Topics in Federalism and Decentralization
Professor Julia Payson
(POL-GA 3300)

Course Description

Do you study political institutions or political economy? The vertical distribution of power almost certainly affects whatever political phenomenon you are interested in. Across the world, states are experimenting with devolving political and administrative authority to regional and local governments. And with the exceptions of democracy, competitive markets, and rule of law, decentralized government is perhaps the government institution that has been theorized to cure the broadest range of political and social problems. At the same time, power is shifting upward in certain contexts---particularly to supranational bodies like the European Union. What explains these trends, and what are the political implications?

In this course, you will survey the theoretical and empirical literature on federalism and decentralization. I hope that exposure to this broad and vibrant scholarly agenda will spark ideas for your own research. However, an equally important goal of this seminar is equipping you with professional tools that you will use throughout your political science career. These include learning how to write a referee report, developing your skills as a paper discussant, experimenting with effective writing habits, and working to produce or revise a piece of scholarly work that can be submitted to an academic journal. This means that in addition to weekly readings on topical themes related to federalism and decentralization, we will also be reading excerpts from handbooks like Writing your Journal Article in 12 Weeks and Stylish Academic Writing.
**Logistics**

Class Meetings: Monday 2pm – 3:50pm  
Room: 212 (19 West 4th St.)

Contact Info: Julia Payson  
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Class Readings: Available under the Resources tab at NYU Classes

**Evaluation**

Attendance and Participation (25%)  
- I expect you to attend class each week prepared to learn and contribute to the seminar.

Referee Reports (25%)  
- You will write 3 or 4 short referee reports on the articles we read for class over the course of the semester. These will be 2-3 pages in length and written as though you were reviewing a manuscript for an academic journal.

Discussant Role (25%)  
- You will serve as a discussant 3 or 4 times over the course of the semester. This will involve making slides and giving a 5 minute presentation on one of the papers assigned for that week.

Final Paper (25%)  
- Your final paper can either be: 1. A full length journal article, 2. A shorter article in the style of a letter or research note, or 3. An NSF style research grant proposal. *Your final project will depend on the stage of your*
research and what would be most useful for you. I’ll provide more details in class.

Class Schedule

Mon. 1/22 (JP@ Penn – Class To Be Rescheduled): Contextual Overview


Mon. 1/29: Why Federalism? Introduction to Normative Theory


Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks: Chapter 1

Mon. 2/5: Building Positive Theories of Federalism


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 2

**Mon. 2/12: Decentralization and Institutional Design**


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 3

**Mon. 2/19: Presidents’ Day (No Class)**

**Mon. 2/26: Market Preserving Federalism and Fiscal Discipline: Part I**


Wibbels, Erik (2005) *Federalism and the Market*: Chapters 1 and 2

*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 4

*Stylish Academic Writing*: TBA

**Mon. 3/5: Market Preserving Federalism and Fiscal Discipline: Part II**


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 5

*Stylish Academic Writing*: TBA

**Mon. 3/12: Spring Break!**

**Mon. 3/19: Transfers, Grants, and Distributive Politics in Federations**


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 6

*The Professor Is In: The Foolproof Grant Template*

**Mon. 3/26: How Federalism Shapes Partisan Political Strategies and Competition**


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 7

**Mon. 4/2: Elections, Accountability, and Economic Voting in Federal Systems**


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 8

**Mon. 4/9: Decentralization and Public Service Provision**


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 9

**Mon. 4/16: Intergovernmental Policy and Taxation**

Berry, Chris (2009) *Imperfect Union: Representation and Taxation in Multilevel Governments*: Chapter TBA


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 10

**Mon. 4/23: Intergovernmental Competition, Bargaining, and Lobbying**

Treisman, Daniel (2007) *The Architecture of Government Rethinking Political Decentralization*: Chapter 4


*Writing Your Journal Article in 12 Weeks*: Chapter 11

**Mon. 4/30: Re-Centralization and Other Topics**


Mon. 5/7: Presentations of Final Papers