**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, LA FOLLETTE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFARIS**

**PA 974: TOPICS IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS: POLITICS OF STATE POLICY ISSUES**

**Meeting Time and location:**

**Wednesday 3:30pm-5:25pm,**

**Instructor:**

**Jim Doyle**

**E-mail:** [**jdoyle6@wisc.edu**](mailto:jdoyle6@wisc.edu)

**Office hours: In office, Wednesday 1:30pm—3:15pm, Room 402 Bascom Hall**

**Also, other hours, by appointment, in person or remotely**

This is a three credit, face-to-face course. All of the campus requirements for a face-to-face course must be followed. The credit standard for the course is met by an expectation of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), including class meetings of 115 minutes per week, as well as reading, writing, studying, preparation of projects, etc.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES**

To a large extent the adoption and implementation of governmental policy affecting people’s lives is determined not in Washington D.C., but in state capitals and municipal halls. State governments operate in a complex federal system and are affected by their relationships with the federal government on the one hand, and local governments on the other. State politics are influenced not only by the larger national trends, but also by the particular history, nature and character of each state. This course is being held this semester at a time when the federal/state relationship, for better or worse, is affecting our approach to immediate pressing health, social and political issues—our response to covid-19, to racial justice, to the environment and climate change, and to voting rights. The political dimensions of our federal system are on fully display and are being tested.

This course is based on two premises: 1) policy ideas, however well founded, are only effective if they are adopted through the political process; 2) the political process is grounded in the needs of the people, historical precedent, economic, demographic and social trends, political ideology and identification, communication, advocacy and more. We will focus on a number of broad areas of state governmental policy (covid-19 specifically), access to health care, criminal justice, pre-K-12 education, higher education, the environment, economic development, budgeting and taxes. We will examine and discuss the practical, political and budgetary issues confronting state policy makers and advocates in each of these areas. By examining the political divides, communication strategies, campaign politics, effective methods of advocacy and persuasion, students will gain a sense of how to anticipate and strategically navigate the political challenges and opportunities they may face in their careers.

**COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Students will be expected to:

Explain the role state governments play in the development of policy;

Critically analyze the political dimensions of policy change at the state level given the policy divides between and within parties, the advocacy and interest groups involved, the budgetary constraints, and the broader political climate;

Anticipate and strategically navigate the political opportunities and obstacles in effecting governmental policy; and

Develop a policy initiative directed at meeting a specific perceived need in one of the policy areas we consider and set forth a strategy for implementation.

**TEXTS/MATERIALS**

There is no required textbook for this course. Any readings noted in the syllabus or assigned in the class are available on line, or made available via Canvas or directly by me.

The readings are listed for the first few weeks. They will be added for the following weeks. All readings are required to be read before we meet each week. The readings will form a backdrop for our discussions.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION**

Grades will be determined on the following basis:

Class participation 45%

Assignment 1 15%

Final Assignment 40%

Class participation is the most important component of student evaluation. **There are no right or wrong answers. I strongly encourage you to share your thoughts.** You will be expected to read assigned materials prior to class meetings and to come prepared to discuss them and the issues they raise. For our major final project we will work in groups. You will be expected to engage in critical analysis.

Regular class attendance ins necessary.

**Assignment 1 (15%)**

The first assignment is due at the beginning of Session #7, on October 8, 2021.

Masks or no masks? Vaccine mandates or not? Opening schools? Restaurants and bars? Football games and concerts? And many other issues. In this assignment students should imagine that they are working as a health policy advisor in a Governor’s Office in a state of their choosing and are asked to write a confidential memo to the Governor on whether the state should adopt or reject a particular measure. A complete memo will consider:

-The effect the proposal will have on people’s health;

-The effect the proposal will have on the economy and quality of life of the state;

-The political consequences of adoption/rejection;

-The scope and language of the political fight that will occur;

-The strategy for implementing the recommendation.

You are strongly encouraged to choose a policy position that is contrary to your personal position.

**Assignment 2 (40%)**

The second assignment will be in a group of 3. The assignment is due at the beginning of Session #13 on Dec.1, or Session #14 on Dec. 8, depending on when you are scheduled to present.

Description: Early in the semester, each group will choose one of the subject areas we are studying. The group may be asked to select readings for the class discussion on their topic. Each group will develop a state-specific policy proposal. You will develop and describe a model of how the policy works and what its fiscal implications are. Then you will describe the political strategy to see that it is adopted.

Each group will prepare a paper of 7-10 pages, a one-page executive summary, and appropriate slides for the class presentation. Students will pitch their proposal to the class in a 20 minute presentation, followed by a 20 minute question and answer session.

**ACCOMODATIONS**

Please inform me if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. Certain accommodations may require assistance of the UW McBurney Disability resource Center: <http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu>.

**COURSE COMMUNICATION**

The best way to contact me is via email. [jdoyle6@wisc.edu](mailto:jdoyle6@wisc.edu). I will return emails from students within two business days. I have indicated my office hours above. Students can schedule to meet then or stop by. We can also arrange to speak by phone or other remote means.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Please note that the following scheduled may be adjusted from time to time to accommodate guest speakers and class interests.

