I. Course Overview

Most of us know more about our national government than our state and local governments. The national media almost imposes the daily activities of the nation’s president on our lives. But the actions of our governors and state legislatures are covered less extensively. And the daily work of our mayors, city and county councils, school district board members even less so. Yet these state and local government officials impact our lives enormously. They tax us and thereby provide schools, roads, parks, water systems, and electrical power. They police our streets and neighborhoods, settle most of our court cases and incarcerate over 90 percent of all prisoners. They put out our fires, pick up our garbage, regulate our businesses and decide how we can use our land.

Given the broad reach and impact of state and local governments, it is to our advantage to understand them better. This course is designed to help students develop a clearer understanding of their state and local governments. In this course, we will discuss the diversity of the fifty states and how that impacts governing. We will look at governors, legislatures and state courts. We will discuss grassroots participation, the influence of interest groups, and the role of political parties. We cover specific public policy issues such as: education, health care, social welfare, public safety, transportation, environment, and economic development. Finally, we will discuss the challenge of governing in these fast changing times.

II. Class Dates

April 24  Class introduction
Chapter 1: New Directions for State and Local Governments
Chapter 2: Federalism and the States

26  No Class – Professor out of town

May 01  Chapter 3: State Constitutions
Chapter 4: Citizen Participation and Elections

03  Chapter 5: Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Campaigns
Chapter 6: State Legislatures
III. Books, Tests and Other Important Information

**Books:** There are two books for the class.

*State and Local Government*, Ann O’M. Bowman and Richard C. Kearney, (Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2011, Eighth Edition) This is the textbook that we will cover chapter by chapter during the quarter. The authors begin by laying the foundation of the American political system, then discuss ways people can and do participate in the
political process. The authors then treat the institutions of state and local governments: legislatures, governors, judiciary and local governments. Once these institutions are treated, the authors then discuss the major issues that these governments face: taxes and spending, economic development, education, criminal justice, and social welfare policy.

The Appeal, John Grisham. This best-selling author has taken a very hot topic – corporate liability – and tied it into a significant public policy issue - the election of state judges.

Lectures and Class Discussions
All lectures and class discussions on the chapters in State and Local Government are presented in PowerPoint and will be available on the BYU Blackboard. This allows students to have access to the essence of each lecture. Students may want to print out the PowerPoint presentation and bring it to class and just add their notes to the PowerPoint presentation.

Tests
Both tests are short answer essays. You are expected to take the tests as scheduled. If circumstances prevent this, and you notify me ahead of the scheduled test, arrangements can be made for a different test time without penalty. Any student missing the test on the scheduled date and who has not notified me ahead of the test may still take a make-up test within a week, but will be penalized 15 percent. No test may be made up after a week has passed.

Grades are based on a straight line scale: 90% and above is an A; 80-89% is a B; 70-79% is a C; 60-69% is a D; and 59% and below is an E. Minor adjustments to this policy may be made based on overall class performance.

Writing Assignment
Students are required to write a book review of The Appeal. The review is to be no more than three pages long - double-spaced type. The review should explain what the author is trying to tell his readers. What is he trying to drive home? Next to his main point, what else is he trying to tell us about our society? Then give me your evaluation of how well he did in making his case. The book reviews are due on the date noted in the syllabus. Reviews handed in 1-7 days late will be docked 20 percent. No reviews will be accepted after seven days.

Team Presentations
Class members will self-divide into teams of 3-4 (depending on class size) and prepare a report on a local government issue like: zoning, hazardous waste, economic development, housing, public services, etc. The team will make a 10 minute class presentation and prepare a 4-5 page report. The information for the report and presentation can be obtained from newspapers, local government council meetings, local government web sites, publications of national organizations that represent local governments, professional journals, etc.
Extra Credit and Attendance
There will be no extra credit reports, papers, etc. However, I take attendance and will give each student who misses no classes points equal to three percent of the total points possible.

Contacting the Professor
I am an adjunct professor and therefore have no campus office or phone. However, I want to be available and accessible. I encourage you to email me when you have questions or concerns and I will respond quickly, usually within 24 hours. You can also call me at my home anytime. If I am not there (which is usually the case) leave me a message and I will call you back, usually that evening when I get home from work. If all else fails, you may call me at work, but I prefer to have this as a last option. If you miss class, I strongly encourage you to contact me as soon as possible to see what you missed. Since my work sometimes forces me to change the agenda at short notice, consistent attendance or immediate contact with me after missing a class is to your definite advantage.