GOVT 706/ PUAD 750

SEMINAR ON FEDERALISM AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Fall 2020

Monday 7:20-10 p.m.

Dr. Michelle Sager

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Course Description: This course is a graduate level survey of federalism and intergovernmental relations. We will bridge theory, practice and current issues in politics and governance. Specific topics to be explored include: theories and controversies concerning the appropriate roles of different levels of government, the intergovernmental context of policy making and service delivery in the United States, the evolution and performance of the American federal system, aspects of comparative federalism, and the politics of intergovernmental reform.

Course Structure: The course will be conducted as a graduate seminar. This is not a lecture course. The success of the course will depend on active and informed participation by everyone in the course every week. Additional details will be posted on Blackboard and discussed during the first class.

Most of the seminar content will be synchronous (during the scheduled course time). Additional materials will be provided to supplement the readings and illustrate the discussion points. These materials can be viewed asynchronously. All participants will be expected to read and analyze each week's readings. All students should expect to contribute to every class discussion by preparing key points to highlight from the week's readings and then discussing those points during the course.

In addition, there will be an opportunity for discussion of individual research topics and assigned oral presentations throughout the semester. Federalism theory and practice will be considered throughout the semester along with intergovernmental policy making structures and specific policy issues.

Student Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to help students become familiar with:

1. Major theories—political, philosophical, economic, and administrative—concerning the advantages and disadvantages of a federal form of government.
2. Theoretical rationales and empirical evidence concerning the assignment of functions among various levels of government in multi-level systems.
3. The historical development and evolution of the U.S. federal system.
4. The challenges of intergovernmental policy making and implementation in the United States.
5. The practical reality of contemporary American federalism and the implications for intergovernmental relations.
6. Ongoing practical application of the readings and theories to current policy issues.
7. Reading, thinking, writing, and speaking that results in detailed understanding of federalism and intergovernmental relations theory and practice.

**Learning Community:** Our efforts to build a learning community are especially important in a virtual course format. Students are encouraged to share contact information with classmates to build our virtual learning community, foster contacts to use as resources regarding class content, and continue developing professional networks.

**Required Texts:** The following books will be used for the course:


The required books will be supplemented by articles and readings available through open source websites and materials that are accessible through Blackboard. Collectively, the readings are intended to serve several complementary purposes:

- to give a descriptive and analytical overview of contemporary intergovernmental issues;
- to provide current, historical and comparative perspective on key issues;
- to highlight influential analytical frameworks;
- to illustrate alternative models of research design and methodology; and
- to draw on information and analysis that reflects entities and researchers that play a key role in intergovernmental affairs and federalism research.

**Seminar Discussants:** At the first class meeting, each student will be assigned a class period from August 31 through the end of the semester to lead a discussion for 30-45 minutes of the period. Discussants should be prepared to address topics from the readings and highlight any questions that emerge from the readings, their own policy interests and current events. Speaker’s notes of three to five pages should be typed and handed in the evening of the assigned discussion. The notes will aid in the evaluation of the discussant and be evaluated on substance, not style or format.

**Written Assignments:** The course assignments will include four short papers. Each paper should be no more than four double-spaced pages. Additional detail will be provided in class and on Blackboard regarding each paper. Students are encouraged to develop the papers throughout the semester in order to leverage the reading material as it is discussed in class.

The papers should draw on assigned readings as well as additional topic-specific resources that will be discussed throughout the semester.

**Memo #1:** The first memo will identify the policy topic background and its nature as an intergovernmental issue. This paper should explain the topic and the role of each level of government as a “backgrounder” or “explainer” written for a policymaker who is new to the issue. This memo should identify the nature of the issue as well as key considerations for
understanding federal, state and local perspectives on the topic as well as any key aspect of federalism that provide a foundation for considering the topic.

**Memo #2:** The second memo will present the key issues or current controversies surrounding this policy topic and frame the debate at a high level in terms of any common federal, state, or local government perspectives and/or political party positions on the topic. This paper should be written as an overview for understanding the current debate for this topic without taking a position.

**Memo #3:** The third memo will present a discussion of the key sources of evidence available to objectively analyze the topic. This paper should describe what is known about the evidence base, what is known about data limitations and what is unknown but would help advance understanding of the topic. In other words, what resources are available to continue to learn about the topic and follow the development of the evidence base?

