

UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS

Fall 2006: PSC 101 Section 012

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS & AMERICAN FEDERALISM

Timing: Tuesdays & Thursdays 7:00 pm – 8:45 pm

Room Assignment: BEH - 104

Instructor: Olga Kuznetsova-Elliott

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Office Hours: Tuesday - 9:00 pm - 10:00 pm &
Friday - 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm, and
by appointment.

COURSE OBJECTIVES, CONTENT, PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

This is an introductory course in American Politics. As such, it is designed to explore the origins, the underlying principles, the reasoning behind, and the important elements of the *American Political System and American Federalism*. We will examine and analyze the basic documents themselves - the US Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Federalist Papers, and other significant writings on the fundamental structural rules that define the American political system. We will engage in in-depth discussion of the topics and issues at hand. We will examine contemporary issues and controversies and their implications for the present and for the future. *The course is designed to achieve the following:*

1. Introduce students to **American Politics** as a dynamic and evolving field, undergoing constant change and development. We will look at various US political institutions and their continuity and change.
2. Examine the institutional framework and the inner workings of the US political system at the federal and state levels.
3. Introduce students to the basic methodological, theoretical, and conceptual tools for the analysis and study of American Politics.
4. Familiarize students with the historical and philosophical basis for US polity as envisioned by **the Founding Fathers**. Based on the historical perspective, we will navigate through the institutional framework of the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary branches at the national, state, and local levels.
5. Analyze contemporary political issues and policy implications for the present and for the future. We will gain insight into the workings and the dynamics of various branches of US government, as they strive to influence policy-making and policy agenda.
6. Analyze **Nevada Government, Nevada Politics and the Nevada State Constitution**. We will take a closer look at the mechanics of *American Federalism* “in action” as it relates to the state of Nevada and local issues. We will analyze state and local policy issues.
7. Gain insight into US politics and review such important topics as Federalism, Public Opinion and the Media, Political Parties, Congress, the Presidency, the Judiciary, Electoral process, Voting and Elections, Interest Groups, Political Culture, etc.
8. Seek understanding into such fundamental concepts as Liberty, Order, Equality, Democracy, Ideology, Legitimacy, Sovereignty, Majority Rule, Pluralism, Constitutionalism, Limited Government, Constitutional Restraints, Pragmatism, Liberalism, Conservatism, Judicial Review, Interest Articulation, Interest Aggregation, etc.

Course Structure and Expectations:

Each session will consist of three parts.

The *first* ‘warm-up’, *introductory part* will help us “activate” our political vocabulary. During this part, we will tackle various concepts to enlarge our political vernacular and enhance our knowledge of American politics. During this time, the instructor will conduct short pop quizzes and review sessions. This part, as well as all other parts of the class, will be based on the *required* reading, which will be assigned *prior* to that week. The *second part* will consist of a lecture, where the topic at hand will be discussed at length. The *third part* will be based both on **theory and practice**. Students will participate in **interactive activities, games, debates, case studies, discussion groups and policy formulation assignments**.

We will be actively engaged in discussions and presentations, as well as “question-answer” time. This will be a chance for students to shine and show active participation. We will **conclude each class** with a brief summary of the subject matter. Homework and assignments for the next class will be discussed. Students will leave the classroom with a list of discussion topics for the next class and will be asked to ponder over some probing issues, as they relate to American politics and their own experiences.

I will expect everybody **to read the required materials prior** to each class to allow you to participate in each session to your full potential. Students will be **required and expected** to follow **current events** by watching the news, reading newspapers and magazines, listening to the radio, researching political issues on the Internet, etc.

Evaluation:

Grades will be determined based on the following and the score of 100% will be distributed as follows:

1. Attendance and participation can greatly affect your grade! (10%)
2. **A written mid-term examination, consisting of 3 PARTS (25%):** multiple choices and/or true/false statements, a short quiz based on concepts and terms, and a short 2-page essay (in-class). With regards to essays, students will be free to select their favorite topic from an extensive list, provided by the instructor. Most essay topics will be phrased in the form of a question or a probing issue to allow students to expand on an idea or a theory.
3. **A written final examination, consisting of 3 PARTS (25%):** multiple choices, a quiz based on concepts, terms, and a short 2-page essay (in-class). Students will be free to select their favorite topic from an extensive list, provided by the instructor. Again, most essay topics will be phrased in the form of a question to allow students to expand on an idea or a policy issue.
4. Throughout the semester, I will be conducting short *pop quizzes* (5%), based on **concepts, terms and reading assignments**.
5. Each student will be assigned **1 (one) oral group presentation (15%)** and **1 (one) 7-page research paper (20%)**. You will have ample time to research a topic for both of them. *Presentations and research paper assignments* will encompass a vast array of topics. Try to polish the presentation *before* you have to present it to the rest of the class. The quality of your oral presentation can greatly improve your overall grade evaluation. Be ready for the “question-answer” time. After you select a topic for your oral presentation, you will have **one month** to research it and to prepare the **presentation** itself. You will be required to distribute a **short 1-page outline** to the class with the most important highlights of your presentation. I will be happy to make copies of the outlines for you, provided you give it to me ahead of time. **You will be required to submit a copy of your entire oral presentation for the instructor prior to the class. You are welcome to e-mail it to me ahead of time. Students will have two months to work on their research paper, which should allow everyone to produce an outstanding paper.**

