

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS
Department of Political Science
POS 101.6
Introduction to American Politics

Summer III, 2009
M-F: 11:20 am-1:20 pm
CBC C 146

Prof. Mehran Tamadonfar
Office: WRI B 212
Office Hrs: M-R 8:30-9:30 a.m.
& by Appointment
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PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

This introductory course in American politics is designed to:

1. Introduce students to the major conceptual, methodological, and theoretical tools for the study of American politics.
2. Familiarize students with the philosophical foundations and critiques of the U.S. and Nevada politics.
3. Examine the contemporary structural and functional characteristics of the U.S. and Nevada political systems as well as their policy issues.

Daily class lectures will consist of two parts: first, the examination of the philosophical foundations, institutional frameworks, and process functions of the political system; and second, the analysis of the policy issues. In order to understand these discussions, **students are required to read** their assignments **before** each class session **and to follow current events** in the U.S. and Nevada politics by watching news programs, reading newspapers, etc.

TEXTS:

REQUIRED:

- Benjamin Ginsberg, et. al. We The People: An Introduction to American Politics, 7th shorter ed., New York: Norton & Co.; 2009.
- Michael W. Bowers, The Sagebrush State, Nevada's History, Government & Politics. 3rd ed., Reno and Las Vegas; University of Nevada Press; 2006.

Suggested:*

1. James A. Bill and Robert Hardgrave, Jr., Comparative Politics: The Quest for Theory, United States: University Press of America; 1981.

*Available at the reserve desk of the Lied Library.

COURSE CONDUCT AND EVALUATION POLICY:

All students are **required to attend and participate** in lecture sessions **regularly**. The instructor reserves the right to administratively drop students who are repeatedly tardy or have an attendance problem.

Course grades will be determined as follows:

1. Attendance and participation.....20% of the grade.
2. A multiple-choice mid-term examination (July 20) 40% of the grade.
3. A multiple-choice final examination (August 7).....40% of the grade.

Failure to take your mid-term exam on the scheduled date will result in a failing grade, unless you have a **documented legitimate and compelling excuse**. There will not be any written make-up exams. **Oral Mid-term exams** (absolutely no make-ups for the final exam) will be arranged for those with such excuses. **You are not allowed to have any electronic devices turned on in class. There will be no audio or video taping of lectures or discussions in class. Violators will be asked to leave the lecture sessions.**

COURSE OUTLINE:

Note: The following topics and dates are subject to minor changes, if necessary, to accommodate your needs and interests.

July 6 Introduction and Overview

PART I. THE PUBLIC AND POLITICS

July 7 & 8 The American Political System: A Framework For Analysis

- Conceptual Analysis
- Group Approach and Pluralism
- General Systems Theory and Structural-Functionalism

Suggested Reading:

- Bill & Hardgrave, Chapters IV, VII and III (in this order)

Discussion Topic: Race and Gender in American Politics

July 9 The Context of Politics: Society, Culture, and Economy

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapters 1, 6, 7 & 8

Discussion Topic: The Politics of Immigration

July 10, 13& 14 Group Politics, Party Politics and Elections

- Structures
- Interest Articulation and Aggregation
- Campaigns and Elections

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapters, 11,9 & 10 (in this order)

Discussion Topic: Political Corruption

Part II. U.S. Government and Politics

July 15

The Constitutional Framework

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapter 2

July 16 & 17

The Congress and the Legislative Process

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapter 12

Discussion Topics: Health Care Policy

July 20

Mid-Term Examination

July 21 & 22

The Presidency and Bureaucracy

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapters, 13 & 14

Discussion Topic: America's Wars

July 23, 24 & 27

The Court System & Liberties

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Readings:

- Ginsberg, Chapters, 15, 4 & 5 (in this order)

Discussion Topic: The Delusion of the Due Process

PART III. NEVADA GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

July 28 Federalism, Neo-Federalism, and State and Local Governments

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapter 3

July 29 State and Local Governments in Nevada

Required Readings:

- Bowers, Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Discussion Topic: Judicial Reform in Nevada

July 30& 31 Nevada Politics, and Policies

Required Reading:

- Bowers, Chapters 11 and 3.

August 3, 4 & 5 Policy Issues in American Politics

August 6 Review

August 7 **Final Examination**

Office Hours:

I do hold extended office hours. If my hours are not convenient for you, please do not hesitate to contact me at 895-3318 for an appointment. I have an open door policy. Please feel free to come by my office with any questions, comments, and criticisms.

University Policies:

I do honor any and all university rules and regulations pertaining to academic dishonesty, disabilities, and religious observances. If you have special needs please do not hesitate to contact the University Disability Resource Center at 895-0866.

"If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact the Learning Enhancement Center (LEC) for coordination of your academic accommodations. The LEC is located in the Reynolds Students Services complex in Rm 137. The phone is 895-0866 (TDD 895-0652) and [www.drcssc@cmail.nevada.edu](mailto:drcssc@cmail.nevada.edu)".