

Honors 112 H: Exploring American Politics

CBC C-122 | Thursdays 2:30-5:20
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Fall 2009

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Office: WRI A216 | Hours: Wed 12pm-2pm and by appointment

I. Course Overview and Objectives

This course examines the formal and informal institutions of American government with the intent of understanding how these institutions interact to form public policy in America. In so doing, we will examine the constitutional basis of governance, the role of the various branches of government, the impact and influence of the media, political parties, and interest groups on American politics, as well as the concept of federalism. Since this course also satisfies the Nevada Constitution requirements set forth by UNLV, we will undertake a concurrent examination of similar processes within our state. At the conclusion of the course, you will be expected to be able to apply theoretical and analytical approaches in order to:

- have a basic understanding of the fundamental principles upon which both the federal and state governments are based;
- understand the organizational structure and responsibilities of each branch of government (again, at both a federal and state level);
- be aware of the civil rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States; and
- understand how the formal and informal institutions of American government interact to formulate public policy.

There are two required texts for this course. Be sure that you have the correct edition.

- Magelby, David B. and Paul C. Light. *Government by the People*. 23rd edition: Longman, 2009.
- Bowers, Michael. *The Sagebrush State*. 3rd Edition. University of Nevada Press, 2006. ISBN:

II. Grading

The grading structure is based on three components: exams (3), short papers (3), and your overall participation. The exams are 25% each (75% total), the papers are 5% each (15% total) and participation is 10%. I will post grades continually throughout the semester on WebCT.

Exams

The exams are a combination of multiple choice, short answer identification, and essay questions. Each exam will take place at the conclusion of each segment of the course (see dates on the schedule) and are not cumulative (though I do retain the right to include important material from prior segments). Make-ups for each of the first two exams are permitted under only the most worthy of circumstances, and will be administered on December 3rd. The final exam is scheduled by the University for **December 10th at 6:00pm**. Note that this is a significant departure from our normal meeting time, and you should prepare and plan accordingly, as there is no make-up available for the final exam.

Short Papers

During the course of the semester, you will be required to submit two short position papers on topics to be assigned separately (see due dates on schedule).

Participation

Discussion and debate are a fundamental component of a course in American politics, and we shall not be denied this pleasure. My lectures are designed to facilitate discussion, and ample time and opportunity will be provided for you to make use of. Towards this end, you should be prepared to amicably discuss and debate the assigned readings, while at the same time, you should show your fellow students (as well as your instructor) respect by turning off all electronic devices (this would include cell phones, laptops, recording devices, etc.) as well as by showing up on time and remaining present for the entire period. I do take attendance, and absences adversely affect your participation grade, as well as your ability to successfully complete exams. Quite simply, adherence to this policy will result in success in this component of the course (at 10%, it is important); ignorance of this policy will quickly diminish results. Indeed, excessive ignorance of this policy may result in administrative drops.

III. Schedule

The grid below displays the planned schedule for the Fall 2009 semester. However, please note that these dates are open to revision, as the flow of the course itself will dictate the speed with which we progress. All changes will, of course, be clearly announced well ahead of time. If you are planning to miss a class due to religious holiday observance or a UNLV sanctioned event (see “policies” below), please let me know as soon as possible. In the schedule below, “GBTP” refers to *Government by the People* while “SS” refers to *The Sagebrush State*. Occasional additional readings may be assigned as necessary, and will be provided. Readings should, of course, be completed *before* the scheduled class.

Date	Topic	GBTP	SS	Other
August 27	Course Intro	2-27	--	--
September 3	U.S./NV Const Federalism	28-89	15-27	Add'l Readings: U.S., NV Constitutions, Wood Intro
September 10	Political Landscape Int. Grps	114-177	59-65	--
September 17	Political Parties Campaigns	178-205; 238-273	45-58	
September 24	Public Opinion The Media	206-237; 274-297	--	Short Paper # 1 Due
October 1	Congress	298-325	--	Exam #1
October 8	Congress	298-325	66-77	
October 15	Presidency	326-355	78-90	Short Paper #2 Due
October 22	Bureaucracy	356-381	105-109	--
October 29	Judiciary	382-407	91-104	Add'l Readings:: WebCT
November 5	Civil Liberties	408-437	--	Exam #2 Add'l Readings:: WebCT
November 12	Civil Rights	438-467	28-44	Add'l Readings:: WebCT
November 19	Public Policy Econ. Policy	468-513	110-118	Short Paper #3 Due
November 26	No Class	--	--	--
December 3	Social Policy Course Review	514-537	119-134	--
December 10	<u>FINAL: 6:00pm – 8:00pm</u>			

IV. Course Policies:

There are several other course and university policies to be aware of:

- a. Communication: There are times when it may be beneficial for me to communicate with you during the week prior to class meeting. University policy requires that I only use your **Rebelmail e-mail account**. Therefore, you should check this account regularly during the course of the semester.
- b. Children, girlfriends/boyfriends, wives/husbands, etc. are not allowed in the class.
- c. No in-class dining allowed. Water is suggested – please use bottles with lids/caps.
- d. **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>

Plagiarism, in any form and to any degree, will not be tolerated. Be sure you understand exactly what constitutes plagiarism (see me directly on this issue if you have any questions or concerns) as violation of this policy will subject you to the most severe penalty the University allows.

- e. **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/>
- f. **Disability Resource Center (DRC)** - 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, TDD (702) 895-0652, fax (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit: <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>.

- g. **Religious Holidays Policy and Official Extracurricular Activities** – Examinations that may conflict religious holidays and official extracurricular activities may be made up as long as sufficient notice is given (the start of the semester would be ideal; at least one week is required). If such a date falls on homework due date, you will need to turn the assignment in during the prior week's meeting.
- h. **Tutoring and Writing Center**-- The Academic Success Center (ASC) provides tutoring and academic assistance for all UNLV students taking UNLV courses. Students are encouraged to stop by the ASC to learn more about subjects offered, tutoring times and other academic resources. The ASC is located across from the Student Services Complex, #22 on the current UNLV map. Students may learn more about tutoring services by calling (702) 895-3177 or visiting the tutoring web site at: <http://academicsuccess.unlv.edu/tutoring/> The **UNLV Writing Center**: One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. Your Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>
- i. **Meeting with instructor:** Above all else, I strongly encourage you to contact me with **ANY** questions, concerns or comments. You can meet with me before and after class, during my office hours (which will be extended by appointment if my regular schedule does not work for you), by email, or by phone. Your success is important to me, and I can help you achieve it – but you must make the first step!

Have a great semester!