

Introduction to American Politics

POLITICAL SCIENCE 101
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Spring 2007

Professor: Dr. Michele Kuenzi

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Class Meets: MW 02:00 PM-03:45 PM TBE B174

Introduction: In this class we will discuss the structure and workings of the American Political System. We will examine the major participants and institutions of the national and state government and explore how these actors and institutions interact within our political structure to produce public policies. Special emphasis is given to conflicting theories of power and influence as they apply to different groups. As a framework, we will look at how these actors, groups, institutions, rules and processes attempt to serve the interests of citizens and contribute to or detract from our struggle for democracy, equality, and justice.

Texts:

We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 6th edition. Edward S. By
Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir. Norton.*

The Sagebrush State: Nevada's History, Government, and Politics. By Michael W.
Bowers. 3rd Edition University of Nevada Press, 2006.

*** Because Norton will only be able to have the *We the People* texts arrive at the end of the week, Norton has posted the first two chapters of the text with open access (no password required) on their website at this link:**

<http://www.wwnorton.com/college/titles/polisci/weir6/> The *Sagebrush* book should be in the bookstore.

Grades

The total number of points that can be achieved in this course is 400. The points are allocated in the following way:

	Number of Points	Percentage Equivalent
Quizzes	100	25%
Mid term	120	30%
Attendance	20	5%
Participation	20	5%
Final Exam	140	35%
Totals	400	100%

In other words, quizzes count for 25% of your grade, the mid term for 30%, attendance for 5%, participation for 5%, and the final examination for 35%. **The final examination will be cumulative.**

According to the point system, final grades will be assigned in the following way:

A	374 points to 400 points
A-	358 points to 373 points
B+	346 points to 357 points
B	330 points to 345 points
B-	318 points to 329 points
C+	306 points to 317 points
C	290 points to 305 points
C-	278 points to 289 points
D+	266 points to 277 points
D	250 points to 265 points
D-	238 points to 249 points
F	237 points and below

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. They will be based on the assigned readings and lectures and consist of mostly multiple-choice questions. Students will need two number 2 pencils for the exams. **Make-up exams will not be given** except in the case of extreme circumstances. The student must be able provide documentation that the absence is for a reason recognized by the university (e.g., illness, death in the family, observance of a religious holiday) and make arrangements with me **prior** to the scheduled exam date. If it is absolutely impossible to make prior arrangements with me, students must contact me as soon as possible about the situation. (Please notify me of any planned absences for religious holidays or official extracurricular activity for UNLV by **February 12, 2007**).

Quizzes

Four quizzes will be administered during the course. **The quizzes will be administered at the beginning of class.** Students may drop their lowest quiz score. Since the lowest quiz score can be dropped and students know in advance the dates of the quizzes, **no makeup quizzes will be administered.**

Quizzes and exams will be based on material covered during class in lectures, films, class discussions, and from the required readings. I will periodically introduce current event articles or materials as they relate to the topics and concepts being covered in class. Students will, of course, be responsible for this material as well as material covered in films and guest lectures.

Attendance, Participation and General Expectations

Attendance will be taken each class. Students may miss up to three classes without losing attendance points. Because students are already allowed three absences during the term, three points will be subtracted from the attendance points for every absence beyond three, whatever the reason for the absence. Attending class is a very important part of the learning process. If anyone foresees the possibility of missing class more than three times, she/he should consider taking PSC 101 when she/he will be able to attend all of the classes. **Signing the attendance sheet for another student is a form of fraud**, and anyone participating in this activity will be penalized.

Participation in class discussions is strongly encouraged. Of course, participation should be constructive, and all comments should be relevant to the material being covered in class. Students must **do all of the reading!** I will call on students in class and expect their answers to reflect familiarity with the ideas and information in the readings. Respect should be shown for all other class members at all times. Inappropriate and disruptive participation/behavior will result in a drop in the student's grade. If you are habitually late, the attendance portion of your course grade will be marked down substantially.

