



Online Undergraduate Studies

PBA 3050 State and Local Government

3 units

Spring 2026

March 16 - May 10

Online

Instructor: Dr. Amy Nantkes

Email: anantkes@pointloma.edu

Office Hours by appointment! Send me an email with 2 days/times that work well for you and we will set up a meeting.

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description

This course studies the place and responsibilities of state and local governments in America and how they interact with other units of government. This includes an examination of civic participation with political institutions at the local, regional, and state levels. Although the course is comparative, special attention is given to California politics.

Course Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Students will distinguish the role of federalism as it is carried out through federal, state and local governments.
 2. Students will examine the state and local public budgeting and tax revenue-generating processes.
 3. Students will explain how states regulate elections and discuss the role that interest groups and political parties play in elections and representation.
 4. Students will evaluate the various local agencies charged with implementing policies and delivering services.
 5. Students will explain the role of federal and state governments in public health, education, and environmental policy.
-

Program Learning Outcomes

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for Bachelor in Public Administration:

Upon successful completion of the Bachelor in Public Administration program at Point Loma Nazarene University, students will:

1. Apply public administration concepts to real-world scenarios: Graduates will have the ability to apply theoretical concepts to practical situations, showcasing their competence in navigating complex bureaucratic systems within governmental and non-governmental organizations.
 2. Evaluate the impact of administrative discretion on democratic governance: Graduates will critically assess the role of administrative discretion in a democratic society, understanding its implications on policy implementation, decision-making processes, and the delicate balance between administrative efficiency and democratic principles within the public sector.
 3. Exhibit ethical awareness in public administration practices: Graduates will demonstrate a keen awareness of ethical considerations within public administration practices, emphasizing the importance of integrity, transparency, and accountability in administrative decision-making within governmental and non-governmental contexts.
-

Institutional Learning Outcomes

1. **Learning, Informed by our Faith in Christ**
Students will acquire knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world while developing skills and habits of the mind that foster lifelong learning.
 2. **Growing, in a Christ-centered Faith Community**
Students will develop a deeper and more informed understanding of others as they negotiate complex professional, environmental, and social contexts.
 3. **Serving, in a Context of Christian Faith**
Students will serve locally and/or globally in vocational and social settings.
-

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

All readings are required and are available through the bookstore or online retailers.

- **Smith, K. & Greenblatt, A. (2025). Governing States and Localities (10th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press. E-book: ISBN 9781071901854, Paperback: ISBN 9781071968604**
- **Various digital readings**

Note: Students are responsible for having the required textbooks prior to the first day of class. Students are also encouraged to begin reading the books in preparation for the class as soon as possible.

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law. All supplemental materials posted on this course site (including articles, book excerpts, or other documents) are provided for your personal academic use. These materials may be protected by copyright law and should not be duplicated or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.

Course Credit Hour Information

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 3-unit class delivered over 8 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 112 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided below and in the Canvas modules.

Estimated Time to Complete Course

<i>Activity Category</i>	<i>Time-to-Complete (Hours)</i>
Required Resources	35
Critical Thinking Assignments	25
Discussions	25
Final Project	27
Total:	112

Assessment and Grading

Weighted Grades

This course uses weighted grades. Each assignment category is worth a certain percentage of the total grade (100%) for the course, as specified in the table below:

Course Assignments

<i>Assignment Category</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Grade</i>
Weekly Reading Quizzes	Each week, you will take a quiz, based on the readings assigned in the textbook.	25%
Critical Thinking Assignments	Throughout the course, you will have four assignments related to state or local government entities. You will examine and analyze the issues unique to that agency or entity. The fourth assignment will be part 1 of your 3-part Final Project.	25%
Discussions	Students will have the opportunity to discuss with other students about various topics germane to local, regional, and state government and governance. For full participation credit, students will be expected to answer the initial post and interact with at least two classmates.	20%
Final Project	You will apply the knowledge and analytical skills you've acquired throughout the course to conduct an in-depth evaluation of a local or city government entity of your choice	30%

Student grades for assignments will be posted in the Canvas gradebook no later than midnight on Tuesday of each week beginning in Week Two of this course. It is important to read the comments posted in the gradebook as these comments are intended to help students improve their work. Final grades will be posted by the due date as posted in the Academic Calendar.

