, © 2020). Via [Amazon](#) | Via [Barnes & Noble](#)

OPTIONAL, RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL EXPLORATION

The *Governing States and Localities* student companion website: <https://edge.sagepub.com/smithgreenblatt7e>. This site is a particularly good resource for review of course materials.

IMPORTANT COURSE DATES

(subject to change, based on class progress):

September 7	Labor Day University is closed
September 9	Accommodations Letter Due (if applicable)
October 7	Interview with a Government Official is due
October 9	Midterm Grades Submitted
November 8	Course withdrawal date
November 11	Veteran's Day University is closed

COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ASSIGNMENTS

BlackBoard Introduction & Syllabus Quiz—5 points

Each student is required to complete a BlackBoard Quiz that will demonstrate that they:
 Logged into BlackBoard
 Read the course syllabus

Content Quizzes—70 points

Each student is required to complete ten (10) quizzes. Students can choose 10 quizzes from among any of the twelve chapters in the course. Each quiz is worth seven (7) points.

Each chapter includes a quiz that covers the chapter's contents. Reading the material is *imperative* to doing well on the quizzes. You may use the SAGE course supplementary website and its materials to prepare and ensure you've understood the material.

Course Discussion Board—10 points

During the semester, students will be required to participate in course discussion using the course discussion board in BlackBoard. The course discussions may cover textbook materials, additional readings, or current events. Students are required to participate in **all** course discussions **in a timely fashion**. The total sum of discussion board entries will be worth ten (10) points. The ten points will be divided among the total number of discussions. For example, if we end up with ten discussions then each discussion will be worth one point. If we end up with twenty discussions, then each discussion will be worth .5 point.

Interview with Government Official— 15 points

Each student will arrange a personal interview with an elected state or local official. The student will prepare a list of no fewer than 20 questions in advance of the interview and submit those questions to BlackBoard for approval. Then, the student will interview the official. Finally, the student will then compile a report, including information on the choice of interviewee, the questions posed, and a summary of the interviewee's answers. Students are required to complete a corresponding paper, which should include answers to the interview questions and a summary of the interview experience. The summary of the interview experience should be at least one, single-spaced page. Paper should be formatted in Times or Times New Roman 12-point font, with one-inch margins.

GRADING: THE GRADING SCALE FOR THIS COURSE IS AS FOLLOWS:

A	100-90 pts
B	89-80 pts
C	79-70 pts
D	69-60 pts
F	59 or less pts

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

- Students will need access to a computer, high-speed internet, and an internet browser to be successful in this course.
- Students will need Microsoft software for written assignments
 - I will only accept written assignments in MS Word or Adobe pdf.
 - I will not accept Google documents.
 - Please download the MS Office Suite. [HU - Enterprise Technology Services \(ETS\)](#) provides software for Howard faculty, staff, and students through the online portal at <http://secure.howard.edu>.
- You may need adobe reader to read .pdf documents posted in BlackBoard. You can download adobe reader for free here: <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>

MINIMUM TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIRED

1. Using the learning management system (BlackBoard)
2. Using email with attachments and sending calendar invitations
3. Creating and submitting files in MS Word or .pdf
4. Copying and pasting
5. Using presentation and graphics programs

COURSE OUTLINE

This course organized into four thematic modules.

Foundations of American Politics and State & Local Government	Module 1
Institutions in American State Governments	Module 2
Politics in American Communities & Local Governments	Module 3
Policy Areas in State & Local Government	Module 4

COURSE AND INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES

Attendance/Participation- Students should be mindful to set aside time each week to complete the assigned coursework. Students should be present and on time for any scheduled class virtual meetings. It is in your best interest to complete the required reading and participate in the online classroom environment.

You are required to contribute to the class discussion by posting two quality responses to organized discussion questions each chapter/each module. You are expected to review responses by classmates and reply to their ideas in an insightful way. This type of class participation enables the learning process through your reflections, questions, linkages to applications, and explanations to others.