**Week 1, September 8: Introduction to the Seminar, Understanding the Role of States in the Quilt of American Government**

**and**

**Week 2, September 15: States Sovereign Powers and Politics**

This seminar takes place at a time when the country is faced with challenges of enormous importance and urgency: 1) the response to the covid-19 pandemic, the effects of climate change, the pursuit of racial justice, the debate over how elections should be administered, among others. Much of the policy and political discussions around these matters involve the allocation of power among federal, state and local governments.

In these sessions we will set the foundation for the rest of the course by discussing how states fit in the American political system, the inherent sovereignty of the states, the variety of governmental structures among the states, the responsibilities states have to their residents, and the politics surrounding federalism and states’ rights. We will consider the sovereign states as the source of people’s sense of identity, the exercisers of sovereign power, the dutiful implementers of federal policy, the resistors to federal policy and power, and “the laboratories of democracy.”

**Required Readings**

2021 State of the State Addresses

South Dakota Governor Kristi Noem

New Hampshire Governor Chris Sununu

Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves

Washington Governor Jay Inslee

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf

<https://www.nasbo.org/resources/stateofthestates>

Former Governor Perry’s speech to CPAC, 2014

<https://www.c-span.org/video/?318175-1/cpac-2014-day-2&event=318175&playEvent>

“As Washington Stews, State Legislatures Increasingly Shape American Politics,” The New York Times, Michael Wines, August 29, 2021

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/29/us/state-legislatures-voting-gridlock.html>

“Drink Wisconsinibly” <https://www.drinkwisconsinbly.com/collections/all>

“This Is Where Wisconsin Ranks Among the Drunkest States in America,” 24/7 Wall St. via The Center Square, Hristina Byrnes, April 1, 2021

<https://www.thecentersquare.com/wisconsin/this-is-where-wisconsin-ranks-among-the-drunkest-states-in-america/article_3ccd11a4-c261-563b-919a-e02a0254b6dd.html>

“States find Ways to Resist Health Law,” The Washington Post, Sandya Somashekhar, August 28, 2013

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/states-find-new-ways-to-resist-health-law/2013/08/28/c63f8498-0a93-11e3-8974-f97ab3b3c677_story.html>

“California Sanctuary Law Divides States in Fierce Immigration Debate,” NPR, October 17, 2018

<https://www.npr.org/2018/10/17/657951176/california-sanctuary-law-divides-state-in-fierce-immigration-debate>

“ ‘Lost Decade’ Casts a Post-Recession Shadow on State Finances,” Pew, June 4, 2019

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2019/06/lost-decade-casts-a-post-recession-shadow-on-state-finances>

“US States Face Biggest Cash Crisis Since the Great Depression,” The Wall Street Journal, Heather Gillers, Gunjam Banerji, October 28,2020

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-states-face-biggest-cash-crisis-since-the-great-depression-11603910750>

“Awash in Cash, State Lawmakers Ask How Long the boom Will Last,”

Pew, Stateline, Sophie Quinn, July 26, 2021

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2021/07/26/awash-in-cash-state-lawmakers-ask-how-long-the-boom-will-last>

“Flush With Cash, Red States Are Cutting Taxes,” Forbes, Liz Farmer, July 28,2021

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/lizfarmer/2021/07/28/flush-with-cash-red-states-are-cutting-taxes/?sh=484608b62d96>

“A Progressive Call to Arms: Laboratories of Democracy,” Harvard Political Review, Keeling Baker, December 3, 2020

<https://harvardpolitics.com/laboratories-of-democracy/>

“Devolution: Four Proposals to Empower States and Reduce Washington’s Political Strife,” Manhattan Institute, Brian Riedl, April 15, 2021

<https://www.manhattan-institute.org/proposals-empower-states-and-reduce-political-strife>

“It’s the Economies, Stupid,” the Washington Post Magazine, John B. Judis, November 29, 2018

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/magazine/wp/2018/11/29/feature/the-key-to-understanding-americas-red-blue-split-isnt-ideology-or-culture-its-economics/>

“America’s Mass Migration Intensifies As ‘Leftugees” Flee Blue States And Counties For Red,” Forbes, Chris Dorsey, March 17, 2021

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/chrisdorsey/2021/03/17/americas-mass-migration-intensifies-as-leftugees-flee-blue-states-and-counties-for-red/?sh=83bcf9831460>

“Tale of two toss-up elections 16 years apart: the new 50/50 Wisconsin isn’t the same as the old 50/50 Wisconsin, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Craig Gilbert, November 16, 2020

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/analysis/2020/11/16/election-results-wisconsin-remains-razors-edge-despite-big-shifts/6263180002/>

**Week 3, September 22: Health Care, Covid-19**

**Week 4, September 29: Health Care, Covid-19**

**Week 5, October 6: Education PreK-12**

**Week 6, October 13: Education PreK-12**

**Week 7, October 20: Higher Education**

**Week 8, October 27: Criminal Justice**

**Week 9, November 3: Criminal Justice**

**Week 10, November 10: Environment**

**Week 11, November 17: Environment**

**Week 12, November 24: Tribal/State Relations**

**Weeks 13, 14 and 15, December 1, December 8 and December 15:**

**Class Presentations**