Grading Scale

The following grading scale will be used for all exams and final course grades:

- 93-100% = A
- 90 - 92% = A-
- 87 – 89% = B+
- 84 – 86% = B
- 81 – 83% = B-
- 78 – 80% = C+
- *75 – 77% = C
- 73 – 74% = C-
- 71 – 72% = D+
- 68 – 70% = D
- Below 68% = F

Incompletes and Late Assignments

All assignments are to be submitted by the due dates posted and will be considered late if submitted after midnight Pacific Standard Time on the day they are due. If an assignment is submitted late, the points possible for the assignment decrease by 10% each day for four days after the due date. Any assignment or deliverable submitted more than four days late will not be accepted. **Presentations, Exams, and Reading Responses cannot be “made up” and must be completed by the due date.**

All deliverables for the course, including assignments, projects, presentations, papers, etc., must be turned in by 11:59 pm on the last day of the course. No extensions or incompletes will be given to students to complete course requirements.

If you believe you have an extenuating circumstance, such as illness or family emergency, please send me an email or come talk to me as soon as possible so that we may speak about your options. With abundant notice, I'll be as accommodating as possible, as long as it does not compromise fairness for all.

PLNU Spiritual Care

PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as a whole person. To this end, we provide resources for our Graduate and Adult Undergraduate students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith. At the Mission Valley (MV) campus we have an onsite chaplain who is available during class break times across the week. If you have questions or a desire to meet or share any prayer requests with the onsite chaplain, you may email Dr. Sylvia Cortez Masyuk at scortezm@pointloma.edu.

In addition, on the MV campus, there is a prayer chapel on the third floor, which is open for use as a space set apart for quiet reflection and prayer.

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to

the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Recording Notification

In order to enhance the learning experience, please be advised that this course may be recorded by the professor for educational purposes, and access to these recordings will be limited to enrolled students and authorized personnel.

Note that all recordings are subject to copyright protection. Any unauthorized distribution or publication of these recordings without written approval from the University (refer to the Dean) is strictly prohibited.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when, in reality, they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course.

For all student appeals, faculty and students should follow the procedures outlined in the University Catalog. See [Adult Undergraduate Academic and General Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

During the first week of class, you will be asked to submit an Academic Honesty Verification Statement. Submitting the statement is a requirement of this course. By submitting the Academic Honesty Verification Statement, you will be verifying all assignments completed in this course were completed by you. Carefully review the Academic Honesty Statement below.

Statement: "In submitting this form, I am verifying all the assignments in this course will be completed by me and will be my own work."

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g., ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski, GrammarlyGo, Perplexity, etc.) is prohibited in this course for any aspect of your work, including idea generation, drafting, editing, or final submissions. This course is designed to assess your independent critical thinking, writing, and research skills without the assistance of AI technologies.

Violations of this policy will be treated as breaches of academic integrity.

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will work with the student to create an Accommodation Plan (AP) that outlines allowed accommodations. The EAC makes accommodations available to professors at the student's request.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course. Accommodations are not retroactive, so clarifying with the professor at the outset is one of the best ways to promote positive academic outcomes.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to ensure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC. Students cannot assume that because they had accommodations in the past, their eligibility at PLNU is automatic. All determinations at PLNU must go through the EAC process. This is to protect the privacy of students with disabilities who may not want to disclose this information and are not asking for any special accommodations.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars, we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice-free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced a bias incident regarding language, you can find more information on reporting and resources at www.pointloma.edu/bias.

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe learning environment for all students. If you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available through the [Title IX Office](#). Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office.

If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors via our [Sexual Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#).

