

PSC 101.04
Introduction to American Politics
Summer Session II 2008

Instructor: Dr. David Damore
Location: WRI C237
Time: M – Th 7 – 9:30 pm

e-mail: david.damore@unlv.edu
Office Hours: Tu and Th 5:30 to 7 pm
Phone: 895-3217; Office: WRI B213

Scope and Purpose:

This course offers students an overview of the American governing and political process. The course is divided into three parts. Part one examines the "rules of the game" by focusing on the founding and the subsequent development of our republican system of government. Particular attention is given to the philosophical underpinnings of our constitutional system, competing explanations of how the system should operate, and assessments of how well it meets its democratic ideals. Part two focuses on the conduits that link the governed to the government (i.e., political parties and interest groups, campaigns and elections, and the media); notable attention is given to analyzing how these linking institutions form and constrain popular input into the governing process. Part three covers the formal institutions of the government (e.g., Bureaucracy, Congress, the Supreme Court, and Presidency). Here, the powers of each institution are addressed with emphasis given to examining their development over time.

Readings:

Dahl, Robert J. 2003. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Lowi, Theodore J., Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2006. *American Government: Power and Purpose*, Core 9th ed. New York: Norton.

Students are expected to read a daily newspaper either printed or online (exam questions will come from the *Las Vegas Review Journal* and nytimes.com).

Requirements:

1. Exams (90%) – Three exams, consisting of multiple choice and true/false questions. Exams draw on lecture, reading, and current events. Exams are open note and open book and are administered via the course WebCampus site (details forthcoming). Highest exam score counts for 35% of total grade; middle exam score counts for 30% of total grade; and lowest exam score counts for 25% of total grade.

2. Classroom Contribution (10%) – This component of the grade is based upon a combination of attendance, attention, and willingness to enter into discussions as they arise.

Course Goals:

1. Increase substantive understanding of the political process.

2. Motivate participation in the political process.
3. Increase newspaper readership.
4. Sharpen critical thinking and information gathering skills.

Policies and Miscellaneous:

1. The honor code is strictly enforced. Any evidence of collaboration, plagiarism, or other violations of the honor code will be immediately referred to the administration for investigation.
2. Make-ups are granted for documented illnesses or deaths in the immediate family (documented as well). If the exams for this course conflict with work in other courses you are taking, plan ahead and either adjust your schedule or study habits accordingly. If you need to miss class because of observance of a religious holiday you must notify me no later than week three of the semester. Students who represent UNLV at any official extracurricular activity may make-up any missed assignments provided that official written notification is provided no less than one week prior to the missed classes.
3. Lecture begins at 7 and ends at 9:30. If you choose to attend lecture, plan to do so for the duration. Do not disrupt class by showing-up late, leaving early, or talking. Violations will adversely impact on your final grade. More generally, if the subject matter is not of interest to you or you are unwilling to meet its expectations, do not enroll in this course.
4. Learning Enhancement Services (LES) houses Disability Services, Tutoring Services, and Learning Strategies. If you have a documented disability that may require assistance, you need to contact the LES for coordination in your academic accommodations. LES is located in Reynolds Student Services Complex, Suite 317. The phone number is 895-0866. You may also visit their website at <http://www.unlv.edu/studentilife/les>.
5. Cut-offs for final grades are:

A = 100–93 A- = 92–90 B+ = 89–87 B = 86–83 B- = 82–80 C+ = 79–77
 C = 76–73 C- = 72–70 D+ = 69–67 D = 66–63 D- = 62–60 F = 59–0

Course Calendar and Reading Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading
Part One: The Founding and Development of Our Democracy		
June 9	Course Overview and the Purpose of Government	Lowi: Preface, chapter 1 Dahl: chapter 1
June 10	The Americanization of Democracy	Lowi: A1-A44 Dahl: chapter 2

June 11	The U.S. Constitution	Lowi: 36-64, 105-115 Dahl: chapter 3
June 12	Amendments and the Nevada Constitution	Lowi: 65-75 Dahl: chapter 4
June 16	Federalism	Lowi: 78-100, Dahl: chapter 5
June 17	Civil Rights	Lowi: 133-157
June 18	Civil Liberties	Lowi: 118-132 Dahl: chapters 6, 7

June 19 **Exam 1**

Part Two: Political Processes and Participation

June 23	Political Socialization and Public Opinion	Lowi: 378-396
June 24	Participation and Voting	Lowi: 397-419
June 25	Presidential Elections	Lowi: 422-451
June 26	Congressional Elections	Lowi: 452-473
June 30	Political Parties and Interest Groups	Lowi: chapters 11, 12
July 1	The Media	Lowi: chapter 13

July 2 **Exam 2**

Part Three: The Formal Institutions and the Policy Process

July 3	Congress	Lowi: chapter 5
July 7	The Presidency	Lowi: chapter 6
July 8	The Federal Courts	Lowi: chapter 8
July 9	The Bureaucracy	Lowi: chapter 7

July 10 **Exam 3**