POLITICAL SCIENCE 7125:
FEDERALISM

Wednesday, 2 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.
Derby Hall 150
Spring 2016

Professor Vladimir Kogan
Office: Derby Hall 2004
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., and by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
In 2012, a preliminary count by the Census Bureau recorded more than 89,000 government agencies active in the United States. These jurisdictions range from small and isolated — for example, a rural mosquito abatement district — to agencies that span huge geographic areas and provide vital public services to millions of constituents. In this course, we will study the impact of governmental decentralization and fragmentation on democratic representation and policy outcomes. In particular, we will consider how multi-level governance shapes the incentives of political elites and affects the ability of voters to hold their agents accountable. We will cover topics relevant to both American and comparative politics and examine substantive questions dealing with both political institutions and mass behaviors.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Participation (25% of Overall Grade)
   Students must complete the assigned readings ahead of time and come to class ready to discuss the material. I have been very judicious in limiting the amount of reading — no more than three per week — so I expect each student to have done the reading carefully and to have thought about the material critically prior to class.

2. Response Papers (20% of Overall Grade)
   Students will write three “referee report”-style papers during the course of the semester on assigned readings of their choice. Only one report will be accepted for credit during any given week. The response papers should be about three to four pages long (double-spaced); clearly identify and discuss the empirical, theoretical, or methodological contribution of the chosen reading; and identify and discuss any weaknesses or potential extensions that may provide fertile ground for future research.

3. Research Paper (20% of Overall Grade)
   The ultimate objective of the class is for each student to end the semester with a draft research paper that, with further polishing and revision, can be submitted to a top-tier political science journal. Students are welcome to write papers on any topic — regardless
of whether it relates to the course. For those struggling with finding a topic, I suggest beginning with a replication of one of the papers we examine in class, and then building off that replication (e.g., testing the hypotheses using different data; using an improved research design, etc.)

4. Research Presentation (10% of Overall Grade)
Each student will need to complete a draft of their research paper prior to the end of the semester and to formally present it to the entire class. The presentation should be approximately 25 minutes long and should be done in the style of a traditional “job talk.”

5. Referee Reports and Discussant Presentation (15% of Overall Grade)
Students will be paired up and asked to read and review a draft of the research paper written by a colleague. In addition to providing written comments, in the style of a blind referee review, each student will also share their thoughts with the full class following each respective paper presentation.

6. Referee Response Memo (10% of Overall Grade)
When submitting their final drafts, students will also need to include a letter outlining the revisions they made in response to the comments received from their discussant.

COURSE OVERVIEW AND SCHEDULE:

Wednesday, January 11: Introduction to Federalism

Required Readings:

Skill: Referee Reports
Wednesday, January 18: Fiscal Federalism — Theory and Practice

**Required Readings:**

*Skill:* Introduction

Wednesday, January 25: Horizontal Spillovers

**Required Readings:**

*Skill:* Literature Reviews

Wednesday, February 1: Retrospective Voting

**Required Readings:**

*Skill:* Conclusions
Wednesday, February 8: **Democratic Downsides**

**Required Readings:**

**Skill:** Referee Response Memos

Wednesday, February 15: **Incentives and Representation**

**Required Readings:**

**Skill:** Identification Strategies

Wednesday, February 22: **Federalism as an Equilibrium**

**Required Readings:**

**Skill:** Replication
Wednesday, March 1: Social Welfare and Public Goods Provision

*Required Readings:*

*Skill:* Conference Presentation

Wednesday, March 8: Subnational Institutions

*Required Readings:*

*Skill:* Conference Discussants

Wednesday, March 15: Spring Break

Wednesday, March 22: Writing Session

Wednesday, March 29 – Student Presentations

Wednesday, April 5 – No Class

Wednesday, April 12: Student Presentations

Wednesday, April 19: Student Presentations