Students are expected to attend class regularly, arrive promptly and have a collegial demeanor. Students are not allowed to sleep, read newspapers, listen to headphones, or talk to others during class. Engaging in these behaviors will result in a drop in the student's grade. **You must turn off all cell phones, pagers, and other electronic devices during class. Any exceptions must be cleared with me in advance. If you look at your cell phone during a quiz or exam, you will receive a zero for that quiz or exam.** Arriving late, leaving early, or interrupting class with a cell phone or other electronic device will also result in a drop in the student's grade. **Students are not allowed to tape record, photograph, video tape, or otherwise electronically record any of the class.**

I reserve the right to modify the course syllabus. Students will be responsible for knowing any changes made to the syllabus during class time whether they were in attendance or not. The instructor's lecture notes are not available to students; it is the student's responsibility to obtain class notes from a classmate, should class be missed.

Learning Enhancement Services (LES) is the office to provide Disability Services. If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you will need to contact LES for coordination in your academic accommodations. LES is located in the Reynolds Student Services Complex, suite 137. The phone number is 702-895-0866, or TTD 702-895-0652, or you may visit the website at www.unlv.edu/studentlife/les.

Academic Honesty:

All breaches in academic honesty will be handled in accordance with the UNLV Student Conduct Code and Policies, which can be accessed at <http://www.unlv.edu/studentlife>.

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Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1		
Wednesday, 1/17	Class Introduction	Read the Syllabus Carefully!
Week 2		
Monday, 1/22	Institutions, Culture, and Politics	We the People ch.1; Sagebrush ch. 1
Wednesday, 1/24	The Constitution	We the People ch.2
Week 3		
Monday, 1/29	Federalism	We the People ch.3 ; Sagebrush ch. 2
Wednesday, 1/31	Civil Liberties	We the People ch.4; Sagebrush ch. 3
Week 4		
Monday, 2/5	Quiz 1 Civil Rights	We the People ch.5
Wednesday, 2/7		
Week 5	Civil Rights (cont.)	We the People ch.5
Monday, 2/12	Public Opinion	We the People ch.6
Wednesday, 2/14	The Media	We the People ch.7
Week 6		
Monday, 2/19	President's Day Recess	
Wednesday, 2/21	Political Participation	We the People ch.8
Week 7		
Monday, 2/26	Quiz 2 Public Opinion, Political Participation, and Politics	
Wednesday, 2/28	Catch up Review for the Midterm	
Week 8		
Monday, 3/5	Midterm Examination	
Wednesday, 3/7	Political Parties	We the People ch.9
Week 9		
Monday, 3/12	Spring Break: No Class	
Wednesday, 3/14	Spring Break: No Class	
Week 10		
Monday, 3/19	Campaigns and Elections	We the People ch.10; Sagebrush ch. 4
Wednesday, 3/21	Campaigns and Elections (continued)	We the People ch.10; Sagebrush ch. 4
Week 11		
Monday, 3/26	Interest Groups	We the People ch.11; Sagebrush ch.5
Wednesday, 3/28	The Legislature	We the People ch.12; Sagebrush ch.6
Week 12		
Monday, 4/2	The Legislature	We the People ch.12; Sagebrush ch.6
Wednesday, 4/4	Quiz 3 The Executive	We the People ch.13; Sagebrush ch.7

Week 13		
Monday, 4/9	The Executive	We the People ch.13; Sagebrush ch.7
Wednesday, 4/11	American Public Policy: War on Terrorism	<i>TBA</i>
Week 14		
Monday, 4/16	Bureaucracy	We the People ch.14
Wednesday, 4/18	Courts	We the People ch.15; Sagebrush ch. 8
Week 15		
Monday, 4/23	Courts (cont.)	We the People ch.15; Sagebrush ch. 8
Wednesday, 4/25	State and Local Government	Sagebrush State ch. 9 and 10
Week 16		
Monday, 4/30	Quiz 4 Nevada: Past, Present and Future	Sagebrush State ch. 11
Wednesday, 5/2	Catch-up Review for the Final Exam	
Week 17		
Wednesday May 9 3:10 PM	Final Examination	