

**POLS 121 – State and Local Government
Learning Outcomes
Effective Summer 2005**

Areas of Study

- 1. Role of State and Local Government**
- 2. Federalism and State and Local Government**
- 3. State Constitutions**
- 4. Citizen Participation and Elections**
- 5. Political Parties and Interest Groups**
- 6. State Governors**
- 7. The Bureaucracy**
- 8. State Legislatures**
- 9. State Judiciary**
- 10. The Structure of Local Government**
- 11. State and Local Finances**

NOTE: While every effort has been made to cover the major topic areas that are covered in each section of POLS 121, students should be aware that individual faculty members determine the specific topics covered and the emphasis on each topic in their classes.

The POLS 121 Departmental Final Examination consists of a total of 50 multiple choice questions. Ten of the questions are based on student interpretation of a selected paragraph.

Topic One: Role of State and Local Government in Our Political System

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain the increased role of state and local government in our political system.
2. Describe the changing role of state government in the global economy.
3. Describe the forces at work in the nonnational governments' drive for efficiency, effectiveness, and equity.
4. Explain the challenges that nonnational governments face in their efforts to solve problems.
5. Define political culture and the effects it has on different regions of the country.
6. Evaluate the role racism and sexism play in the political culture.

Topic Two: Federalism and Nonnational Governments

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain the differences between confederal, federal, and unitary systems of governments.
2. Describe the evolution of federalism in this country.
3. Describe the role that the Courts, Congress, and the U.S. Constitution have individually played in the relationship between the states and the states and the national government.
4. Describe the difference between block grants and categorical grants.
5. Describe the traditional descriptive models used to portray the American federal system.
6. Define the following federal constitutional terms in the context of state and local government:
 - A. Enumerated powers
 - B. Reserved powers
 - C. Supremacy clause
 - D. Necessary and proper clause
 - E. Implied powers
 - F. Commerce clause

Topic Three: State Constitutions

Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the evolution of state constitutions from colonial charters to modern constitutions.
2. Identify the essential elements in a state constitution according to the National Municipal League's Model State Constitution.
3. Explain the informal and formal methods for amending state constitutions.
4. Describe the role and importance of state constitutions in protecting individual civil rights and civil liberties.
5. Discuss the major components of Michigan's 1963 constitution.

Topic Four: Citizen Participation and Elections

Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the ways people may participate in American representative democracy.
2. Distinguish between representative democracy and direct democracy. Identify the following components of direct democracy: initiative, referendum, and recall.
3. Discuss and identify the factors that effect voter turnout.
4. Describe the difference in voting participation on the basis of age, education, occupation, and other social class factors.
5. Identify the various types of primary elections within states.
6. Describe the various devices used by state and local governments to open government to citizen scrutiny and participation, e.g. Freedom of Information Act, Open Meetings Act, Whistleblower Protection Act, Administrative Procedures Act and sunset laws.

Topic Five: Political Parties and Interest Groups

Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the significance and structure of state political parties and the role individuals play in these organizations.
2. Describe the changing nature of state and local political campaigns.
3. Describe the interest groups and the types of activities in which they engage. Identify why some interest groups are more successful than others.
4. Discuss the issue of campaign finance and its significance to our political process.
5. Explain the reasons for and consequences of steadily rising campaign costs.

Topic Six: State Governors

Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the formal and informal powers of a governor.
2. Describe the increased quality and level of experience of recent governors.
3. Explain the reasons for and consequences of steadily rising gubernatorial campaign cost.
4. Explain the concept of the plural executive and describe the roles of other key state executive branch officials.
5. Identify the various roles of a governor: chief executive, chief legislator, commander in chief, ceremonial leader, chief policy maker, intergovernmental coordinator, and party leader.

Topic Seven: The Bureaucracy

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain the origins and nature of the federal merit system and its influence on state and local government personnel systems.
2. Describe the impact on state and local governments of issues such as affirmative action, sexual harassment, and unionization.
3. Discuss the impact privatization has on the role of state and local bureaucracies.

Topic Eight: State Legislatures

Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the process of how a bill becomes a law in state legislatures.
2. Describe the legislative functions of policymaking, representation, and oversight.
3. Explain the ideals and reality of legislative reform efforts in the recent past, e.g. term limits, professional staffing, and part-time legislatures.
4. Explain the history, process, and significance of legislative apportionment and districting.
5. Describe the basic structure of state legislatures, their leadership, and their committee makeup.
6. Explain the factors that help individual legislators make voting decisions.
7. Describe the nature of legislative and executive cooperation and conflict.

Topic Nine: State Judiciary

Learning Outcomes:

1. Describe the difference between civil and criminal law and civil and criminal procedure.
2. Explain the state court systems of appellate, trial, and limited jurisdiction courts.
3. Explain the methods by which judges are selected and removed.
4. Describe the difference between judicial activism and judicial restraint.
5. Explain the concept and significance of judicial review.

Topic Ten: The Structure of Local Government

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain Dillon's Rule and its significance in the context of state and local government.
2. Explain the difference between general-purpose and special-purpose governments.
3. Describe the general role of counties and their different organizational structures.
4. Describe how municipalities or cities are created and the different ways in which they are structured.
5. Describe the nature of a home rule city.
6. Describe township and village government.

Topic Eleven: State and Local Finance

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain the relationship between revenues and expenditures in the context of state constitutional requirements for a balanced budget.
2. Describe the nature of the operating and capital budgetary process as well as the participants in the process.
3. Identify the five steps in a budget cycle.
4. Identify the available types of state and local taxes and their advantages and disadvantages. How are they evaluated?
5. Explain the effects that constitutional and statutory tax limitations have on state budgets.
6. Describe the changing financial relationship between state and local governments and the national government, e.g. revenue sharing, devolution, and unfunded mandates.