If you (or someone you know) have experienced other forms of discrimination or bias, you can find more information on reporting and resources via our [Nondiscrimination and Anti-harassment Policy](#).

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. Therefore, regular attendance and participation in each course are minimal requirements.

If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Students who anticipate being absent for an entire week of a course should contact the instructor in advance for approval and make arrangements to complete the required coursework and/or alternative assignments assigned at the discretion of the instructor. Acceptance of late work is at the discretion of the instructor and does not waive attendance requirements.

Refer to [Academic Policies](#) for additional details.

Synchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

For synchronous courses that have specific scheduled meeting times (including in-person, hybrid, and synchronous online courses), absences are counted from the first official meeting of the class regardless of the date of the student’s enrollment. For courses with specific attendance requirements, those requirements are outlined in the course syllabus.

Note: For synchronous courses with an online asynchronous week, refer to the Online Asynchronous Class Attendance policy listed below.

Online Asynchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

Students taking online courses with no specific scheduled meeting times are expected to actively engage throughout each week of the course. Attendance is defined as participating in an academic activity within the online classroom which includes, but is not limited to:

- Engaging in an online discussion
- Submitting an assignment
- Taking an exam
- Participating in online labs
- Initiating contact with faculty member within the learning management system to discuss course content

Note: Logging into the course does not qualify as participation and will not be counted as meeting the attendance requirement.

Course Modality Definitions

1. Online Courses: These are courses with class meetings where all instruction and interaction are fully online.
 1. Synchronous Courses: At least one class meeting takes place at a designated time.
 2. Asynchronous Courses: All class meetings are asynchronous.
2. Hybrid Courses: These are courses with class meetings that take place both in the classroom and online synchronously and/or asynchronously.
3. In-Person Courses: These are courses that meet in person with the instructor and students in a physical classroom setting. With approval by the area dean, this may include up to 25% of qualified class interactions through a Learning Management System (such as Canvas).

Use of Technology

In order to be successful in the online or hybrid environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers, microphone, or webcams compatible with their computer available to use. Please note that any course with online proctored exams requires a computer with a camera (tablets are not compatible nor allowable) to complete exams online.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

GPS Academic Resources

PLNU offers the following free academic resources virtually for Graduate Professional Studies (GPS) Students. Visit myPLNU through the links below for more information.

- [The GPS Writing Center](#) offers:
 - **Zoom Writers Workshops** offered each quad on a variety of helpful topics
 - **One-to-one appointments** with the Writing Coach
 - **Microlearning YouTube Video Library** for helpful tips anytime
 - [Research Help Guide](#) to help you start your research
 - The physical office is located on the third floor of the [Mission Valley Regional Center](#) off the student lounge
 - [Academic Writing Resources Course](#): Found on your Canvas Dashboard, this course is non-credit with 24/7 access, no time limits, and self-paced content. [Watch a quick video run-through](#) and take time now to explore!
 - [Grammarly](#): Students have unlimited FREE access to Grammarly for Education, a trusted tool designed to help enhance writing skills by providing real-time feedback, identifying areas for improvement, and providing suggestions. Grammarly's Generative AI is NOT available with our student accounts.
 - [Tutoring](#): Students have access to 24/7 live or scheduled subject tutoring through Tutor.com, including a Paper Drop-Off Service with feedback within 12 hours.
-

Assignments-at-a-Glance

The course summary below lists our assignments and their due dates. Click on any assignment to review it.

Getting to Know You Survey, Mid-Course Survey, Course Reflection

Throughout the course, you will complete surveys and a reflection to help your instructor know more about you and your learning process and experience in the class.

Weekly Reading Quizzes

Each week, you will take a quiz, based on the readings assigned in the textbook.

Weekly Lecture Engagements

There will be a lecture each week. During the lectures, students will be prompted to engage the lecture video through various forms of interaction.

Critical Thinking Assignments Throughout the course, you will have four assignments related to state or local government entities. You will examine and analyze the issues unique to that agency or entity. The fourth assignment will be part 1 of your 3-part Final Project.

