

COLLOQUIUM ON POLITICS AND POLICY-MAKING IN AMERICAN FEDERALISM¹
BARNARD COLLEGE | DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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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.”²

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.”³

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 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.

¹ Thanks to Kenneth Bickers (University of Colorado at Boulder), Susan Clarke (University of Colorado at Boulder), Stephan Lavertu (Ohio State University), Kimberly Johnson (Barnard College), and Flora Davidson (Barnard College) for sharing their syllabi on related (and unrelated) topics; many of the readings and assignments included in this syllabus were suggested by them.

² 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.

³ Steuart, Sir James. 1767. *An Inquiry into the Principles of Political Oeconomy*. Vol. 1: A. Millar and T. Cadell.

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 economics and political science tells us about which governments are best equipped to provide which goods. We will apply that theoretical and historical knowledge to tobacco policy and welfare reform in the 1990s. The second block, “Horizontal Relationships: Metropolitan Organization and the Hollow State,” emphasizes human mobility, sub-state jurisdictional arrangements, alternative goods provision, and institutional collective action. In this block we will pay special attention to education and immigration policy.

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 (including a 5 to 10 minute introduction to all of the readings), write three reading memos, and produce a research paper (including the related assignments: a research statement, a research design with an annotated bibliography, a draft, and a presentation).

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

Hirschman, A. O. 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Harvard University Press. (eBook Available online via Columbia University Library).

Oakerson, Ronald J. 1999. *Governing Local Public Economies: Creating the Civic Metropolis*. Oakland: ICS Press.

Peterson, Paul E. 1995. *The Price of Federalism*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

Varsanyi, Monica, ed. 2010. *Taking Local Control: Immigration Policy Activism in U.S. Cities and States*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

OPTIONAL BOOKS

Shively, W. Phillips. 2005. *The Craft of Political Research*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall

GRADE DISTRIBUTION AND ASSIGNMENTS

Grade Distribution:

Reading Memos: 30% (10% each)

Discussion Leadership: 10%

Class Participation: 15%

Research Paper: 45%

- Research Statement: Students who do not hand in a research statement or fail to produce an adequate research statement will see their final paper grade reduced by 1/3rd of a letter grade.
- Research Design: 5% of Research Paper Grade (2.25% of overall grade)
- Literature Review: 5% of Research Paper Grade (2.25% of overall grade)
- Draft: 10% of Research Paper Grade (4.5% of overall grade)
- Presentation: 10% of the research paper grade (4.5% of overall grade)
- Final Paper: 70% of the research paper grade (31.5% of overall grade)

Grading Scale: I grade on a 100 point scale. Each letter grade you receive for this class is converted to that scale (A=97, A-=92.5, B+=87.5, B=85, B-=82.5...) and weighted to calculate your final course grade.

Reading Memos (3 x 10% = 30%): Each student will be required to write a reading memo for the class session for which they are serving as discussion leader *and two other class sessions*. Students will sign-up for each after our first meeting (this will ensure that we have multiple memos for each class). The reading memos should be about one single-spaced page and *comment on* an important aspect (or important aspects) of the week's readings. Students should not simply summarize the readings; instead, memos should raise important points that you believe are worthy of further class discussion. Memos should be e-mailed to me by **1:00 p.m.** the day of class. I will combine the memos and circulate them to the whole class prior to our meeting.

Discussion Leadership (10%): Classes will have one or two discussion leaders. In addition to their reading memo, discussion leaders should come to class with at least three discussion questions. The discussion leaders will be charged with beginning each class with a 5 to 10 minute introduction of the assigned reading and helping to facilitate discussion throughout the meeting. Discussion leaders are encouraged to meet with me during office hours or email me prior to the class meeting in order to discuss their preparations for class.

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. While I do not take regular attendance, 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 (45%): 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 governments. The governments can be on different levels (e.g. federal and state) but need not be. Students may also research a question that pertains to multiple governments on the same level or similar levels (e.g. states, cities, school districts, special districts or any combination thereof). The research design for the paper must involve the use of *at least one major primary source that is actually obtainable*. The paper is to be 25 to 30 double-spaced pages using 11pt or 12pt font and 1-inch margins. **The final paper is due at the final class session.**

Research Statement: A document containing your research question followed by a short explanation of why you want to research the question and a note about any previous research you have already completed (including research from other courses).

