

POLS BC 3304

COLLOQUIUM: POLITICS AND POLICY-MAKING IN AMERICAN FEDERALISM BARNARD COLLEGE | DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Wednesdays 2:10-4:00PM

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COURSE OVERVIEW

The American political apparatus is frequently characterized as a system with a single national government and 50 state governments—the organization of which we loosely refer to as “federalism.” Hamilton offers a defense of American federalism in *Federalist 9* by quoting Montesquieu (1748):

“This form of government is a convention by which several smaller states agree to become members of a larger one, which they intend to form. It is a kind of assemblage of societies that constitute a new one, capable of increase, by of new associations, till the arrive to such a degree of power as to be able to provide for the security of the united body... The form of this society prevents all manner of inconveniences... As this government is composed of small republics, it enjoys the internal happiness of each; and with respect to its external situation, it is possessed, by means of association, of all the advantages of large monarchies.”¹

Indeed, American government can be characterized as a “convention by which *several* smaller states [have agreed] to become members of a larger one,” but today it is also characterized by 3,131 counties, over 36,000 city and town governments, 366 metropolitan areas, more than 14,000 school districts, and about 35,000 special districts. This is in addition to 312 million people, 46.3 million people living in poverty, and 10.5 million millionaire households. It is thus reasonable to ask whether today’s confederation in any way resembles the one Hamilton defends. Sir James Steuart wrote in his *Inquiries into the Principles of Political Oeconomy* (1767):

“How hurtful soever the natural and immediate effects of political revolutions have been formerly, when the mechanism of government was more simple than at present, they are not brought under such restrictions, by the complicated system of modern oeconomy, that the evil which might otherwise results from them may be guarded against with ease... Modern oeconomy, therefore, is the most effectual bridle ever was invented against the folly of despotism.”²

Steuart’s thesis is that economic, governmental, and political complexity is actually a means to fair representation and better public policy. But while our complex political-economic system may ensure the internal happiness of its various polities and guard against despotism, it also presents incredible theoretical and practical challenges for policy-makers and citizens alike. In addition to creating multifarious channels for policy-makers to navigate, the complexity of contemporary American politics

¹ Hamilton, Alexander. 1787. “The Federalist No. 9.” In *The Federalist: A Commentary on The Constitution of the United States*, ed. R. Scigliano. New York: The Modern Library. And Montesquieu, C.S., ed. 1748. *The Spirit of the Laws*. Edited by A. M. Cohler, B. C. Miller and H. S. Stone. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

² Steuart, Sir James. 1767. *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*. Vol. 1: A. Millar and T. Cadell.

presents questions about which governments ought to be doing what, how our voices matter, and what it means to produce coherent public policy. This colloquium is about developing a sophisticated understanding of these challenges and opportunities and applying that understanding to actual policy contexts.

The colloquium has two blocks. In the first, “Vertical Relationships: Federalism in Theory, Federalism in Practice,” we will focus on the national-state and state-to-state relationships with an emphasis on what contemporary political science and economics tells us about which governments are best equipped to provide which goods and implement which policies. We will apply that theoretical and historical knowledge to tobacco, welfare, and health care policy among other topics. The second block, “Horizontal Relationships: Metropolitan Organization and the Hollow State,” emphasizes human mobility, sub-state jurisdictional arrangements, and alternative goods provision.

As it is a colloquium, the course is based around in-class discussions of each week’s readings. The readings for the course have been carefully selected to provide you with both foundational information and to stimulate discussion about the topics. Accordingly, the expectation is that you will come to all classes having completed the assigned reading and prepared to participate in a lengthy discussion of the material. Each student will be required to help lead one class session, write two reaction papers, and produce a research paper (including the related assignments).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Building upon previous course work, this colloquium provides a comprehensive examination of the complex structures that characterize American federalism and metropolitan organization. Students who complete this colloquium should:

- Develop a comprehensive theoretical understanding of the vertical and horizontal institutional structures of American government.
- Develop a comprehensive practical understanding of how policy is made and shaped by the vertical and horizontal institutional structures of American government.
- Use the tools of social science to develop a research question related to intergovernmental relationships and contemporary public policy.
- Engage with, understand, and present primary research on their research question.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Students are required to purchase the following books. All other readings will be provided via New CourseWorks.

Derthick, Martha A. 2001. *Keeping the Compound Republic: Essays on American federalism*. Oakland: ICS Press. (e-book available on CLIO)

Derthick, Martha A. 2002. *Up in Smoke: From Legislation to Litigation in Tobacco Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND ASSIGNMENTS

Grade Distribution:

Reaction Papers: 20% (10% each)

Discussion Leadership: 10% (5% each)

Weekly Reading Abstracts: 5%

Class Participation: 15%

Research Paper: 50%

Reaction Papers (2 X 15% = 30%):

Each student is required to write a reaction paper for the readings for two classes. Students will sign-up for their papers after the first class (this will ensure that we have multiple papers for each class). The papers should be about 1½ to 2 single-spaced pages. Papers should contain minimal summary of the readings; rather, they should strongly emphasize your reactions and assessments of the week's readings. In doing so you may connect the readings to other class content and/or incorporate outside research. *Reaction papers are due two hours before the start of class and should be submitted to CourseWorks (and a hard copy should be submitted at the beginning of class).*

Discussion Leadership (2 X 5% = 10%)

Students will serve as discussion leaders on weeks they wrote a reaction paper. Discussion leaders will be charged with beginning each class with an introduction of the assigned reading and helping to facilitate discussion throughout the meeting.

