The books we are reading are below:

Magleby, D.B.; O’Brien, D.M.; Light, P.; Peltason, J.W.; and Cronin, T.E. (2001). State and Local Politics: Government by the People. 15th Ed. Prentice Hall, Inc.

Zimmerman, Frederick A., (2012). State-local Governmental Interactions. State University of New York, Albany. In the APUS Library at <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/apus/docDetail.action?docID=10570802>

Week 1 Lecture Notes

Identify the range of policy programs administered by state and local governments, and analyze the influences on state and local politics.

Most government programs, including those funded in part by federal programs, are administered by state and local governments. The range of policy issues dealt with by state and local governments is broad and important. As a result, interest groups are organized and active at the state and local levels. Because of the closer proximity of local and state government and the tradition in many localities and states of more direct citizen participation, there is a perception that state and local governments are more responsive to the people. Other factors that impact local government are the political structure, the local traditions, the social structure, and the local economy.

2.1 Contrast the functions of federal, state, and local governments, and evaluate the theories of decision- making in local governments. Although the federal government has enacted a large number of major domestic programs, state and local governments face many of the most critical domestic and economic issues facing the United States. State and local governments also administer most public local governments also administer most public programs, including those funded in large part by the federal government. Finally, most interactions between citizens and government involve employees of state and local governments. Studies of states and communities have investigated how formal government institutions, social structure, economic factors, and local traditions interact to create a working political system. Some studies find that a power elite dominates, whereas community power studies find pluralism and diverse interest groups competing for influence over a range of policy areas. These different findings may reflect in part differences in research methods.

2.2 Analyze the activities and influence of interest groups and lobbyists at the state and local levels. Special- interest groups operate in every state and locality, but their composition and influence vary a great deal, and the politics of some states and localities are dominated by a small number of major, usually economic interests. In some ways, the types of interest groups found at the state and local levels are similar to what we find at the national level, as are their activities and paths to influence. But the influence of groups is often greater at the state and local levels, as there is often less competition between diverse groups and as legislators typically have fewer sources of alternative information.

2.3 Assess the level and consistency of involvement of the major participants in local communities. Although local governments command more public trust and are widely viewed as “ closer to the people” than the national government, voting and other forms of participation at the local level are low. Nonetheless, local civic action often does occur, and it frequently produces innovative and flexible approaches to problems in education, the environment, crime and violence, and recovery from natural disasters.

2.4 Evaluate the challenges facing state and local governments. State and local governments face severe challenges now and in the near future— in raising sufficient revenues, resolving conflicts over recent immigrants, rebuilding infrastructure, paying the costs of a fast- growing prison population, alleviating urban poverty, providing quality education, solving environmental problems, and ensuring that all residents have access to good- quality and affordable health care.