Attendance policy:

Throughout the entire semester I will be tracking down and taking everyone's attendance. Students who arrive late or leave early will be marked absent. Since this is such a significant part of your grade, you must have a legitimate and compelling excuse to miss a class (with proper documentation). As a general rule, a student missing a class because of observance of a religious holiday shall have the opportunity to make up missed work. However, students must notify the instructor of anticipated absences by the last day of late registration, September 1, 2006, to be assured of this opportunity. **NOTE:** Students who represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity shall also have the opportunity to make up assignments, but the student must provide official written notification to you no less than one week prior to the missed class(es). Failure to take your mid-term or final exam on a scheduled date may result in an inferior grade. **Mid-term make-up exams may be arranged for those students with legitimate and compelling excuses (and proper documentation).** **NOTE: Make-up exams are NOT offered for the final exam.**

Other Important Announcements:

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*" (12/05, in the approval process).

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, the University encourages you to visit its copyright website at: www.unlv.edu/committees/copyright/.

Disruptive Behavior: Any kind of disruptive behavior (vulgar/foul language, rude remarks, sidebar conversation, fighting words, offensive language, cheating, etc.) shall not be tolerated. Non-compliant students may be dropped from the class. Respect and common sense will be practiced in the classroom. We will honor students' right to learn.

DRC: The UNLV **Disability Resource Center (DRC)** houses the resources for students with 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.

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/>>.

Course Outline:

Note: The following topics and dates are subject to minor changes to accommodate your interests, requests and needs. Your suggestions and ideas are very welcome.

Week #1 (8/29-8/31) – Introductions. Overview of the syllabus: policies, procedures, and expectations. ***Why Do People Form Governments?*** John Locke: **Second Treatise of Civil Government (the Concept of Social Contract)**. The **Declaration of Independence**. Perspectives on **Power**. The **Dichotomy** between *what is* **vs.** *what should be*.

Reading: *Peeverill Squire, Chapter 1, and Appendix A, B, C, D, and E:*
The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union, The Declaration of Independence.
The Federalist Papers #10 and #51; Anti-Federalists and the Constitution (Appendix E).

Week #2 (9/5-9/7) – **The Dynamics of Democracy – Conflict, Rules, Continuity, and Change. Politics and the Roots of Conflict.** The **Role of Government** in Human Affairs – **Conflict Management and Rule Making.** The **Constitution and Federalism (the Vertical Dimension).** **Federalists vs. Anti-federalists.** The **Colonial Experience.** The **Constitutional Convention: The Virginia Plan, the New Jersey Plan, and the Connecticut Compromise.**

Reading: *Peeverill Squire, Chapters 2 & 3, the US Constitution, the Federalist #63.*

Week #3 (9/12-9/14) – **The Social Context of American Politics: Race, Immigration, Language, Age, Family Households, Sexual Orientation, Religion, Education, Wealth and Income, Home Ownership, Occupation. Experimentation - Diversity and Pluralism.**

Reading: *Peeverill Squire, Chapter 4.*
U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Week #4 (9/19-9/21) – **Civil Liberties: Interpreting the Constitution. The Bill of Rights.**

Reading: *Peeverill Squire, Chapter 5,*
Appendix F – Race and the U.S. Constitution.

Week #5 (9/26-9/28) – **Civil Rights. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights. Conflicting Theories of Equality – Equal Opportunity vs. Equal Outcomes.**

Reading: *Peeverill Squire, Chapters 6 & 7.*

Week #6 (10/3-10/5) - **Public Opinion. Ideologies. The Nature and Acquisition of Opinions and Values. Voting and Participation.**

Reading: *Peeverill Squire, Chapters 8 & 9.*

Week #7 (10/10-10/12) – **The News Media and Political Parties. What is a Political Party? Characteristics and the History of U.S. Parties.**

Reading: REVIEW CHAPTERS 1-9 and ALL THE LECTURE NOTES!

