Tompkins Cortland Community College

Master Course Syllabus

Course Discipline and Number: POSC104 **Year: 2025-2026**

Course Title: American State and Local Government **Credits: 3**

I. Course Description: This course is designed to study the forms, function, and services of state governments and representative local governments. The dynamics of state and local governments are also considered. POSC104 fulfills the SUNY General Education Social Sciences requirement. Prerequisites: Prior completion or concurrent enrollment in ENGL100. 3 Cr. (3 Lec.). Spring semesters.

II. Additional Course Information:

1. This course could be curated as an OER (free) option with careful selections made by the instructor.
2. This course may be used as a social science or unrestricted elective.
3. This is an elective option is several A.S., A.A.S and the Certificate programs

III. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand the history of state constitutions and interpretations and how they are applied to local and statewide governmental processes.
2. Gather, organize, interpret, and synthesize information and research from various sources and apply this to the analysis of public opinion, political campaigns and elections, the roles of political interest groups on influencing policy.
3. Combine formal knowledge with individual experience to reach informed opinions, make decisions, and solve problems as they relate to the state and local government systems and politics.

IV. Tompkins Cortland Institutional Learning Outcomes; Program Learning Outcomes; SUNY General Education Competencies and Knowledge and Skills Areas

Tompkins Cortland ILOs

Complete this section for “service” courses only (e.g., courses that are required of all students; courses that are not program specific but satisfy liberal arts requirements; or commonly used in multiple academic programs to meet non-program-specific requirements). Check only Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) that are meaningfully developed and assessed in this course. For each ILO chosen, include the SLO to which it aligns.

Students will:

☐ Communicate effectively, in oral and written forms, taking into consideration audience and purpose.

☐ Apply principles and methods of scientific inquiry and quantitative reasoning appropriate to their discipline.

☐ Use information, critical thinking, and the creative process to solve problems and reach conclusions.

☐ Use technology appropriate to their discipline.

☐ Describe the ways in which social, economic, or environmental sustainability depends on their own and the collective contributions of a diversity of ideas and people.

Program Learning Outcomes

Complete this section for program-specific courses (e.g., those that share the same discipline code as the academic program or satisfy requirements in related programs). List the academic program(s) here and note which Student Learning Outcomes align to specific Programmatic Learning Outcomes. Please see the MCS Instructions for more details.

Specify the Academic Program:

SUNY General Education Competencies

If this course assesses a SUNY GEN ED Competency, check all that apply and indicate which course outcome(s) address each checked item:

☒ CRITICAL THINKING & REASONING- Students will:

a. clearly articulate an issue or problem;
b. identify, analyze, and evaluate ideas, data, and arguments as they occur in their own or others' work; acknowledge limitations such as perspective and bias; and
c. develop well-reasoned (logical) arguments to form judgments and/or draw conclusions.

Course SLO(s): Combine formal knowledge with individual experience to reach informed opinions, make decisions and solve problems as they relate to the state and local government systems and politics.

☐ INFORMATION LITERACY - Students will:

a. locate information effectively using tools appropriate to their need and discipline; evaluate information with an awareness of authority, validity, and bias; and demonstrate an understanding of the ethical dimensions of information use, creation, and dissemination.

Course SLO(s):

☒ SUNY GENERAL EDUCATION KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS AREA(s): Social Science
For courses that are approved to meet one (or more) of the ten SUNY General Education Knowledge and Skills Areas, indicate which area the course fulfills, and which outcome(s) are aligned with the SUNY outcomes for that area:

SUNY SLO: describe major concepts and theories of at least one discipline in the social sciences; and
Course SLO1: Understand the history of state constitutions and interpretations and how they are applied to local and statewide governmental processes.
SUNY SLO: demonstrate an understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena.
Course SLO3: Combine formal knowledge with individual experience to reach informed opinions, make decisions and solve problems as they relate to the state and local government systems and politics.

☐ This course does not address any of the above Tompkins Cortland ILOs, PLOs, or SUNY General Education Competencies or Knowledge and Skills Areas.