**Memo #4:** The fourth and final policy analysis memo should take the form of synthesizing knowledge gained throughout the semester in the form of a memo that bridges theory and practice for the selected policy issue. What aspects of the issue confirm or contradict long-standing federalism and intergovernmental relations challenges? To what extent are the levels of government united or divided in their approach to the policy issue? To what extent does the current environment exist as an inflection point for this policy issue and why is this the case (or not)? This memo should be drafted as an essay that leverages the readings and discussions throughout the semester.

The papers should draw on assigned readings as well as additional topic-specific resources that will be discussed throughout the semester.

Policy topic selections will be discussed during the first class (August 24) and identified during the second class (August 31).

Students will be expected to present and discuss their first three papers during the second half of the class when they are due (either November 23 or November 30 based on assignments made after the first class). The final two weeks of the course will focus on student presentations and facilitated critique and discussion of the final policy analysis memo with the entire class. Students are expected to provide constructive critiques of each other's draft papers during the last two classes and prior to final submission of the paper for a course grade (December 14). Students should plan to use the class discussions to inform their revisions before submitting final versions on December 14.

**Course evaluation:** Final grades for this course will be based on general class participation, discussant roles and oral presentations (20%); short written assignments (15% for each of the first three papers = 45% of total course grade); and the final draft of the intergovernmental memo (35%).

**Statement on services for people with disabilities:** Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about
the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

**Statement on diversity and inclusion:** The Schar MPA program is committed to create a learning environment that reflects the growing diversity of the modern workplace and of the communities that are being served by public service organizations. We welcome, value and foster respect for all individuals and their differences, including race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, sex, sexuality, gender expression and identity, national origin, first language, religion, ideology, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

**Academic Integrity:** Faculty in the Schar School have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty and will strictly enforce Mason’s honor code.

**Class Schedule:**

**Week 1 (Aug. 24)/Course Introduction**

- Syllabus Review
- Discussion of learning styles
- Seminar participant introductions
- Brainstorming Memo Topics: Policy Issue Options

**Week 2 (Aug. 31)/An Introduction to Federalism & Intergovernmental Relations**

- David K. Hamilton, Carl W. Stenberg, Chapter 1, Introduction: Intergovernmental Relations in Transition and Chapter 2, Intergovernmental Relations in the Early Twenty-First Century: Lingering Images of Earlier Phases and Emergence of a New Phase, By J. Edwin Benton
- Kettl, Preface & Chapter 1, Madison’s Balancing Act
- Rozell & Wilcox, 2: Federalism, American style and 4: What state and local governments do
- **Tentative Memo Topic Discussion and Submission**

[September 7 - Labor Day/University Closed]

**Week 3 (Sept. 14)/Fiscal Federalism**

● Browse USAspending.gov (see https://www.usасpending.gov/#/explorer)
● Stenberg & Hamilton, Chapter 3, Why Coercion and Cooperation Coexist in American Federalism, By John Kincaid
● Rozell & Wilcox, 5: Fiscal federalism
● Kettl Chapter 2, E Pluribus Unum
● NASBO Fiscal Survey of the States
● Policy Topic Selection for Course Writing Assignments Due

Week 4 (Sept. 21)/Fiscal Federalism and Federal Governance

● Executive Order 13132: Federalism (see https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-1999-08-10/pdf/99-20729.pdf) and Guidance for Implementing E.O. 13132, M-00-02 (see https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/memoranda/2000/m00-02.pdf)
● Kettl Chapter 3, The Search for Unity

Week 5 (Sept. 28)/Intergovernmental Grants

● Kettl Chapter 4, Washington Rising
● Stenberg & Hamilton, Chapter 5, Scarcity and the Federal System, Paul L. Posner
● Stenberg & Hamilton, Chapter 6, Putting the “R” Back in IGR: The Great Recession and Intergovernmental “Relationships,” By Bruce J. Perlman, Michael J. Scicchitano, Yahong Zhang
● Follow the Money: How to Track Federal Funding to Local Governments, Urban Institute, February 2018 (see https://www.urban.org/research/publication/follow-money-how-track-federal-funding-local-governments)
Week 6 (Oct. 5)/Federalism and Inequality

