

## **Political Science 101: Introduction to American Politics** *Fall 2009*

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Course Location: WRI C239

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This course, which satisfies the university's U.S. and Nevada Constitution requirements, provides a careful analysis of the political institutions, processes, and cultures of the United States and Nevada. PSC 101 also includes an emphasis on contemporary political, social and economic issues and policies. Students taking this course will be expected to achieve the following educational outcomes: 1) A basic understanding of the origins and development of American and Nevada government and politics over time. 2) A basic understanding of how American political institutions function. 3) A clear understanding of the U.S. and Nevada Constitutions. 4) An understanding of American political culture and how this affects American politics.

### **Required Readings**

Keeping the Republic (Fourth Edition, 2009), Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright  
The Sagebrush State (Third Edition, 2006), Michael Bowers  
Ancillary materials on the course's WebCT site

### **Course Requirements**

*Readings:* Students are expected to read the assigned material prior to class meetings. This may include material from the course's two assigned books, or the pamphlet on the 2008 elections, or material from the course's WebCT site. The instructor will assign these WebCT readings on a weekly or even daily basis. The WebCT readings will mostly include news articles on current events, albeit some supplementary background material for each topic may also be included.

*Current Events:* As noted above, I will be posting news articles on current political events on the course's WebCT site. Each time I do so I will make an announcement in class to this effect. Students are then expected to peruse these articles in timely fashion so that they can participate in classroom discussions and prepare for the quizzes that will flow from these posted pieces. We will have five (5) such quizzes throughout the semester, at roughly three week intervals (see more on this under "Grading," below).

*Communications:* Official university communications, including those from the instructor, will be sent to students' RebelMail accounts. Students should check their RebelMail accounts regularly for such communications. I will be posting student grades on the class WebCT site.

## **Grading**

I will administer three examinations during the semester, at roughly five week intervals (see “Schedule,” below). Each exam will count for 28.33% of your final grade (85% total). The final 15% of your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on five (5) current events quizzes, given throughout the semester in roughly three week intervals. Each quiz, that is, will count for 3% of your final grade. I will provide a study guide at least one (1) week before each examination. Each exam will be non-cumulative in nature in terms of material to be covered. See below, under “Classroom Behavior” for how attendance may affect your grade in this class. My grading scale is as follows: 92-100% = A, 90-91=A-, 88-89 = B+, 83-87=B, 80-82=B-, 78-79 = C+, 73-77=C, 70-72=C-, 60-69% = D, and 0-59% = F.

## **Academic Integrity**

“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.”—*Student Academic Misconduct Policy*.

For this course, any attempt to cheat on an examination or quiz will be met with strict enforcement of the university’s policies on academic misconduct.

## **Classroom Behavior**

I expect students to attend class on a regular basis. Only EXCUSED absences are exempt from the following policy. My attendance policy is as follows: I will take attendance each and every week. Students are permitted to miss ONE class with no grade penalty. Students who miss TWO classes will lose FIVE percentage points off their final grade. Students who miss THREE classes will lose TEN percentage points off their final grade. Students who miss FOUR or more classes will automatically fail the class. I also expect students to make every reasonable effort to get to class on time. I would ask that students who might arrive late try to make as little disturbance as possible when entering the classroom. I may well give such students dirty looks. Students who have arrived on time are encouraged to do likewise. I would also ask that students who have to leave class early for some compelling reason please let me know ahead of time, and try to sit near an exit so that you can leave without disrupting the class. We may well talk about you after you leave. I also expect that students will switch off cell phones when entering the classroom—just pretend the classroom is a jet that takes off when class begins, and lands at the end of class. I also expect that students will make every effort to attend class for the entire time, from 5:30 to 9. We will likely take a brief (5-10 minute) break each evening. Some weeks I will take attendance prior to the beginning of class, other weeks I will take attendance after the class break.

## **Religious Holidays and Official Extracurricular Activities**

If the date of any examinations or quizzes conflicts with a religious holiday that you observe or an official extracurricular activity, you must notify the instructor at least one week prior to the exam or quiz so that alternative arrangements may be made. For extracurricular activities, documentation will be required.

## **Writing Center and Other Student Assistance**

One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-301. Although some drop-in times are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702.895.3908. Another source of information on UNLV organizations whose purpose is to support students' academic activities can be found at [http://tlc.unlv.edu/student\\_success.htm](http://tlc.unlv.edu/student_success.htm)

## **Students with Disabilities**

UNLV complies with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and offers 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 as follows: VOICE (702) 895-0866, TTY (702) 895-0652, FAX (702) 895-0651. For additional information, please visit <http://studentlife.unlv.edu/disability/>

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Week One, Part One: Readings:	Citizenship and Democracy in American Politics Barbour and Wright, chptr. 1
Week One, Part Two: Readings:	American Political Ideas and Culture Barbour and Wright, chptr. 2
Week Two Readings:	The Founding of the American Republic Barbour and Wright, chptr. 3
Week Three, Part One: Readings:	Nevada's Founding Period Bowers, chptrs. 1 & 2.
Week Three, Part Two: Readings:	American Federalism Barbour and Wright, chptr. 4; Bowers, chptrs. 9 & 10

## ***QUIZ ONE***

Week Four: Civil Liberties  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 5; Bowers, pgs. 43-44

Week Five, Part One: ***EXAMINATION ONE***

Week Five, Part Two: Civil Rights  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 6

Week Six, Part One: Civil Rights (continued)  
Readings: Bowers, pgs. 28-42.

Week Six, Part Two: Legislative Politics  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 7; Bowers, chptr. 6

***QUIZ TWO***

Week Seven, Part One: Legislative Politics (continued)  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 7; Bowers, chptr. 6

Week Eight: Executive Politics  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptrs. 8 & 9; Bowers, chptr. 7

Week Nine: The Courts  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 10; Bowers, chptr. 8

***QUIZ THREE***

Week Ten: Public Opinion  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 11

Week Eleven, Part One: ***EXAMINATION TWO***

Week Eleven, Part Two: Political Parties  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 12; Bowers, pgs. 45-48

***QUIZ FOUR***

Week 12: Interest Groups  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 13; Bowers, chptr. 5

Week 13: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections  
Readings: Barbour and Wright, chptr. 14; Bowers, pgs. 48-58

***QUIZ FIVE***

Week Fourteen:                   Media Politics  
Readings:                         Barbour and Wright, chptr. 15

Week Fifteen:                   Economic and Social Policy  
Readings:                         Barbour and Wright, chtprs. 17 & 18

***FINAL EXAMINATION: December 10, 6 p.m.***