

PSC 101-020
Introduction to American Politics
Spring 2006; 4 Credit Hours

Instructor: Joseph C. Bebel
Location: WRI-C151
Time: Fridays, 2:30 - 6 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 the various steps by which the Constitution was written and ratified.
5. Identify the powers of each branch of government.
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:

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 sixteen (16) times which equates to 16 potential attendance points. Beginning with our second meeting, there will be 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. EXCEPTION: On exam days, you earn attendance points for taking exams on the scheduled exam day.
 - b. Participation. You earn an additional four (4) participation points by being prepared for class, answering questions and getting involved in classroom debates. There is potential for up to 8 debate teams to be randomly formed by the instructor on any given class day. No prior notice will be provided to the students selected for debate. Every student will be given at least two opportunities to participate in a class debate but you must be in attendance when those 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 May 5th. 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 with a “W” or “WF.”
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 twenty (20) 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 four (4) points for each article applicable to the PSC 101 course topic(s) of the week you present to class (i.e., immediately following the opening quiz, class begins with an opportunity to discuss current events that relate to the PSC 101 topic of the week as noted in the class schedule). 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). Present your article to the class (to earn the 4th point) and hand-in both the article and your “bullet” paper to the instructor to ensure the extra credit is recorded.

7. **Disabilities:** Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the official office to provide Disability Services. If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you need to contact DRC for coordination in your academic accommodations. DRC is located within the Reynolds Student Services Complex, Room 137. The phone number is 702-895-0866 or TTD 702-895-0652. You may also visit their website at <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les>

8. **Honor Code:** ANY form of cheating will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in accordance with the most severe penalty the University allows. The Undergraduate Catalog (pp. 58-59) defines academic dishonesty as “any act that violates the academic processes on the university.” The simple rule for this class: do not cheat! It just isn’t worth it. Cheating leads to an “F” for the course and the cheater may be subject to disciplinary review as found in the UCCSN document, “Rules and Disciplinary Procedures for Members of the University Community.”

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. **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
January 20 th	Course Overview/Pre-test/ America in the 21 st Century	Sidlow & Henschen (S&H), chap 1 Bowers (B), chaps 1, 2

[Note: Jan 23rd is the last day to register, 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).]

January 27 th	The Constitution	S&H, chap 2 and skim A1-A10; B, skim Appendix
February 3 rd	Federalism/Introduction to Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	S&H, chap 3; B, chap 3

[Note: Feb 3rd is the last day to submit an application for May graduation without a late penalty fee.]

PART TWO: Our Liberties and Rights

February 10 th	Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	S&H, chaps 4, 5
February 17 th	Exam #1	

PART THREE: The Politics of Democracy

February 24 th	Political Parties	S&H, chap 7 and pp. 401, 403; B, chap 4
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[Note: Feb 24th is the last day to completely withdraw from all classes and receive a 50% refund. Also, the final date to submit an application for May graduation with a late penalty fee.]

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
March 3 rd	Public Opinion/Voting/Campaigns/Elections	S&H, chaps 8, 9
March 10 th	Interest Groups/Politics and the Media	S&H, chaps 6, 10; B, chap 5
[March 12-18	Spring Break]	
March 24 th	Midterm Exam	

PART FOUR: Governing Institutions

March 31 st	Congress	S&H, chap 11; B, chap 6
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[Note: Mar 31st is the last day to drop/withdraw from classes or change from credit to audit (except for short courses).]

April 7 th	Presidency/Bureaucracy	S&H, chaps 12, 13; B, chap 7
April 14 th	Judiciary	S&H, chap 14; B, chap 8
April 21 st	Exam #3	

PART FIVE: Public Policy

April 28 th	Domestic Policy	S&H, chap 15 and pp. 408-412; B, chaps 9, 10
May 5 th	Foreign Policy	S&H, chap 16
May 12th	Final Exam (same time/place as regular class)	

[Note: Jul 1st is last day for all students to submit supporting documentation for Nevada reclassification status.]