Research Design: The research design is your first opportunity to formally clarify your research plan and theory. Your research design should include 5 sections:

1. *Research Question:* An updated research question.
2. *Theory:* At least two preliminary ideas/theories/hypotheses for answers to your research question. The theory should be reasoned out and explained (and not merely stated).
3. *Method:* This section explain what the student is going to do to determine if their theory is correct and potentially develop new theories. For example, are you going to conduct case studies? If so, what are the cases (or at least the kinds of cases) you are going to select? Are you going to do interviews? If so, whom would you like to interview? Are you going to do some sort of data analysis? If so, what data would you like to obtain?
4. *Research Progress:* Notes on any research done to-date as well as questions/concerns about how to proceed with the research and writing.
5. *Preliminary Annotated Bibliography:* The research design should include a preliminary annotated bibliography. Each source should receive a full bibliographical entry and contain one or two sentences that summarize the entry and/or its contribution to your research. The bibliography should include a section for secondary sources and a section for primary sources. Students must include (and, consequently, plan on using) at least 1 primary source in their preliminary annotated bibliography and at least 15 secondary sources.

Literature Review: Each student's paper must situate their own research amongst previous research on similar topics. The literature review assignment is thus a first draft of the portion of the research paper that discusses previous work on the topic. Successful literature reviews are not bibliographies re-written in paragraph-form. Rather, successful literature reviews present the previous research as a discussion while still attributing ideas to their authors (either by referencing them in the sentence of via citation). Each student's literature review should be 1.5 to 2.5 single-spaced pages and contain appropriate in-text citations and a bibliography.

Draft: The paper draft is aimed at putting the student in a good place to finish on time with a high-quality product. Accordingly, students should hand-in as complete a draft as is possible. The more the student hands-in, the more I have to provide feedback on. At this point, however, it is likely that students are still in the process of finishing their research and drawing conclusions based on that research. As such, students should not fret if their paper lacks (or has an incomplete) conclusion. Regardless of the paper's completeness, it should be professionally presented and include all necessary in-text citations and a bibliography.

Presentation: During the last two weeks of the term, each student will do a 10-minute presentation followed by a 10 minute Q&A session. Students will be graded based on the clarity of their presentation and their ability to thoughtfully respond to questions.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to the Course & Conducting Primary Research

- *Motivating Question: What is this course about? How can I do good primary social science research?*
- Readings:
 - Shively, W. Phillips. 2005. *The Craft of Political Research*. 6th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall. Chapters 1-2.

BLOCK 1. VERTICAL ARRANGEMENTS: FEDERALISM IN THEORY, FEDERALISM IN PRACTICE

Week 2: National Federalism v. The Compound Republic

- *Motivating Question: Was America founded to be a country where the states are the drivers or the driven?*
- Readings:
 - Beer, S. H. 1993. *To Make a Nation: The Rediscovery of American Federalism*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press. Introduction, Chapter 9, & Conclusion.
 - Derthick, Martha. 2001. *Keeping the Compound Republic: Essays on American Federalism*. Brookings Institution Press. Chapters 1, 5, & 11.

Week 3: Functional Assignment

- *Motivating Question: What responsibilities ought different levels of government have?*
- Readings:
 - Peterson, Paul E. 1995. *The Price of Federalism*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Chapters 1-4, & 6.
- **Due: Research Statement**

Week 4: Tobacco Policy Example

- *Motivating Question: How were tobacco policy goals reached?*
- Readings:
 - Derthick, Martha A. *Up in Smoke: From Legislation to Litigation in Tobacco Politics* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2002).

Week 5: Devolution

- *Motivating Question: How have federal and state policy responsibilities changed?*
- Readings:
 - Conlan, Timothy. 1998. *From New Federalism to Devolution: Twenty-Five Years of Intergovernmental Reform*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. Chapters 1, 11, & 14.
 - Dinan, J. 2011. "The Rehnquist Court's Federalism Decisions." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 41 (1): 158.
- **Due: Research Design**

Week 6: Welfare Policy Example

- *Motivating Question: How did devolution change American welfare? Was it successful?*
- Readings:
 - Peterson, Paul E. 1995. *The Price of Federalism*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution. Chapter 5.
 - Grogger, J. and L. A. Karoly. 2005. *Welfare Reform: Effects From a Decade of Change*. Boston: Harvard University Press. Chapter 1 (available online via Columbia University Library).
 - "Keeping Jobs and Raising Families in Low-Income America: It Just Doesn't Work." (Radcliffe Public Policy Center 2002)
 - Meyers, Marcia. 2000. "How Welfare Offices Undermine Welfare Reform." *The American Prospect*.