Week #8 (10/17/06) - Brief Overview of the covered material in preparation for the mid-term exam.

GET READY FOR THE MID-TERM EXAM!

Reading: REVIEW CHAPTERS 1-9 and ALL THE LECTURE NOTES!

10/19/06 – MID-TERM EXAMINATION- MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Good Luck! Please, BRING 2 SCANTRONS and pencils to the EXAM.

Week #9 (10/24-10/26) - Defining Interest Groups. Interest Group Formation, Maintenance, Influence, and Strategies. The Structure and Evolution of CONGRESS. Congress and Representation. Congress as an Organization.

Reading: Peverill Squire, Chapters 10 & 11, The Federalist #35.

Week #10 (10/31-11/2) - The Presidency in American Politics. The Presidency as an Institution. The Federal Bureaucracy – the Real Power? The Politics of the Federal Bureaucracy – the Pursuit of Competing Values.

Reading: Peverill Squire, Chapters 12 & 13, The Federalist # 68.

Week #11 (11/7-11/9) – **NOTE: ORAL PRESENTATIONS ARE DUE on 11/7/06!** Get ready to present your topic. Make sure to e-mail your complete presentation to the instructor ahead of time. Thank you in advance. Good Luck!

Reading: Peverill Squire, Chapters 14 & 15, The Federalist #78.

Week #12 (11/14-11/16) – The U.S. Judicial System – the Federal Courts and State Courts. The Federal Courts as Policy Makers. The Supreme Court as a Political Institution. The Federal System and State Government. Relations among Federal, State, and Local Government. State Budgets. Divided Sovereignty?

Reading: Peverill Squire, Chapters 16, 17 & 18.

Week #13 (11/21/06) – **NOTE: YOUR RESEARCH PAPERS ARE DUE TODAY!**

The Federal Budget: Budgets, Deficit Spending, and National Debt. The Budgetary Process. Revenue & Spending. Domestic policy. Managing the Economy – Fiscal and Monetary Policies. Foreign Policy Formation and Execution. Models of Foreign Policy Decision Making. Short Overview of US Foreign Policy. America's War on Terrorism. The Bush Doctrine. The Theory of Just War. Foreign Policy vs. Domestic Policy.

Reading: Michael W. Bowers, The Sagebrush State, Chapters 1- 7, and the Nevada State Constitution.

11/23/06 -11/26/06 – Thanksgiving Recess

Reading: Michael W. Bowers, The Sagebrush State, Chapters 1- 7, and the Nevada State Constitution.

Week #14 (11/28-11/30) – Politics in Nevada. Nevada's ORIGINS and Early History. Nevada Territory and Statehood. Civil Rights and Liberties in Nevada. Forming the Constitution. Political Parties & Elections. Interest Groups & Lobbying.

Reading: Michael W. Bowers, *The Sagebrush State*, Chapters 8-11, and the *Nevada State Constitution*.
Week #15 (12/5- 12/7) – The Legislative, the Executive, and the Judicial Branches in Nevada. The Past, The Present, and the Future of Nevada. Brief Review: Revisiting Federal and State Politics.

Reading: Peverill Squire, *Chapters 1- 18*. Michael W. Bowers, *The Sagebrush State*, *Chapters 1-11*. Review **ALL** the materials and lecture notes in preparation for the final exam.

Week #16 (12/12/06) – **Final review in preparation for the FINAL EXAM.**

Reading: Peverill Squire, *Chapters 1- 18*. Michael W. Bowers, *The Sagebrush State*, *Chapters 1-11*. Review **ALL** the materials and lecture notes in preparation for the final exam.
Get ready for the FINAL EXAM!

12/14/06 - FINAL EXAM – GOOD LUCK!

PLEASE, BRING 2 (two) SCANTRONS, PENCILS & ERASERS TO THE EXAM.

REQUIRED READING:

- Peverill Squire, James M. Lindsay, Cary R. Covington, Eric R.A.N. Smith, *Dynamics of Democracy*, 4th Edition, 2006, Atomic Dog Publishing. (Note: Appendix Sections in the textbook are required reading).
- Michael W. Bowers, *The Sagebrush State, Nevada's History, Government & Politics*.
- The Declaration of Independence.
- Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*.
- The Articles of Confederation.
- The Constitution of the United States of America, including the Bill of Rights and the Constitutional Amendments.
- The Constitution of the State of Nevada.

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