



PLS 212: U.S. Government II
Elite Learning—Fall 2020
Supporting Colleges: MECC WCC VHCC SWCC

Southwest Virginia Education and Training Network

Contact Information

Instructor : Kyle Scanlan

E-mail: The best way to reach me is by sending an email to kscanlan@mecc.edu. In addition, you may also message me in Canvas. Students should expect to receive email and message responses within 24 hours. I will post if I will not be available in the Announcements, so be sure to read the Announcements!

Online hours responses will occur within 24 hours of emails sent M-F. Please note weekend (Saturday/Sunday) email/contact may take longer.

Course (Catalog) Description

Teaches structure, powers, and functions of state and local government in the United States.

Prerequisite: Placement tests may be required. Contact your school counselor for more information.

Students who are successful in this course will receive six college credits for PLS 211/212 as well as have a basic overview of United States Government and related topics.

Course Materials

Textbook: (loaded in Canvas)

State and Local Government and Politics: Prospects for Sustainability

Christopher A. Simon, Brent S. Steel, Nicholas P. Lovrich

Oregon State University (2018 Edition)

Other Required Materials

Each chapter of material in the course has videos from crash course. Links for specific videos are loaded in the chapter module.

Crash Course Videos: <https://thecrashcourse.com/courses>

Zoom App: <https://zoom.us/client/latest/ZoomInstaller.exe> (Links to an external site.)

Office365: <http://office.vccs.edu>Links to an external site.

Students will use their full MyVCCS email address as their username, and their MyVCCS password to log into the site.

Time & Location of Class Meeting:

This course is asynchronous in Canvas, which means you will be able to access your course material at any time. The learner should have a specific time in the school day to work on the assignments. It is expected that the student will follow the assignments as outlined on the webpage which includes links to Internet sites that contain information related to lesson objectives. The student will use the information at the sites as

supplements to text materials. The course is designed so the student will spend 60-90 minutes per week day on the assignments.

It is required for you to log into your course and work each school day. I will be checking your activity in the course, and if you are not participating, I will message you and your counselor.

Technology Requirement:

Students will be required to complete and submit assignments by using Canvas, the learning management system for Elite Learning. The course can be accessed from www.learn.vccs.edu

Students will need use of the Internet for all coursework. Access to word processing software and slide-show software is also required. Microsoft Word and PowerPoint are preferred but not required.

The Virginia Community College System offers Microsoft Word for free to currently enrolled students. Students are eligible to install Office 365 on up to 5 devices at no cost. The Office 365 product includes Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook. Students can download Microsoft Office 365 by going to: <http://office.vccs.edu>. Students will use their full My VCCS email address as their username, and their My VCCS password to log into the site.

Technical Support:

Technical problems are not common but occur from time-to-time. Trouble tickets, for the most part, will be sent directly to the technical support team at the community college. Students should refer to the *How to Receive Technical Support* document to receive prompt support. This document is found in the *Elite Learning Guide for Students* on Page 28. You should receive a response within 24 hours (usually much sooner). After you have submitted the trouble ticket, please send me an email or message to let me know what problems you are having.

Teaching Methods:

The teaching/learning method in this course will incorporate an online delivery through Canvas, with a focus on reading assignments from the textbook, augmented with videos and background documents. The learning environment will contain an active discussion forums and activities featuring constant interaction between the students as well as the instructor. All assignments in the course feature an emphasis on developing critical thinking and communication skills.

Reading Assignments: You are expected to read Chapters 1-12 in your textbook, as directed in Canvas. In addition, there will be some additional readings as part of several of the assignments.

Other Assignments: There are 12 units in the course. In each unit the student will complete a unit quiz, and one unit activity. In addition, there will be 5 ongoing discussion forums. There will be a midterm exam and final exam. Finally, there is a book review assignment.

Method of Evaluating Student Achievement

Grading Policy & Scale--This course will be graded on a ten-point scale:

89.5-100%= A 79.5-89.4 % = B 69.5-79.4 % = C 59.5-69.4 % = D 59.4 % or less = F

Grades are divided into categories:

Unit Quizzes (16)=	10%
Unit Activities (16)=	25%
Discussion Assignments (5)=	25%
Book Review=	10%
Midterm Exam=	15%
Final Exam=	15%

Students who simply follow all the guidelines for assignments earn grades of C. A grade of C is equivalent to “Average.” Those whose work and contributions to the class community are clearly more advanced than the majority’s earn grades of B, “Above Average,” whereas those who contribute less than the majority earn grades of D, “Below Average.” Work that is truly exceptional earns a grade of A, “Excellent,” whereas work that is substandard and unacceptable earns a grade of F, “Unsatisfactory.”