Class Discussions

Students will have the opportunity to discuss with other students about various topics germane to local, regional, and state government and governance. For full participation credit, students will be expected to answer the initial post and interact with at least two classmates.

Final Project: City Strategic Plan Evaluation

Evaluating Local Governance: A Comprehensive Analysis of a City's Strategic Plan. You must select an entity with readily available information for analysis.

You will apply the knowledge and analytical skills you've acquired throughout the course to conduct an in-depth evaluation of a local or city government entity of your choice. The goal of this assignment is to assess the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of the selected government entity in serving its community, identifying its strengths and weaknesses, and proposing recommendations for improvement.

A rough draft of the executive summary will be submitted on Wednesday of Week 7.

Submit a final executive summary of your analysis and recommendations (3-5 pages in length) and create a narrated presentation of your executive summary (3-4 slides) on Wednesday of Week 8. *See instructions in weeks 7 and 8.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Course Schedule	
Week	Topic & Learning Activities
Week 1	State & Local Government Federalism
	Read: Chapters 1, 2 <i>Introduction to State and Local Governments, Federalism</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Take: Reading Quiz # 1
	Submit: Class Discussion Initial post due by day 3, complete interactions by day 7.
	Review: Engagement Site Links
Week 2	4
	Read: Chapters 3, 7 <i>Constitutions: Operating Instructions</i> <i>Legislatures: The Art of Herding Cats</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Submit: Class Discussion Initial post due by day 3, complete interactions by day 7.

Week	Topic & Learning Activities
	Take: Reading Quiz # 2
	Submit: Critical Thinking Assignment #1
	Review: Engagement Site Links
Week 3	Finance & Bureaucracy
	Read: Chapters 4, 10 <i>Finance: Filling the Till and Paying the Bills</i> <i>Bureaucracy: What Nobody Wants but Everybody Needs</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Take: Reading Quiz # 3
	Submit: Class Discussion Initial post due by day 3, complete interactions by day 7.
	Submit: Critical Thinking Assignment #2
	Review: Engagement Site Links
Week 4	Attitudes, Participation, Parties and Interest Groups
	Read: Chapters 5, 6 <i>Political Attitudes and Participation: Venting and Voting</i> <i>Parties and Interest Groups: Elephants, Donkeys, and Cash Cows</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Submit: Class Discussion Initial post due by day 3, complete interactions by day 7.
	Take: Reading Quiz # 4

Week	Topic & Learning Activities
	Submit: Critical Thinking Assignment #3
Week 5	Executives at State and Local Levels
	Read: Chapters 8, 11 <i>Governors & Executives: There is No Such Thing as Absolute Power</i> <i>Local Government: Function Follows Form</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Take: Reading Quiz # 5
	Submit: Class Discussion Initial post due by day 3, complete interactions by day 7.
	Review: Engagement Site Links
Week 6	The Courts, Crime and Punishment
	Read: Chapters 9, 14 <i>Courts: Turning Law into Politics</i> <i>Crime & Punishment</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Submit: Class Discussion Initial post due by day 3, complete interactions by day 7.
	Take: Reading Quiz # 6
	Submit: Critical Thinking Assignment # 4
	Review: Engagement Site Links
Week 7	Policy: Education, Health & Welfare

Week	Topic & Learning Activities
	Read: Chapters 13, 15 <i>Education: Reading, Writing, and Regulation</i> <i>Health & Welfare</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Submit: Class Discussion Initial post due by day 3, complete interactions by day 7.
	Take: Reading Quiz # 7
	Submit: Executive Summary Rough Draft Due
	Review: Engagement Site Links
Week 8	Metropolitics & Environment
	Read: Chapters 12, 16 <i>Metropolitics: The Hole Problem of Government</i> <i>Environment & Climate Change: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally</i>
	View & Interact: Lecture Video
	Take: Reading Quiz # 8
	Submit: Executive Summary and Presentation
	Discussion: Post your Executive Summary Presentation and comment on fellow student's submission.