Current Events- To make the most of this class, I suggest that students remain abreast of current events. There are a variety of ways to accomplish this goal. I recommend engaging traditional sources like newspaper, television, radio, as well as podcasts.

“Writing Matters”- Writing is an essential tool for thinking and communicating in virtually every discipline and profession. Therefore, in this course I expect you to produce writing that is not only thoughtful and accurate, but also organized, clear, grammatical, and consistent with the conventions of the field. If your writing does not meet these standards, I may deduct points or ask you to revise. For assistance with your writing, go to the student section of the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) website, <http://www.cetla.howard.edu/wac/students.aspx>.

Academic Integrity- Academic dishonesty is unnecessary. Further, the “Academic Code of Conduct” in the [H-Book](#) prohibits cheating, plagiarism, and copyright infringement. Penalties for violations range from a “0” for the assignment or exam to an “F” in the course or suspension. See CETLA’s [Plagiarism](#) webpage for more information about plagiarism as well as ways to avoid it. Please note that I will check your work using Blackboard’s *SafeAssign*—a plagiarism detector. Any assignment with more than 15% matching will be subject to an intense review, and possibly a zero (0) grade. If you follow the guidelines provided here, you will be successful in this course. Therefore, I will not tolerate academic dishonesty in any form.

Late/Missing work- I will not accept late work without an official excuse. If you think that you may have a problem submitting your work on time, be sure to contact me in advance. I will only administer make-up exams if the student provides a University-issued excuse. Students must provide official university excuses within one week of the absence. If you experience computer-related problems, you should request a note from a technical assistant or, if Blackboard is not working, immediately e-mail helpdesk@howard.edu and “cc” me at Keneshia.Grant@Howard.edu to document your problem.

Extra Credit- There is limited extra credit in this course. Therefore, if you earn a borderline course average (i.e., 59.5, 69.5, 79.5, 89.5), you will not automatically receive an additional fraction of a point to capture the higher grade.

Incomplete Grades and Withdrawals- A grade of Incomplete (I) is given only if you have fulfilled 75% of the course requirements prior to the Registrar's withdrawal deadline Friday, **November 13, 2020** and an emergency prevents you from completing the course. Your dean or advisor must document such an emergency. If you have not completed most of the coursework, I advise that you withdraw before the deadline. Otherwise, am required to enter the grade you have in the class. Please note that if you receive an incomplete grade, you can complete only the coursework you missed. Further, you must complete that work by the end of the following semester, in accordance with University policy.

Grievance of Grades- There are two ways to contest grades in this class. For assignments during the semester, I use a 24-hour cooling off period before discussing work. In other words, students are required to wait 24 hours from the time work is returned to them before we will have a conversation about the grade. Once we do talk about the grade: 1) the student must be prepared to discuss the entire work, and be willing to accept the grade that results from review of the entire work whether that grade is higher or lower than the original grade; 2) The student must have a copy of the assignment rubric, and come to the meeting prepared to discuss their work in terms of the rubric. The student must clearly demonstrate how their work matches the rubric's description of correct work.

For final grades: Students will have access to a running tally of their grades, so they know what to expect well before the end of the semester. I do not "bump up" grades for students, regardless of their circumstances. Political Science students are required to earn the grade of C or higher in this course. I do not give special consideration in the form of preferential grading to students because they are graduating and/or political science majors. If you believe that you have been graded unfairly, I encourage you to follow the grievance process available to you through the College of Arts & Sciences. You should begin by scheduling an appointment with the Undergraduate student advisor and department chair, then working through the appropriate channels to reach a solution.

American Disabilities Act (ADA)- Howard University is committed to providing an educational environment that is accessible to all students. In accordance with this policy, students who need accommodations because of a disability should contact [Student Services](#) (202-238-2420) as soon as possible after admission to the University or at the beginning of each semester.

If you need a special accommodation required by the American Disabilities Act, please document and discuss your disability with me *during the first week of classes*. You are required to furnish a copy of your accommodations letter to me, either in person or via email, no later than three weeks into the course: **September 9, 2020**.