All grades will be reported by SVETN to each school with a numeric grade and a recommended letter, but assignment of a final letter grade will be at the discretion of the student's school.

Students should expect to receive feedback from the instructor on all discussion board posts within 48 hours. Because it takes much longer to grade papers, you can expect feedback within 7 days of your submission (usually sooner).

Due dates for all assignments are listed in each unit in Canvas.

****All Unit work (Activities, Quizzes, Forums) as well as the Module Exams and Book Review must be turned in by the dates listed in Canvas.****

Late Work Policy This is a college course, and you are expected to plan for due dates and give yourself plenty of time to complete all work. DO NOT wait until the last minute. Plan accordingly if you will be out of school on trips. All work must be completed before leaving for a school trip to prevent them from being late. Due dates are located on the calendar and throughout the course.

If you do not turn in an assignment on the deadline, you will be allowed to submit it with point deductions for one week (exceptions may apply).

For example: If assignment is due on August 10, you will have until August 17 to submit it for partial credit. There will be an automatic 25-point deduction for all late submissions.

- Sue doesn’t turn in her work by the August 10 deadline. On August 11, the instructor posted the following into Sue grade book: *This assignment was due on August 10 but not submitted. You may submit the work until August 17 with a 25-point deduction.*
- Sue turns in her work three days late. After grading the assignment, her instructor believes it is quality work. He assigns her a 90 BUT he then deducts 25 points because the assignment was late. Sue will see a 65 in the grade book. Students will be made aware of the last day to submit the assignment within the grade book.
- If Sue doesn’t turn in her assignment by the final deadline, she will see the following statement in her grade book. *This assignment is now closed. It was not submitted by the final deadline. You may*

longer submit this assignment for a grade. Previous message: This assignment was due on August 12 but not submitted. You will have until March 19 to submit it for partial credit.

Exceptions to the late work policy will only be allowed IF a documented excuse is provided by your school's guidance counselor or administrative staff (illness, family emergency, etc.). Email the teacher if problems occur so they can be handled on a one-on-one basis. Please be aware that SVETN's schedule requires that we adhere to deadlines, even when schools are closed. If you have internet access at home, continue to log in and participate in class even if your school is closed. If you do not have home internet access, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Attendance Policy:

Because this is an Internet based course, there is not a scheduled time set for your coursework. Regular class attendance is required. When absence from a class is necessary, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor prior to the absence. The student is responsible for the subsequent completion of all work missed during an absence. The Virginia Community College System is committed to academic quality and student success. Elements that support both values are regular attendance and participation in class. The college policy states that regular class attendance is required.

At least once every school day, you are required to log into Canvas and perform three tasks:

1. Check your inbox for new messages.
2. Check for new course announcements.
3. Check the calendar under to see what work is due.

You should then proceed to work on the assignments within the current unit.

Elite Learning Inclement Weather or School Closure Policy:

Asynchronous online courses have many advantages over the traditional classroom. Among those advantages are the availability of the instructor, the opportunity to "attend" class from many locations, the flexibility of schedule, and no make-up days due to snow. To provide the required amount of "seat-time" for students, Elite Learning instructors will continue to present class material and require assignment submissions. When some schools are temporarily closed, it is necessary to require a continuation of assigned work even if students are absent from school due to weather or school closures. It is the responsibility of the student to access the class via Internet during this type of absence. **Students without Internet access beyond school hours will need to discuss this with their instructor at the beginning of the semester.**

This policy will also be in place due to Covid-19 school closures or any other unexpected closures.

Students with Disabilities:

Disabilities Students who participate in this class are also high school students. Each high school has resources available for students with disabilities (IEP). Please contact the guidance counselor at your school to request academic accommodations. Each community college also has the Office of Student Services, which may be able to provide additional services. A representative from your school (guidance counselor) may make a request for services at the college. That office will evaluate the request and make recommendations for appropriate and reasonable accommodations, which the student will provide to the instructor. Please contact your guidance counselor or SVETN for more information.

Emergency Policy:

Follow all emergency policies for your home school.

Academic Integrity:

Academic work is evaluated on the assumption that the work presented is the student's own, unless designated otherwise. Anything less is unacceptable and considered academically dishonest. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication facilitating academic dishonesty.

