

PSC 101-017
Introduction to American Politics
Fall 2006; 4 Credit Hours

Instructor: Joseph C. Bebel
Location: WRI-C151
Time: Fridays, 8:30 AM – 12 PM

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or, by appointment

Scope and Purpose:

This course has two main goals: (1) to impart a good understanding of both American and Nevada government and politics; (2) to instill skills necessary to achieve informed political participation and a willingness to use them. It is expected that after taking this course you will have a greater knowledge of the following course objectives:

1. Define democracy and demonstrate how it differs from other forms of government.
2. Explain the purpose of government, fundamental values, and political ideologies.
3. Define federalism and its relationship to the American governmental system.
4. Identify, and have a general knowledge of, the various sections of the Constitution.
5. Identify the powers of each branch of government and know where in the Constitution those powers originate.
6. Explain the process of a bill going through Congress.
7. Identify the major offices within the executive branch.
8. Provide a brief history of, and understand the chief players in, the bureaucracy.
9. Explain the importance of an “Iron Triangle.”
10. Explain the structure of the federal and state court system and explain its various jurisdictions.
11. Identify the various ways that a case can reach the Supreme Court.
12. Analyze the influence of public opinion on how government and politicians function.
13. Trace the process by which the media influences the political process.
14. Understand the role that lobbyists play in the American political process.
15. Explain the importance of political action committees in the campaign process.
16. Discuss the genesis of political parties.
17. Explain the difference between civil rights and civil liberties.
18. Understand the Bill of Rights and additional amendments to the Constitution.
19. Define the important elements within domestic policy making.
20. Identify the major factors and the major players within foreign policy making.

Lastly, this course supports the following political science department degree objectives/learning outcomes: (1) to enhance students’ ability to communicate orally and in written form; (2) to enhance students’ ability to think through and compare competing theories and information using logic and analytical means; (3) to enable students to become knowledgeable in one of the six sub-fields of the discipline (i.e., American Politics); (4) to help prepare the student for graduate study in political science or a related discipline.

Required Textbooks (2):

Sidlow, Edward and Beth Henschen. 2007. *America at Odds*, 5th edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.
Bowers, Michael W. 2002. *The Sagebrush State: Nevada’s History, Government, and Politics*, 2nd edition. Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press.

Grading: Your final grade for the course will be determined based on the following criteria:

First Exam:	20	A = 100-93	C+ = 79-77	D- = 62-60
Midterm Exam:	20	A- = 92-90	C = 76-73	F = 59-0
Third Exam:	20	B+ = 89-87	C- = 72-70	
Final Exam:	20	B = 86-83	D+ = 69-67	
Attendance/Participation:	<u>20</u>	B- = 82-80	D = 66-63	
TOTAL:	100			

Class Policies:

1. Attendance/Participation: I am allocating a total of twenty (20) points for class attendance/participation.
 - a. Attendance. You will be awarded one point for each class you attend. We meet thirteen (13) times which equates to 13 potential attendance points. Occasionally, there will be unannounced quizzes (pass/fail) given at the beginning of class (on your assigned reading) and at the end of class (on the material presented that day). You must be present for, and pass, both quizzes in order to earn the full attendance point for the day. EXCEPTIONS: On exam days, you earn attendance points for taking exams on the scheduled exam day. Following the first and second exams, you will be asked to return to class for an hour of lecture; one additional attendance point is earned for attending each of these lectures. PLEASE BRING A SCANTRON TO EVERY CLASS!
 - b. Participation. You earn an additional five (5) participation points by being prepared for class, answering questions and getting involved in classroom exercises. There are two (2) scheduled in-class exercises; other unscheduled opportunities to earn participation points will be provided. You must be in attendance when these participation opportunities are provided. Otherwise, you lose the participation points.
2. Exams: There are four (4) scheduled exams, including a midterm and a final exam. The exams are not cumulative; however, the instructor reserves the right to include some important material from previous exams as appropriate. **Ordinarily no make-up exams will be given.** However, if extraordinary circumstances seem to require one, then students must do the following in order to qualify: (1) inform the instructor of the problem at some time **prior** to the scheduled exam time; (2) provide documentation as soon as possible afterwards. If an emergency occurs just prior to an exam, and you are unable to reach me, call the department office (895-3307/3324) and someone will take a message. The first and third exams include multiple choice, true/false and short essay questions. The second and fourth exams consist of multiple choice and true/false questions only (bonus questions, when offered, may be essay questions). **All make-up exams will be administered immediately following the last scheduled class on Dec 8th.** There is **no make-up for the final exam.**
3. Class Etiquette: Please refrain from eating/drinking in the classroom. Cell phones and pagers are disruptive. Will you turn them off? Thanks! PLEASE come to class on time. Strolling in after class begins is disruptive, both to me as the instructor and to your fellow students. It is common courtesy to be on time. If you choose to be rude or persist in distracting behavior (to include “side bar” conversations), I will ask you to leave the class and will drop you officially from the class. Children/boyfriends/girlfriends are prohibited as they may be disruptive as well.
4. 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 the effected class so that alternative arrangements can be made.
5. 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 official written notification no less than **one week** prior to the examination so that alternative arrangements can be made.
6. Extra Credit Opportunities: **All extra credit earned is applied towards your exam average. Students may earn a maximum of fifteen (15) extra credit points** over and above the bonus questions offered on the exams. There are at least three (3) means to earn extra credit for this class:
 - a. Answering the exam bonus questions correctly.
 - b. Maximum of five (5) extra credit points for each University/community forum attended that relates to PSC 101 Scope and Purpose. Students choosing this option will provide a one-page, “bullet” paper to the instructor at the beginning of the class immediately following the event attended. The bullet paper is graded as follows: one (1) point each for your summary of the speaker’s main points, how they relate to the course, and why you agree/disagree with the speaker’s point of view. You automatically earn one (1) point for merely attending and the 5th potential point is earned if you present your bullet paper to the class. Hand-in your “bullet” paper to the instructor to ensure the extra credit is recorded.
 - c. Maximum of three (3) points for each article applicable to the PSC 101 course topic(s) of the week. Prior to class, find a current article from a respected, credible source (major newspaper, news magazine, script of interview with an expert on the subject, etc.). Prepare a one page, “bullet” paper providing a short summary of the article, how it applies to the course, and whether or not you agree with the article’s content and why (for a total of three points). Hand-in both the article and your “bullet” paper to the instructor at least one week prior to the class your article relates to to ensure the extra credit is recorded.

