

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

Summer III, 2006
M-R. 7:00-9:30 p.m.
WRI C305

Prof. Mehran Tamadonfar
Office: WRI B 212 & B 225
Office Hrs: M-R 8-12 p.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, examining the institutional frameworks and processes of the political system; and second, analyzing 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, 5th shorter ed., New York: Norton & Co.; 2005.
- Michael W. Bowers, The Sagebrush State, Nevada's History, Government & Politics. 2nd ed., Reno and Las Vegas; University of Nevada Press; 2002.

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 24) 40% of the grade.
3. A multiple-choice final examination (August 10).....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 **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.

COURSE OUTLINE:

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

July 10 Introduction and Overview

PART I. THE PUBLIC AND POLITICS

July 11& 12 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: Contemporary Issues in the American Political Culture

July 13 & 17 The Context of Politics: Society, Culture, and Economy

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapters 1, 6, 7 & 8

Discussion Topic: Democracy and Capitalism

July 18, 19 & 20 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: Our Wars

July 24

Mid-Term Examination

Part II. U.S. Government and Politics

July 25

The Constitutional Framework

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapter 2

July 26

The Congress and the Legislative Process

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapter 12

Discussion Topics: Religion and Politics

July 27

The Presidency and Bureaucracy

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapters, 13 & 14

Discussion Topic: Immigration

July 31

The Court System & Liberties

- Structures
- Functions
- Contemporary Issues

Required Readings:

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

PART III. NEVADA GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

August 1 & 2

Federalism, Neo-Federalism, and State and Local Governments

Required Reading:

- Ginsberg, Chapter 3

State and Local Governments in Nevada

Required Readings:

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

Discussion Topic: Nevada's Court System

August 3 & 7

Developmental Issues

Required Reading:

- Bowers, Chapters 11 and 3.

August 8

American Politics Revisited

August 9

Review

August 10

Final Examination

Office Hours:

Usually, I hold extended office hours. If my hours are not convenient for you, please do not hesitate to contact me at 895-5258 for an appointment. Your questions, comments, and criticisms are appreciated.

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 Learning Enhancement Services 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.dresse@cmail.nevada.edu](mailto:dresse@cmail.nevada.edu)".