Each student will be bound by the academic codes of their school. Any violations will be reported to the student's school for appropriate disciplinary action. Cheating will not be tolerated. Because these courses are considered college courses, each student is considered a responsible adult. It is assumed that students will maintain standards of conduct appropriate to membership in Elite Learning as well as the community college. Emphasis is placed on standards of student conduct rather than on limits or restrictions. Guidelines and regulations governing student conduct are developed by the Elite Learning faculty, staff, and administration. More detailed information is found in the Elite Learning Student Guide.

Honor Code:

All local (and Elite Learning) Honor Codes are in place in this course and are expected to be followed at all times. The said Honor Code will be enforced and abided to in this course.

It is critical that all students read the Elite Learning Guide for Students. This guide is located at www.svetn.org as well as within your course. Contact Dawn Stafford, SVETN Executive Director, if you have questions or concerns.

Core Competencies: This course satisfies VCCS Core Competencies in the following categories:

Civic Engagement is the ability to contribute to the civic life and well-being of local, national, and global communities as both as social responsibility and a life-long learning process. Degree graduates will demonstrate the knowledge and civic values necessary to become informed and contributing participants in a democratic society.

Critical Thinking is the ability to use information, ideas and arguments from relevant perspectives to make sense of complex issues and solve problems. Degree graduates will locate, evaluate, interpret, and combine information to reach well-reasoned conclusions or solutions.

Written Communication is the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience. Degree graduates will express themselves effectively in a variety of written forms.

Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Goal: To enable students to demonstrate a well-rounded knowledge of state and local government and politics; understand the fundamentals of the structure, power, and functions of state and local government; and, understand the unique characteristics of the individual states.

Course Objectives:

General Learning Outcome Topics	Specific Student Learning Outcomes (As applicable to course) The student will be able to...
Goal 1: Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• speak and write about political issues that are central to state and local governance• discuss the philosophical and theoretical arguments undergirding state and local governance in the American constitutional system
Goal 2: Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• compare political processes at the state and federal level

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> describe and evaluate the institutional changes that have altered the relationship of power between and among localities, states, and the federal government
Goal 3: Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> create a position paper that evaluates and proposes an institutional reform or policy change needed at the state or local level

Specific Course Level Objectives (PLS 212)

Course Major Topics	Specific Student Content Learning Outcomes for Topic/Unit The student will be able to...
1) Module: Who Governs? States and Localities in America’s Constitutional Order Topics: Localism, Civic Ideal, Community	Consider essential concepts relating to “community,” “place,” “fragmentation,” and the connection of state and local governments to the world, as captured in the phrase, “think globally, act locally.”
2) Module: Federalism Topics: Non-centralization, A real Division of Power, Union	1) Identify the relationship between the levels of government – federal, state, and local and explain the benefits and opportunities. 2) Explain what former Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, Louis Brandeis meant by his remark that states are the “laboratories of democracy” and analyze whether national standards are warranted. 3) Describe the different periods of federalism throughout American history. For example, Dual Federalism (Layer Cake), Cooperative Federalism (Marble Cake), Creative Federalism, and New Federalism. 4) Analyze how the nation determined representation and how that has evolved.
3) Module: State Constitutionalism Topics: Frame-of-government provisions, Bills of rights, Policy provisions, Expansion and restriction of governmental power	1) Explain whether or not state constitutions matter and identify references of support. 2) Describe ways the states differ from one another in politically meaningful ways. 3) Evaluate differences between the national and state constitutions, and consider differences among different state constitutions. 4) Evaluate the competency of state governments versus the federal government.
4) Module: People and Their States Topics: Demographics, Social Equity, Public Interest	1) Explain whether our nation has “decentralized administration” as Alexis de Tocqueville described it and what values are promoted in this situation. 2) Evaluate how America’s federal system addresses or causes some of the following: inequality, participation, and mass media. 3) Identify different “cultures” in different regions of the US.
5) Module: State Parties and Elections Topics: Redistricting, Voting Technology, Campaign Finance, Party Administration	1) Explain the constitutional function of state governments in drawing district boundaries for state and federal elections and evaluate whether this process remains in the hands of state legislators.