7. 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. The DRC strongly encourages faculty to provide accommodations only if and when they are in receipt of said plan. 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/>

8. 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." The simple rule for this class: do not cheat! It just isn't worth it. ANY form of cheating will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in accordance with the most severe penalty the University allows including an automatic "F" for the course.

9. Writing Center: 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 drop-in times are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 895-3908. When you go to your appointment, please bring a copy of your assignment and two copies of any writing that you may have completed on the assignment. One copy will be for you to use, and the second copy will be for the consultant to use. At the end of your session, the consultant will keep the second copy, and it will be shredded. Please bring your Rebel ID card, too.

10. 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/>.

11. RebelMail: Student's UNLV e-mail account (Rebelmail) is one of the primary ways students will receive official university communication: information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a RebelMail account after they have been admitted to the university. **PLEASE REVIEW IT REGULARLY!**

12. Final Comment: The instructor reserves the right to make minor alterations to the syllabus or the course as is deemed necessary.

Class Schedule:

PART ONE: Foundations and Framework of American (& Nevada) Government

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
September 1 st	Course Overview/Pre-test/ America in the 21 st Century	Sidlow & Henschen (S&H), chap 1 Bowers (B), chaps 1, 2

[Note: Sep 1st is the last day to late register, add/change courses, change from audit to credit, or pay fees. Final day to drop/withdraw and receive 100% refund. Final day to pay fees w/ \$125 late penalty (Failure to pay=withdrawal from all classes).]

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
September 8 th	The Constitution Federalism	S&H, chaps 2, 3 and skim A1-A10; B, chap 3 and skim Appendix

[Note: Sep 8th is last day to submit an application for Dec graduation without a late penalty fee.]

PART TWO: Our Liberties and Rights

September 15 th	Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	S&H, chaps 4, 5
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PART THREE: The Politics of Democracy

September 22 nd	Exam #1 /Political Parties	S&H, chap 7 and pp. 401, 403; B, chap 4
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September 29 th	Public Opinion/Voting/Campaigns/Elections	S&H, chaps 8, 9
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[Note: Sep 29th is the final date to submit an application for Dec graduation with a late penalty fee.]

October 6 th	Interest Groups/Politics and the Media	S&H, chaps 6, 10; B, chap 5
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[Note: Oct 8th is the last day to completely withdraw from all classes and receive a 50% refund.]

PART FOUR: Governing Institutions

October 13 th	Midterm Exam /Congress (Part 1)	S&H, chap 11; B, chap 6
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October 20 th	Congress (Part 2)/Presidency	S&H, chaps 11, 12 B, chaps 6, 7
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October 27th Nevada Day recess

November 3 rd	Bureaucracy/Judiciary	S&H, chaps 13, 14; B, chap 8
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[Note: Nov 3rd is the last day to drop/withdraw from classes or change from credit to audit (except for short courses).]

November 10th Veterans Day recess

November 17th **Exam #3**

[Nov 23 – 26 **Thanksgiving recess**]

PART FIVE: Public Policy

December 1 st	Domestic Policy/In-class exercise	S&H, chap 15 and pp. 408-412; B, chaps 9, 10
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December 8 th	Foreign Policy/ In-class exercise	S&H, chap 16
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Dec 15th **Final Exam (same time/place as regular class)**