- Kettl Chapter 5, America’s Struggle with Inequality
- *Memo #1 Due, Backgrounder/Explainer about the Policy Topic and its Nature as an Intergovernmental Issue*

[Oct. 12 is Fall Break/Classes do not meet on Oct. 12/Monday classes will meet on Tuesday]

Week 7 (Oct. 13)/COVID-19 Pandemic as an Illustration of Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations

- Kettl Chapter 6, Health, Unequal
- Rozell and Wilcox, 6: Advantages and disadvantages of federalism
- *Begin Discussion of Memo #2/Class Discussion of Government Information Sources for Understanding Perspectives of Each Level of Government*

Week 8 (Oct. 20)/Intergovernmental Issues in Practice: The Big 7 and Beyond

- Kettl Chapter 7, E Pluribus Plura
- Stenberg & Hamilton, Chapter 14, The Unraveling of the Intergovernmental System: A Practitioner’s Observations, By Donald J. Borut
- GAO-Federalism (Forthcoming-September 2020)
- NCSL
- NLC
- NGA
- NACO
- CSG
- ICMA
- U.S. Conference of Mayors
• **Continued Discussion of Memo #2/Class Discussion of Nongovernmental Information Sources for Understanding Perspectives on Policy Topic (Associations, Think Tanks, Foundations, etc.)**

**Week 9 (Oct. 27)/State and Local Government Relations**

- Kettl Chapter 8, Engines of Inequality
- Stenberg & Hamilton
  - Chapter 10, Bottom-Up Federalism: An Examination of U.S. Local Government Climate Change Policy and Practice, By Benoy Jacob, Brian J. Gerber, Samuel Gallaher
  - Chapter 12, Pulling the Lever: The State’s Role in Catalyzing Local Change, By Ricardo S. Morse, Carl W. Stenberg
- Census Survey of Governments: [https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cog.html](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cog.html)
- **Memo #2 Due: Class Presentation and Discussion of Key Issues Surrounding Selected Policy Topic/Frame the debate at a high level in terms of any common federal, state, or local government perspectives and/or political party positions on the topic.**

**Week 10 (Nov. 2)/Federal Systems and Inflection Points**

- Kettl Chapter 9, Can Some States Lead
- Stenberg & Hamilton, Chapter 15, American Federalism without a System of Intergovernmental Relations, By Parris N. Glendening
- **Speaker’s Task Force on Intergovernmental Affairs**
- Elections,
- 10 Key Recommendations for Reopening the K-12 Classroom (Heritage): [https://www.heritage.org/education/commentary/10-key-education-recommendations-reopening-the-k-12-classroom](https://www.heritage.org/education/commentary/10-key-education-recommendations-reopening-the-k-12-classroom)
- **Memo #3 Outline in Progress: Class Discussion of Sources of Evidence Available to Objectively Analyze the Policy Topic**
Week 11 (Nov. 9)/Collaborative Governance

- Kettl Chapter 10, Madison’s Invention Comes Undone
- President’s Budget FY2020, Building and Using Evidence, [link](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/BUDGET-2020-PER/pdf/BUDGET-2020-PER-3-2.pdf)
- **Memo #3 Due: Key Sources of Evidence Available to Objectively Analyze the Policy Topic**

Week 12 (Nov. 16)/Future of Federalism

- Kettl Chapter 11, Hamilton’s Solution to Madison’s Dilemma
- Rozell & Wilcox, Conclusion: An American model for the world?
- Stenberg & Hamilton, Chapter 16, Back to the Future?: The Road Ahead, By Carl W. Stenberg, David K. Hamilton
- **Memo #4 Outline in Progress: Class Discussion of Framing Approaches and Outstanding Questions**

Week 13 (Nov. 23)

- Presentations and discussion of final memo (presentation dates to be assigned in advance)

Week 14 (Nov. 30)

Last Regular Class

- Presentations and discussion of final memo (presentation dates to be assigned in advance)

Week 15 (Dec. 7)

- Optional Office Hours/Study Session/Discussion of Final Memo/Networking

Week 16 (Dec. 14)

- **Final Memo Due**