

**Introduction to American Politics**

PSC 101 Sect 012  
MW 5:00-6:45 PM  
WRI C151

Fall 2008

**SYLLABUS**

**I. COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To provide students with a general overview of what political science is and how it relates to the other social sciences.
2. To develop the students' knowledge and understanding of the United States Constitution.
3. To develop the students' understanding of the major institutions of government: legislature, executive, judiciary, and the bureaucracy.
4. To increase the students' understanding of how government has and will affect their lives and those of their progeny.

**II. COURSE OUTLINE:**

The course provides a basic overview of the political system, institutions and policies of the United States. The course will be divided into three separate but related sections.

The first section will examine the formal (Constitutional) institutions of American government. This section will provide an in-depth examination of the Constitution itself as well as the US Congress, the American Presidency and Bureaucracy, and the American Court System. Also, a discussion of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights will be included in this section to illustrate the workings of these institutions.

The second section will focus on the informal institutions of American government. This section will examine the role of political socialization and ideology, public opinion, interest groups, political parties, and the media in American politics.

The final section will focus on other various related topics including foreign policy, social welfare policy and economic policy. This section will illustrate how the institutions of American government work in the creation of these policies. Also included in this section will be the study and discussion of American Federalism.

Interspersed throughout the semester at appropriate times will be readings and discussion of the Nevada Constitution and how our state system of government functions here in Nevada.

### III. COURSE ADMINISTRATION:

**1. Instructor:** Rick Steinkamp

Office – Wright Building A-222

Hours: MW 4:00-5:00PM

Telephone: 895-5246 (office) 898-0562 (home)

E-mail: [Rick.Steinkamp@unlv.edu](mailto:Rick.Steinkamp@unlv.edu)

**2. Course Materials:**

A. American Government Brief Version 8/E James Q Wilson  
Houghton Mifflin Co. 2008

B. The Sagebrush State by Michael Bowers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed., University of Nevada  
Press, 2007.

**3. Student Responsibilities:**

Each student is responsible for all the assigned reading materials. These materials include the textbook, hand-outs, and materials that may be placed on reserve in the library. The instructor may require a few home work assignments as a supplement to the lectures. Students will be expected to complete all the homework assignments and use them as a basis for classroom discussion.

All homework assignments must be turned in on the deadline date.

**4. Method of Instruction:**

The course will be taught in an informal lecture/seminar format with emphasis on student participation. Your contributions to the class through your attentiveness, the frequency and quality of your contributions, and the degree of your preparation will influence your grade. While the syllabus provides a structured path, current events may suggest some worthwhile detours. The contents and/or dates of this syllabus are thus subject to change.

**5. Class Attendance:**

Attendance in this course is crucial. The students should arrive at the class on time or even a few minutes prior to the session. This instructor prefers that you come to class late rather than not at all, but if you must be late, enter the classroom quietly and take your seat with the least possible disruption. If you must leave class before it is over, please notify me before class and again, make the least possible disruption. Each student's attendance and punctuality have a direct quantifiable effect upon his or her "Student Participation" grade.

Students are expected to take all exams. There will be no make-up exams. **EXCEPT FOR EXTRODINARY CIRCUMSTANCES, A STUDENT MUST TAKE THE FINAL EXAMINATION IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE.**

You may not attend class if you are not registered for the class. You may not attend a course section if you are not registered for that section. If you are requested by the Registrar or an Advisement office to obtain a faculty signature for any kind of add/drop or other administrative action, you will be referred to the Chairman of the Political Science Department.

**6. Academic Misconduct:** "Academic integrity is a legitimate concern for every member of the campus community; all share in upholding the fundamental values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness, responsibility and professionalism. By choosing to join the UNLV community, students accept the expectations of the

Academic Misconduct Policy and are encouraged when faced with choices to always take the ethical path. Students enrolling in UNLV assume the obligation to conduct themselves in a manner compatible with UNLV's function as an educational institution."

An example of academic misconduct is plagiarism: "Using the words or ideas of another, from the internet or any source, without proper citation of the sources." See the "Student Academic Misconduct Policy" (approved December 9, 2005, located at <<http://studentlife.unlv.edu/judicial/misconductPolicy.html>>).

**7. Copyright:** The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves and to follow copyright and fair use requirements. You are individually and solely responsible for violations of copyright and fair use laws. The University will neither protect nor defend you nor assume any responsibility for employee or student violations of fair use laws. Violations of copyright laws could subject you to federal and state civil penalties and criminal liability, as well as disciplinary action under University policies. To familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, you are encouraged to visit the following website: <<http://www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/>>.