Weekly Reading Abstracts & Questions (5%):

All students must produce a 3-5 sentence abstract for all readings and at least one discussion question. For books, students must do a 1-2 sentence abstract and one question for each assigned chapter. Abstracts and questions are due *by the beginning of class* via CourseWorks and students should come to class with a hard copy. No late abstracts/questions will be accepted. Students who submit all of their questions on time will receive the full 5%. Grade reductions will be the result of missing submissions and submissions that demonstrate no evidence of reading. Students are encouraged to maintain a running annotated bibliography throughout the semester.

Class Participation (15%):

To be successful in this course you must engage the course material both in and out of class. The material is engaged in class by offering comments and asking questions during our class discussions. Please note that you cannot get a good participation grade unless you show up to class. Students should feel free to visit me during my office hours if they wish to discuss their participation in the course to that point.

Research Paper Assignment (50%):

Students will engage a research question related to American national, state, or local policy-making. The only additional substantive requirement is that the research question involve *at least two different*

American governments. The governments can be on different levels (e.g. federal and state, state and local) but need not be (e.g. local and local, state and state). The paper must involve original research conducted via case studies and/or data analysis.

Research Paper Assignments and Deadlines:

Before you hand in your final paper, you will have 6 other deadlines. Each deadline involves the submission of a related assignment or the presentation of your research to the class. Most of the assignments are graded so they should be taken seriously. Failure to submit for any deadline will result in 1/3 letter grade reduction on the final paper.

Deadline 1: 1.28.15: *Topic Submission.* A 2-3 paragraph discussion of why you are choosing the topic, what you know about it already, and any ideas you have for research (including potential case studies or data sources). This assignment is ungraded but failure to complete it will result in a reduced final grade on your paper.

Deadline 1B: 2.5.15: *Topic Re-Submission.* A revision of the topic submission if the original submission is insufficient or the student wishes to substantially revised their paper topic.

Deadline 2: 2.11.15 *Research Report 1 (with annotated bibliography).* A 500-word (minimum) report on the status of your research. This research report should include your case study selection(s) and the reasoning behind them *or* a discussion of any data you are going to analyze, a summary of what you have found so far, your remaining research goals, and a discussion of the challenges your are facing. You must also include an annotated bibliography that contains the citations for at least 10 sources you will use for the literature review portion of your paper. Each citation should contain a 1-2 sentence summary of the source. This assignment is graded and worth 2% of your Research Paper grade.

Deadline 3: 3.4.15: *Research Report 2 (with updated bibliography).* A minimum 1,000-word (minimum) report on the status of your research. This research report should include a summary of your research so far (including advancements on your case study research or data analysis), remaining research goals, and a discussion of the challenges your are facing and how you will deal with them. The report must also include an updated annotated bibliography (that does not count toward your word minimum). Students that already have a working draft may submit that in lieu of the summary but must also include a statement of remaining research goals, and a discussion of the challenges your are facing and how you will deal with them. This assignment is graded and worth 3% of your Research Paper grade. Students wishing to hand in Report 2 early may do so.

Deadline 4: 3.25.15: *Literature Review.* A complete draft of the literature review portion of your paper. The literature review should be at least 10 double spaced pages. You are also encouraged to include other drafted parts of your paper in your submission (though they do not count toward the page minimum). This assignment is graded and worth 5% of your Research Paper grade.

Deadline 5: 4.15.15: Draft. Provide as complete of a draft as possible. The more complete the draft is, the more complete the feedback will be. *All drafts must contain a revised version of the literature review.* This assignment is graded and worth 5% of your Research Paper grade.

Deadline 6: 4.22.15 or 4.29.15: Presentation. Our last two classes of the semester are devoted to your research presentations. Presentation details (including length and format) will be provided to you ahead of time. Your presentation is worth 10% of your Research Paper grade.

Deadline 7: 4.29.15: Final Paper. Worth 75% of your Research Paper grade.

SENIOR RESEARCH EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

All Seniors who have designated this course as the Colloquium to fulfill their Senior Capstone requirement must also complete the following:

1. Provide constructive criticism and feedback to your designated peer partner(s). You and your partner should hold meetings, in consultation with the instructor, to discuss your assignments, e.g. research proposals, research methods, rough drafts. A portion of the class participation grade will reflect the quality of your mentoring.
2. Attend at least one of the Senior overviews of the library and online resources hosted by the instructor or another member of the Political Science Department.
3. Generate a poster that summarizes your research question, argument, and findings. The poster should accompany your class presentation and will be displayed at the Senior end-of-year Departmental party in May 2014. The poster will not be graded, but is required to receive a "Pass" for your Senior requirement and will factor into Departmental considerations for Senior Project Distinction.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

In an academic community our ideas are our capital. The taking of ideas or of the language used to communicate those ideas without proper attribution is theft and it hinders the intellectual, professional, and personal advancement of those to whom the ideas or language rightfully belong. I take issues of academic integrity very seriously. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. In keeping with the Barnard College Honor Code, all work is expected to be original and not previously or simultaneously turned in for credit in another course. All references to outside sources (direct or indirect) should be appropriately cited. All forms of academic dishonesty will result in an F for the course and referral to the Barnard College Honor Board. For more information on the Honor Code and Honor Board, students can visit: <http://barnard.edu/dos/honor-code>