BLOCK 2. HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIPS: METROPOLITAN ORGANIZATION AND THE HOLLOW STATE

Week 7: Exit, Voice, and Loyalty

- *Motivating Question: What tools do people have for averting decline in the state?*
- Readings:
 - Hirschman, A. O. 1970. *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States*. Harvard University Press. (eBook available online via Columbia University Library).

Week 8: Sorting

- *Motivating Question: How are people arranged in metropolitan areas and does it matter?*
- Readings:
 - Howell-Moroney, Michael. 2008. "The Tiebout Hypothesis 50 Years Later: Lessons and Lingering Challenges for Metropolitan Governance in the 21st Century." *Public Administration Review* 86 (1):97-109.
 - Bishop, Bill. 2008. *The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart*. New York: Mariner Books. Introduction, Chapters 1-3.
 - Lyons, W. E., and D. Lowery. 1989. "Governmental Fragmentation versus Consolidation: Five Public-Choice Myths about How to Create Informed, Involved, and Happy Citizens." *Public Administration Review* 49 (6): 533-43
- **Due: Research Paper Literature Review**

Week 9: Policy Provision v. Policy Production and the Hollow State

- *Motivating Questions: What goods can sub-state governments provide and how can they provide them? What satisfies local residents?*
- Readings:
 - Oakerson, Ronald J. 1999. *Governing Local Public Economies: Creating the Civic Metropolis*. Oakland: ICS Press. Chapters 1-4.
 - Milward, H. B., and K. G. Provan. 2002. "Governing the Hollow State." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 10 (2):359-80.
 - Kuttner, R. 1989. "False Profit: The perils of privatization." *The New Republic* 200 (6):214.

Week 10: Education Policy Example

- Readings and Podcasts:
 - Glass, Ira. 2008. "Harlem Renaissance: Geoffrey Canada and the Harlem Children's Zone." In *This American Life*, ed. I. Glass: Chicago Public Radio. Podcast available at <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/364/going-big?act=1>
 - Witte, J.F. 1998. "The Milwaukee voucher experiment." *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* 20 (4): 229.
 - Hess, F.M., and D.L. Leal. 2001. "Quality, race, and the urban education marketplace." *Urban Affairs Review* 37 (2):249.

Week 11: Fragmentation and Competition

- *Motivating Question: What is the best way to organize metropolitan areas?*
- Readings:
 - Oakerson, Ronald J. 1999. *Governing Local Public Economies: Creating the Civic Metropolis*. Oakland: ICS Press. Chapters 5-6.
 - Berry, Christopher R. 2009. *Imperfect Union: Representation and Taxation in Multilevel Governments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1.
- **Due: Research Paper Draft**

Week 12: Regionalism and Institutional Collective Action

- *Motivating Question: Can metropolitan cities work together?*
- Readings:
 - Fishman, Robert. 2000. "The Death and Life of American Regional Planning." In *Reflections on Regionalism*, ed. B. Katz. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press. (Available online via Columbia University Library)
 - Yaro, Robert. 2000. "Growing and Governing Smart: A Case Study of the New York Region." In *Reflections on Regionalism*, ed. B. Katz. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press. (Available online via Columbia University Library)
 - Weir, Margaret. 2000. "Coalition Building for Regionalism." In *Reflections on Regionalism*, ed. B. Katz. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press. (Available online via Columbia University Library)

Week 13: Immigration Policy Example

- *Motivating Question: How do the configuration of jurisdictions and the distribution of people impact how cities and states develop immigration policies?*
- Readings:
 - Varsanyi, Monica, ed. 2010. *Taking Local Control: Immigration Policy Activism in U.S. Cities and States*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Week 14: Research Paper Presentations

Week 15: Research Paper Presentations

- **Due: Research Paper**