**8. Class Conduct and Interruptions:** In accordance with UNLV's student conduct code and student expectations, it is important to maintain a class atmosphere conducive to listening, learning and concentration. Cell phones and pagers should be turned off and put away during class. Late arrivals, early departures, leaving and returning, eating in class, "side-bar" conversations and other inattentive behavior during class interrupt the flow of discussion and concentration of other students, and should be avoided. If a late arrival or early departure is unavoidable, please take a seat as near to the back of the classroom as possible to prevent disruption. If you use a laptop computer in class, please also sit in the back row, so as to avoid distracting other students.

**9. Disabilities:** The Disability Resource Center (DRC) coordinates all academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. The DRC is the official office to review and house disability documentation for students, and to provide them with an official Academic Accommodation Plan to present to the faculty if an accommodation is warranted. Faculty should not provide students accommodations without being in receipt of this plan.

UNLV complies with the provisions set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, offering reasonable accommodations to qualified students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require accommodations, you will need to contact the DRC for the coordination of services. The DRC is located in the Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 137, and the contact numbers are: VOICE (702) 895-0866, TTY (702) 895-0652, FAX (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <<http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>>.

**10. Evaluation:**

There will be two mid-term examinations and one final examination. Quizzes, usually announced beforehand, will be given occasionally. Each mid-term will be worth 20% of the total grade. The final examination, which will be

cumulative, will be worth 40%. The remaining 20% will be based on quiz grades, homework assignments and, importantly, class participation.

All students are expected to be prepared for class by having the reading assignments completed prior to the class meeting. The student's punctuality, preparation, and informed participation in classroom discussion are the major influences on the subjective portion of his or her grade.

All final letter grades will be translated from numerical grades as follows:

100 - 93	A	75 - 73	C
92 - 89	A-	72 - 69	C-
88 - 86	B+	68 - 66	D+
85 - 83	B	65 - 63	D
82 - 79	B-	62 - 59	D-
78 - 76	C+	58 - 0	F

### **11. Extra Instruction and Counseling:**

All students are encouraged to seek extra instruction or other counseling whenever needed. My main concern is to be of assistance to you in understanding the material. However, my job does not include doing the work for you. I look forward to working with each of you and to making this course as informative and interesting as possible.

### **12. Withdrawing from Class:**

Should you at any time decide to withdraw from this class, I would prefer you notify me, but in any event, please be sure to notify the Administration. If I get the final grade sheet and there is not a *w* or *wt* opposite your name, I will be forced to give you an F.

**13. Religious Holidays and Absences:** If you miss a class or exam because of a religious holiday that you observe, you will have the opportunity to make up the missed work. You must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to class so that alternative arrangements can be made.

### **14. Official Extracurricular Activity**

If the date of any of the examinations conflicts with an official extracurricular activity, notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the examination and provide written notification no less than one week prior to the examination so that alternative arrangements can be made.

IV. TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF LECTURE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS. Readings from The Sagebrush State will be assigned periodically throughout the course.

Date	Lecture#	Topic	Readings
8/25	1	Course Introduction Introductory Lecture on Government	
8/27	2	Forms of Governments and Economic Systems	Declaration of Independence
9/1		Holiday	
9/3	3	The Constitution	<u>Wilson</u> Chapter 1 Constitution Art. I-III
9/8	4	The Constitution	Chapter 2 Constitution Art. IV-VII Federalist # 10, 51
9/10	5	Congress	Chapter 9
9/15	6	Congress (continued)	
9/17	7	The Executive	Chapter 10
9/22	8	The Executive Branch and the Bureaucracy	Chapter 11
9/24	9	The Judiciary Review for Test	Chapter 12
9/29		First Mid-Term Examination Lectures 1-8 Chapters 1,2,9,10,11 The Declaration of Independence The Constitution Federalist # 10, 51	
10/1	10	Test Results The Judiciary (continued)	
10/6	11	Civil Liberties	Chapter 3 Bill of Rights
10/8	12	Civil Rights	Chapter 4

10/13	13	Political Socialization and Ideology	Chapter 6 (pp 94-111)
10/15	14	Political Participation and Elections	Chapter 8
10/20	15	Political Parties	Chapter 7
10/22		Political Parties and Interest Groups Review for Test	
10/27		Second Mid-Term Examination Lectures 9-14 Chapters 12,3,4,8 Bill of Rights	
10/29	16	Review Test Results	
11/3	17	The Media	Chapter 6(pp 112-126)
11/5		Election Results	
11/10	18	Domestic Policy	Chapter 13
11/12	19	Domestic Policy (continued)	Chapter 13
11/17	20	Nevada Government	Finish <u>The Sagebrush State</u>
11/19	21	Foreign Policy	Chapter 14
11/24	22	Foreign Policy (continued)	Chapter 14
11/26	23	Federalism	Chapter 5
12/1	24	Federalism (continued)	
12/3		Comprehensive Review	
Week of December 8th		FINAL EXAMINATION (TBD)	