V. Essential Topics/Themes

1. Introduction to state and local government, historical background, creation and context, initiative and referendum, state conventions, amendment processes, direct democracy, ballot initiatives
2. The state constitution: conceptual argumentation, creation, implementation, amendment, voting rights, election law, and interpretation
3. Federalism as it interfaces with state and local governance, centralized versus de-centralized authority models
4. Defining state and local rights: legal cases, interpretations, expansion of applications over time, regulations
5. Public Opinion and Political Parties: close media assessment, party interests/platforms/priorities, campaigns
6. The Legislative: delineation of powers assigned and deployed by either unicameral or bicameral legislatures, gerrymandering
7. Office of Governor: practical application of state authority and constitutional power, debates on expansion or curtailment of executive branch power in the modern era
8. State Judiciary: judicial review, landmark case law, jurisdiction, standing, circuits, and appeals process, regulatory decisions and rulings
9. Bureaucracy: Civil Service law, authority, regulatory functions, applications of gubernatorial and local power
10. Taxation and Economic Policy: budgeting, finance, deficit spending, priorities for funding, process of creation

VI. Methods of Assessment/Evaluation

Method	**% Course Grade**
1. Examinations/Quizzes on course content materials, in class or take home	20-50%
2. Attendance/Participation in class activities and discussions	5-25%
3. Research Papers and essays using primary source materials	10-50%
4. Individual or group presentations, external site visits, or field trips supporting the course	0-35%

VII. Texts – ☐ Required ☒ Recommended ☐ Used for more than one course (list courses)

High school instructors may consult with staff in the CollegeNow office for additional information and guidance.

	OER
1**. State and Local Government,** Ann M'O Bowman and Richard C. Kearney, 10th edition, Cengage, 2016.	☐
2. **State and Local Politics,** Todd Donovan et al, 4th edition, Cengage, 2014.	☐

Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

VIII. Bibliography of Supplemental Materials

1. **State and Local Government: The Essentials,** Ann M'O Bowman and Richard C. Kearney, 5th edition, Cengage, 2014
2. **State and Local Government,** Kevin B. Smith, CQ Press, 2016.

Editions listed are current as of date of syllabus. More recent editions may be used.

IX. Other Learning Resources

Audiovisual: Materials to supplement classroom and remote instruction will be determined by the instructor. There are a myriad of newspapers, magazines, local articles, blogs, media sites, museums, libraries and other sources to consult for each state or region. Selections should be closely curated to match class themes and content. All sources will need to be vetted for authenticity and veracity. Purely polemical sites will need to be introduced with clear comprehension of their content and tone in order to be of use.

Electronic: There are massive numbers of sites to be consulted, many that are excellent state and local journalism. Sadly, there are many of dubious fidelity to reality and function openly as propaganda organs. Instructors will need to offer clear instructions on how to access and select regional, state and local media, how to judge the quality of the content focus and vocabulary, how to discern the validity of the information presented, how to dissect and discount propaganda, and how to check sources, data, and the interpretation of such in a thorough and transparent manner.

Other: Regional, state, county, and city/village media, electronic and print, blogs, local government archives and published proceedings of a public nature, zoning committees, assessors, public planning organs, etc.

Attendance Policy: *To maintain good grades, regular attendance in class is necessary. Absence from class is considered a serious matter and absence never excuses a student from class work. It is the responsibility of all instructors to distribute reasonable attendance policies in writing during the first week of class. Students are required to comply with the attendance policy set by each of their instructors. Students are not penalized if they are unable to attend classes or participate in exams on particular days because of religious beliefs, in accordance with Chapter 161, Section 224-a of the Education Law of the State of New York. Students who plan to be absent from classroom activity for religious reasons should discuss the absence in advance with their instructors. See college catalog for more information.*

Services for Students with Disabilities: *It is the College's policy to provide, on an individual basis, appropriate academic adjustments for students with disabilities, which may affect their ability to fully participate in program or course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Coordinator of Access and Equity Services, to discuss their particular need for academic adjustments. All course materials are available in alternate formats upon request.*

Academic Integrity: *Every student at Tompkins Cortland Community College is expected to act in an academically honest fashion in all aspects of their academic work: in writing papers and reports, in taking examinations, in performing laboratory experiments and reporting the results, in clinical and cooperative learning experiences, and in attending to paperwork such as registration forms.*
Any written work submitted by a student must be their own. If the student uses the words or ideas of someone else, they must cite the source by such means as a footnote. Our guiding principle is that any honest evaluation of a student's performance must be based on that student's work. Any action taken by a student that would result in misrepresentation of someone else's work or actions as the student's own — such as cheating on a test, submitting for credit a paper written by another person, or forging an advisor's signature — is intellectually dishonest and deserving of censure.
Several degree programs offer student learning opportunities (such as internships, field work, and clinical experiences) outside the standard classroom setting. As part of the learning process, students must understand and engage in conduct that adheres to principles guiding employment within the professional workplace. These behaviors include, but are not limited to, academic integrity, accountability, reliability, respect, use of appropriate language and dress, civility, professional ethics, honesty, and trustworthiness. Disciplinary action may be initiated for inappropriate conduct occurring while participating in any course-related project or event.