Center for Academic Excellence- The Center for Academic Excellence provides tutors to assist undergraduates with a variety of General Education subjects. The center also provides academic counselors and student success workshops to help you stay in school and excel.

Blackboard- You are required to use Blackboard throughout this course. If you need help navigating Blackboard, see [Blackboard FAQ for Students](#). You are required to complete the

scavenger hunt assignment in BlackBoard to familiarize yourself with BlackBoard and with our BlackBoard course.

COURSE PREREQUISITE

The successful student will have some introductory knowledge of American Government, although POS 010-National Government of the United States is not required as a pre-requisite for this course. However, I highly suggest that students who want to learn more about national politics register for the American Government course rather than POLS011-State & Local Government.

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COURSE CALENDAR | CONTENT AND SUGGESTED DUE DATES:

August 24, 2020—Week #1

TOPICS:

- Syllabus
- BlackBoard
- Sage Materials Website
- Chapter 1 “Introduction to State and Local Government: They Tax Dogs in West Virginia, Don’t They?”

PREPARATION:

- Buy textbook
- Get familiar with BlackBoard
- Get familiar with SAGE supplementary material website; Read Chapter 1

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Syllabus and BlackBoard quiz
 - Quiz #1
-

August 31, 2020—Week #2

TOPICS:

- “Federalism: The Power Plan”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 2

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #2
-

September 7, 2020—Week #3

Monday, September 7, 2020
Labor Day | University is closed

TOPICS:

- “Constitutions: Operating Instructions”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 3

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #3
-

September 14, 2020—Week #4

TOPICS:

- “Finances: Filling the Till and Paying the Bills”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 4

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #4
-

September 21, 2020—Week #5

TOPICS:

- “Political Attitudes and Participation: Venting and Voting”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 5

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #5
-

September 28, 2020—Week #6

TOPICS:

- “Parties and Interest Groups: Elephants, Donkeys, and Cash Cows”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 6

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #6

October 5, 2020—Week #7

*****Midterm*****

TOPICS:

- “Legislatures: The Art of Herding Cats”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 7

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Government Official Interview Due on Wednesday, October 7, 2020
 - Quiz #7
-

October 12, 2020—Week #8

TOPICS:

- “Governors and Executives: There Is No Such Thing as Absolute Power”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 8

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #8
-

October 19, 2020—Week #9

TOPICS:

- “Courts: Turning Law into Politics”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 9

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #9
-

October 26, 2020—Week #10

TOPICS:

- “Bureaucracy: What Nobody Wants but Everybody Needs”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 10

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #10
-

November 2, 2020—Week #10

Tuesday, November 3, 2020
Election Day | Vote! Vote! Vote!

TOPICS:

- “Local Government: Function Follows Form”

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 11

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #11
-

November 9, 2020—Week #11

Friday, November 11, 2020
Veteran’s Day | University is closed

Friday, November 13, 2020

Last Day to Withdraw from a Fall 2020 course and/or from the University
<https://www2.howard.edu/withdrawal> (No refunds)

Deadline for prospective Fall 2020 Graduates to apply for graduation via BisonWeb

PREPARATION:

- Read Chapter 12

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Quiz #12

TOPICS:

- “Metropolitics: The Hole Problem of Government”
-

November 16, 2020—Week #12

PREPARATION:

- Read one of the following chapters:
 - Chapter 13
 - Chapter 14
 - Chapter 15
 - Chapter 16

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Take the quiz that corresponds to the chapter that you chose to read.

TOPICS:

- “Education: Reading, Writing, and Regulation”
 - “Crime and Punishment”
 - “Health and Welfare Policy: State, Heal Thyself!”
 - “Environment and Climate Change: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally”
-

November 23, 2020—Week #13

PREPARATION:

- Finish up strong!

ASSIGNMENTS:

- Ensure that you have completed all course requirements to earn the grade you want!