Course Description: The invention of a modern federal system was the most original aspect of the U.S. Constitution, and over the years federalism has been the feature of American government most widely copied around the world. Although the operation of the federal system has changed dramatically over the past two hundred and twenty years, issues of federalism have continued to be at the center of American politics and public policy debates.

This course will provide an in-depth look at the evolving role of federalism in the American system of government. Different segments of the course examine the advantages and limitations of decentralized governance, political theories of federalism, the historical development of American federalism, major features of contemporary intergovernmental relations, and current issues and controversies involving the performance of federal programs and federalism reform proposals.

Course Requirements: The basic requirements of this course include a midterm exam (25% of the course grade), a final examination (35% of the grade), a group project (10%), and a 5 page intergovernmental research project (30%). Class participation will be factored into the course grade, especially in borderline cases. Make-up exams and late papers will be considered only in documented emergencies. Grades will be calculated on an A-F scale as follows: 97-100 A+, 93-96 A, 90-92 A-, 87-89 B+, 83-86 B, 80-82 B-, 77-79 C+, 73-76 C, 70-72 C-, 67-69 D+, 63-66 D, 60-62 D-, <60 F

Students are also expected to follow current policy issues and events. A familiarity with policy related developments at both the national and state levels will facilitate your ability to understand the material. I recommend that you read The New York Times or The Washington Post with frequency. You can sign up to receive daily e-mail news updates from the New York Times or The Washington Post for free on their websites. Additionally, you may want to examine news-magazines and websites for more in-depth coverage of particular issues.

Attendance and Laptop/e-device policy: Your attendance will be required for the group projects, and I strongly encourage you to attend and participate actively in class at all times. Your level of learning and performance in the course will greatly benefit from active attendance. That said, when you are in attendance, I would like your full attention. “Multi-tasking” is rude and counterproductive. Laptops and tablets should be OFF unless you are actively taking notes.
Required Readings:
Laurence O'Toole and Robert Christensen, American Intergovernmental Relations, 5th ed. (Washington, CQ press).


various assigned journal articles and book chapters

Class Schedule:

ALTERNATIVE THEORIES OF FEDERAL GOVERNANCE

(Aug 30) Introduction to the Course and to Federalism
Robertson, chap. 1.

(Sep 1-6) Why Federalism? Economic Theories of Federalism

(Sep 8-15) Why Federalism? Political and Administrative Perspectives
Federalist 10 (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp)
Beam, et. al., "Federalism and Competing Values,” pp 253-271

Agranoff and McGuire, “Another Look at Bargaining and Negotiating in Intergovernmental Management,” in O’Toole, American Intergovernmental Relations.


HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN FEDERALISM

(Sep 20-22) Foundations of American Federalism

Samuel Beer, “Federalism, Nationalism, and Democracy in America,” The

1Readings marked by 1 are available on the course blackboard page.
Robertson, chapter 2.

U.S. Constitution; O’Toole, pp. 85-89.

(Sep 27-Oct 4) **Evolution of the U.S. Federal System**

Robertson, chaps 3-7.


Harry Scheiber, “The Condition of American Federalism”


(Oct 6) **MIDTERM EXAM**

**CONTEMPORARY INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

(Oct 13-20) **Overview: Federalism and IGR in the Contemporary Era: Cooperation, Conflict and Complexity**


Robertson, chaps 8-9.


(Oct 25-Nov 1) **Intergovernmental Fiscal Relations**


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2 Available on JSTOR

“Aid to State and Local Governments,” OMB, Analytical Perspectives, Budget of the U.S. Budget, 2017.
http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/Analytical_Perspectives

States and Localities in the Federal System

Martha Derthick, “The Paradox of the Middle Tier,” in O’Toole, pp. 62-75


U.S. Census Bureau, “State and Local Finances 2011, Summary,”
http://www2.census.gov/govs/local/summary_report.pdf

Judicial & Regulatory Trends in US Federalism

U. S. Supreme Court, NFIB v Sebelius and Gonzales v Raich, in O’Toole, pp. 332-343 and 367-383.


Contemporary Issues and the Future of Federalism

Nationalism,”” Publius: The Journal of Federalism 46 (Summer 2016): 281-307.2


(Dec 13) FINAL EXAM: 1:30- 3:30.

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

University Honor Code

To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this honor code: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work.

HONOR CODE POLICY

The Honor Code policy endorsed by the members of the School of Policy, Government, and International Affairs relative to the types of academic work indicated below is set out in the appropriate paragraphs:

1. Quizzes, tests and examinations. No help may be given or received by students when taking quizzes, tests, or examinations, whatever the type or wherever taken, unless the instructor specifically permits deviation from this standard.

2. Course Requirements: All work submitted to fulfill course requirements is to be solely the product of the individual(s) whose name(s) appears on it. Except with permission of the instructor, no recourse is to be had to projects, papers, lab reports or any other written work previously prepared by another student, and except with permission of the instructor no paper or work of any type submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of another course may be used a second time to satisfy a requirement of any course in the Department of Public and International Affairs. No assistance is to be obtained from commercial organizations which sell or lease research help or written papers. With respect to all written work as appropriate, proper footnotes and attribution are required.