Instructional Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to introduce students to the methods and processes by which American state legislatures achieve public policy objectives. It examines the constitutional mandates, legislative organization, political influences and competing public priorities that impact the outcomes of state laws and regulations. It also examines how the concept of federalism shapes the relationships between states and the federal government in achieving these public outcomes.

The activities of state legislatures are closely followed by specific interested parties-stakeholders- but rarely capture the attention of the general public. Periodically an event occurs that captures the nation’s attention. The November 3, 2020 national election was such an event.

On November 3, 2020 nearly 160 million registered voters in 50 states, six territories and the District of Columbia elected 6,000+ members of state legislatures, 435 members of the U.S. House of Representatives, 50 members of the United States Senate and a President and Vice-President of the United States. This was the largest total voter turn-out in U.S. history.

State election laws – passed in state legislatures and encoded in states’ statutes- determined the eligibility of citizens to participate in the above process. By state regulations, the administration of this electoral process occurred under the supervision of 50 Secretaries of State, 50 Chief State Election Commissioners or Election Boards/Commissions in 3,006 counties across the United States. State election laws define the process by which the outcomes of these elections would be validated and certified.

Following the November 3, 2020 Presidential election several states had their vote outcomes challenged by the losing presidential candidate. Charges of massive voter fraud were levied against these states’ election officials. State legislatures were pressured to overturn the results certified by election officials. 60+ Court challenges were mounted without success; multiple recounts were required of several states which were conducted with no changes in outcomes.
The challenges by the losing presidential candidate continued and on January 6, thousands of disgruntled persons stormed the United States Capitol charging that the presidential election had been stolen and it was their intention to prevent the constitutional requirement that the presidential election be certified by the Vice-President of the United States and the Congress. The Capitol was trashed, federal property was stolen and the event left five persons dead, including two Capitol police officers.

This semester provides an extraordinary opportunity to examine how state legislatures make public policy with regard to a hallmark of American democracy—public elections. The Elections Clause of the United States Constitution grants to states the authority to enact a complete code of procedures for state elections including rules for public notice, voter registration, voter protection, fraud protection, vote counting and determination/certification of election results based on their official election statutes. Likewise, the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 protect the fundamental right of eligible citizens to vote—and create mechanisms to challenge laws or practices that seek to override that power.

The Policy question: How durable are the state election laws that determine who is selected to serve in our national, state and local governments? Our case studies focus on four of those states that have come under a barrage of legal and political challenges to their presidential election results: Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. We will compare the election rules and regulations of these states to the following states: California, Florida, New York, South Carolina.

At the end of the semester student should be able to demonstrate a firm understanding of the process of legislative policymaking, including the key policy actors and legislative activities, the major influences in setting the legislative agenda, the impact of political organization on legislative outcomes and the role of public participation in the process.

Attendance Policy

This is an on-line class. Attendance will be tracked through the appropriate web-based technology. Students who miss class due to personal illness, COVID-19 related illnesses, a requirement that they isolate or quarantine, the need to care for a family member who is ill due to COVID-19, other significant medical or family emergencies, etc. are responsible for contacting the instructor directly. Students who fail to meet the stated deadline dates for any written mandatory assignments without a confirmed acceptable reason may incur a grade deduction. The dates for receipt of assignments and/or exams are listed in this syllabus in the appropriate sections.

Grading Policy

Grades for the semester will be based on the following assignments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper #4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grade values will be assigned as follows:

1. A=  93-100  ;  A -=  90-92
2. B+=  88-89  B= 83-87  B-=80-82
3. C+=  78-79  C=  73-77  C-= 70-72
5. F=59 and below

Required and optional Readings

There is not a required textbook for this course. You are required to utilize the following websites and on-line resources for your work during the semester:

1. The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
2. Ballotpedia
3. The National Association of Secretaries of States
4. National Association of State Election Directors
5. U.S. Election Assistance Commission
6. The Congressional Research Service
7. The National Association of Counties
8. The National Governors Association
9. The On-line Legislatures of the selected legislatures
10. Other reports and readings as assigned during the semester

Required assignments to assess student learning outcomes

Research Assignment

This semester provides an extraordinary opportunity to study how state election laws inform and direct the institutions and procedures that determine who is elected to public office at the federal and state levels. We will examine the constitutional mandates, legislative committees, statutory requirements, political control and specific election procedures utilized by states to determine the success or failure of election contests. At the end of this research, you will be able to identify the impact of state election laws on the overall electoral processes that determine election outcomes.

The state legislatures in your study will be comprised of two groups as follows:

Group One – Legislatures whose voting procedures for the November 2020 Presidential Election have been challenged as illegal or fraudulent by the losing presidential candidate: Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

Group Two: - States whose voting procedures have not been challenged by the losing presidential candidate: California, Florida, New York, South Carolina.