	<p>2) Identify and explain state-level reforms for changing representation and third party movements.</p> <p>3) Analyze whether American political parties today encourage civic virtue and the factors that could be manipulated to change it.</p> <p>4) Explain ongoing issues related to federalism and America’s party systems.</p> <p>5) Describe how state and local political party organizations interact with each other, and with the national party organizations.</p>
<p>6) Module: Legislative Power Topics: Organization, Processes, Committees, Policy, Finance</p>	<p>1) Explain concepts such as the legislative process, committee structure, parties in the legislature, staff support, and professional vs citizen legislatures.</p> <p>2) Describe how state legislatures have changed historically in terms of diversity and what institutional factors account for these developments in variation across states.</p> <p>3) Analyze dependency on interest groups and lobbyists at the state and local level.</p>
<p>7) Module: Executive Power Topics: Qualifications & Tenure, Legislative Role, Appointment Power, Executive Orders, Emergency Powers</p>	<p>1) Compare and contrast the different amounts of formal and informal powers governors have across the fifty states.</p> <p>2) Describe “neutral competence” in state and local bureaucracy and how governors/mayors leverage it.</p> <p>3) Evaluate whether the institution of “governor” matters for politics at the national level.</p>
<p>8) Module: Administration Topics: Transparency, Freedom of Information Act, Agencies and Cabinets, Public Engagement</p>	<p>1) Describing state and local bureaucracy historically and currently.</p> <p>2) Evaluate current controversies in state and local bureaucracy, which can include expertise vs. self-representation, responsiveness, and various efforts to reform the bureaucracy.”</p>
<p>9) Module: Judicial Power Topics: Appointments and Elections, Processes, Oversight</p>	<p>1) Compare and contrast methods of electing or appointing justices and judges at the various levels of government.</p> <p>2) Explain the processes of the state judiciary.</p> <p>3) Evaluate whether justice is more accountable at the local level.</p> <p>4) Analyze the use of juries.</p>
<p>10) Module: Local Governance Topics: Counties, Municipal Governments, Special Districts (including School Districts and Regional Entities), with particular attention to Virginia’s Independent Cities</p>	<p>1) Describe the different types of local governments for counties and municipalities.</p> <p>2) Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different types of governments, some of which place more power in an executive (e.g., mayor) and others that disperse power.</p> <p>3) Explain the various arguments for and against regional governments that cross jurisdictions.</p> <p>4) Identify the factors that make Virginia’s independent cities unique in the US.</p>

<p>11) Module: State-Local Relations Topics: Economic & Infrastructure Development, Strategic Communications & Grassroots Advocacy, Regulatory Solutions</p>	<p>1) Explain why cities and other types of localities continue to exist if they lack specific protections in the U.S. Constitution. 2) Identify the impact of redistributing local tax revenue compared to redistributing state monies to reduce national inequities. 4) Describe what factors are necessary for effective governance for states and cities. 5) Analyze whether states are violating principles of federalism that protect their position in the U.S. federal system when preempting local decision-making.</p>
<p>12) Module: Federal-Local Relations Topics: Policy Decision-making and Enforcement, Deregulation, Infrastructure</p>	<p>1) Explain in what ways is the progressive impulse for rationale, homogenized, and efficient government consistent or inconsistent with multiple governments sharing power. 2) Identify how a thriving Congress and presidency affects cities and other types of localities.</p>
<p>13) Module: Budgeting and the Fiscal State Topics: Risk Management, Compliance, Tax Assessment, Budgets</p>	<p>1) Explain the policymaking process. 2) Explain the impact of balanced budget requirements for state and local governments. 2) Evaluate whether states are essential institutions for the implementation of federal policy, or are they merely convenient. 3) Recognize the variation of public spending across the states and within the states. 4) Describe the impact of the growth of the federal government on state and local governments' abilities to raise revenue. 5) Analyze whether competition among state governments for corporate tax revenues has encouraged a "race to the bottom."</p>
<p>14) Module: Metropolitan Issues Topics: Environment, Public Services, Sprawl, Legacy Cities, Smart Growth/Sustainability</p>	<p>1) Explain what makes city life so attractive and its distinct political form in the United States. 2) Identify which policies and political types encourage healthy, vibrant cities. 3) Evaluate recent issues in urban affairs, for example, "de-urbanization," "gentrification," and the impacts of an urbanized society on the environment.</p>
<p>15) Module: Health, Education, and Welfare Topics: Distribution of Powers, Leveraging Resources, Federalism, Public Interests</p>	<p>1) Explain how examples of national policies influence policymaking in the states. 2) Evaluate whether states and localities make it easier for policy to change, or if they make it easier for policies to become "entrenched." 3) Analyze whether inequities manifest in the current policy-making process at the state and local level.</p>
<p>Alternate 15 Module(s): Policies of State and Local Governments Topics: Education, Law Enforcement, Health and Welfare, and Environment</p>	<p>1) Describe state and local government roles in various areas of public policy. 2) Explain various approaches to areas of policy and the ideological underpinnings of different approaches. Examples include the Affordable Care Act,</p>

	Common Core, criminal justice reform, policing reform, among other issues and policies. 3) Evaluate the effectiveness of the policies and the role of the federal government in these areas.
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