Paper # 1- Classification of each of the above states as full or part-time legislatures according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, state voting demographics and the legislative control of each.

Paper # 2- The specific state laws that directed the voting eligibility and ballot administration procedures for the November 3, 2020 General Election.
**Paper # 3** - The official election certification procedures directed by state laws in each of the above states following the November 3, 2020 election.

**Paper # 4** – The official charges brought against each of the above states in group 1; the methods and finding of states that have been required to do recount and the conclusions of courts that have heard charges against these states.

You will be given a specific template for each of the above assignments.

The deadline (due date) for the receipt of each paper is stated in this syllabus. Late papers will be subjected to very severe grade deductions. Papers that are more five days late without a confirmed and acceptable excuse will not be accepted.

Maximum page numbers for these assignments are not defined as the content of official voting requirements such as registration deadlines, balloting laws, etc. cannot be determined in advance. Students are expected to use judgement in determining whether information may be more effectively presented in charts, bullet form, as attachments. It is noted here that writing vague, rambling essays is not recommended.

All assignments will be submitted via the OAKS drop box.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:** This college abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1974 and the American with Disabilities Act. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see an administrator at the Center for Disability Services/SNAP, (843) 953-1431 or contact me so that such accommodations may be arranged.

**Honor Code and Academic Integrity**

“Lying, cheating, attempted cheating and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when suspected, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines that the student’s actions are related more to misunderstanding and confusion will be handled by the instructor. The instructor designs an intervention or assigns a grade reduction to prevent the student from repeating the error. The response is recorded on a form and signed by both the instructor and the student. It is forwarded to the Office of the Dean of Students and placed in the student’s file.

Cases of academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive an XXF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This status will appear on the student’s transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the XX to be expunged. The F is permanent.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: [http://student affairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/student handbook/in-depth](http://student affairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/student handbook/in-depth).
OAKS

OAKS, including Gradebook, will be used for this course throughout the semester to provide the syllabus and class materials and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted.

Recording of Classes (Via Zoom)

Class sessions will be recorded via both voice and video recording. By attending and remaining in this class, the student consents to being recorded. Recorded class sessions are for instructional use only and may not be shared with anyone who is not enrolled in the class.

Inclement Weather, Pandemic or Substantial Interruption of Instruction

If in-person classes are suspended, faculty will announce to their students a detailed plan for a change in modality to ensure the continuity of learning. All students must have access to a computer equipped with a web camera, microphone and internet access. Resources are available to provide students with these essential tools.

Center for Student Learning

The Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services provide assistance in study strategies, speaking and writing skills and course content. Services include tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, study skills appointments and workshops. Students of all abilities have become successful using these programs throughout their academic careers and the services are available at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at: http://csl.cofc.edu or call (843) 953-5635.

Class schedule

January 2021

Tuesday 12       Introductions and Semester Overview
Thursday 14      Review of semester assignments
Tuesday 19       Federalism and state legislatures (Handout)
Thursday 21      Demographics of State Legislatures
Tuesday 26       Demographic of state legislatures
Thursday 28      Snapshots: 2020 Legislative Actions on Elections

Paper # 1 Due

February 2021

Tuesday 2        Snapshots: 2020 Legislative Actions on Elections
Thursday 4       2021 Legislative Session Calendars
Tuesday 9        Legislative Organization
Thursday 11    Legislative Organization
Tuesday 16   Legislative Organization

Thursday 18   Mason’s Manual of Procedures

**Paper # 2 Due**

Tuesday 23  Influences in Setting the Legislative Agenda
Thursday 25  Setting the Legislative Agenda

**March 2021**

Tuesday 2    **Review and Study Day – No Classes**
Thursday 4    **Review and Study Day – No Classes**
Tuesday 9  Setting the Legislative Agenda
Thursday 11  Setting the Legislative Agenda
Tuesday 16  COVID-19 and State Legislatures
Thursday 18  COVID-19 and State Legislatures
Tuesday 23  COVID-19 and State Legislatures
Thursday 25  Elections and Reapportionment - 2022
Tuesday 30  Elections and Reapportionment-2022

**Paper # 3 Due**

**April 2021**

Thursday 1  Elections and Reapportionment-2022
Tuesday 6  COVID-19 and State Legislatures
Thursday 8  South Carolina Legislature: the 2021 Legislative Agenda
Tuesday 13  South Carolina Legislature: the 2021 Legislative Agenda
Thursday 15 –  Semester Recap
Tuesday 20  **Last Day of Class- Final Examination Issued by instructor**

**Paper # 4 Due**

Tuesday 27  **Final Examination due by 5:00 P.M.**
Monday May 3  **Final grades posted by Instructor**