

# Political Science 101: Introduction to American Politics

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Spring 2017

## I. Course Overview and Objectives

This course examines the formal and informal institutions of American government in order to understand how these institutions interact to form public policy in America. In so doing, we will examine the constitutional basis of governance, the role of the various branches of government, the impact and influence of the media, political parties, and interest groups on American politics, as well as the concept of federalism. Since this course also satisfies the Nevada Constitution requirements set forth by UNLV, we will examine similar functions within our state. At the conclusion of the course, you will be expected to be able to apply theoretical and analytical approaches in order to:

- Understand the fundamental principles upon which the U. S. government is based
- Know the structure, responsibilities, and contemporary issues of the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches at both the federal and Nevada state level
- Be familiar with the civil liberties and civil rights guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States
- Examine the impact on the political system of American political culture and ideology, the political parties, interest groups, public opinion, and the media

## University Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (UULOs)

This course supports the following UULOs:

1. **Intellectual Breadth and Lifelong Learning** - Integrate basic principles of the social sciences and develop skills and a desire for lifelong learning.
2. **Inquiry and Critical Thinking** - Be able to identify problems, articulate questions, and use various forms of research and reasoning to guide the collection, analysis, and use of information related to those problems
3. **Communication** - Communicate effectively in written and verbal modes **Citizenship and Ethics** - Participate knowledgeably and actively in the public life of our communities and make informed, responsible, and ethical decisions in one's personal and professional lives.
4. **Multicultural Knowledge and Awareness** – Develop knowledge of multicultural societies and an awareness of one's place in and effect on them
5. **Citizenship and Ethics** - Participate knowledgeably and actively in the public life of our communities and make informed, responsible, and ethical decisions in one's personal and professional lives.

There are two required texts for this course. Be sure that you have the correct edition.

- Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi and Margaret Weir. *We the People*. Tenth Edition. Norton: 2015.
- Bowers, Michael. *The Sagebrush State*. **4th Edition**. University of Nevada Press: 2013 .
  - o In addition to being available in the campus bookstore, *The Sagebrush State* is also accessible online via the UNLV library. (NOTE: Online access is limited! I highly recommend purchasing a physical copy).

## II. Grading

The grading structure is based on three components: three exams (25% each - total 75%), two short papers (10% each - total 20%), and your attendance and participation (5%)

### Exams

The exams are a combination of multiple choice, short answer identification, and essay questions. Each exam will take place at the conclusion of each segment of the course (see dates on the schedule) and are not cumulative (though I do retain the right to include important material from prior segments). Make-ups for each of the first two exams are permitted under only the most worthy of circumstances, and will be administered on May 2, 2017. The final exam is scheduled by the University, and the exact time and date is yet to be determined. Please note that there is no make-up for the final exam, so plan accordingly.

### Short Papers

During the course of the semester, you will be required to submit two short position papers on topics to be assigned separately (see due dates on schedule).

### Participation

Discussion and debate are a fundamental component of a course in American politics, and we shall not be denied this pleasure. My lectures are designed to facilitate discussion, and ample time and opportunity will be provided for you to make use of. Towards this end, you should be prepared to amicably discuss and debate the assigned readings; to do so requires a careful reading (or two) prior to class (and not a quick skim on the way to class!). Also, multiple participation opportunities will be provided throughout the course. At the same time, you should show your fellow students (as well as your instructor) respect by turning off all electronic devices (this would include cell phones, laptops, recording devices, etc.) *as well as by showing up on time and remaining present for the entire period*. I do take attendance, and absences adversely affect your participation grade, as well as your ability to successfully complete exams. Quite simply, adherence to this policy will result in success in this component of the course (at 5%, it is important); ignorance of this policy will quickly diminish results. Indeed, excessive ignorance of this policy may result in administrative drops.

### Grading Cutoffs

100-93 = A	82.9-80 = B-	69.9-67 = D+
92.9-90 = A-	79.9-77 = C+	66.9-63 = D
89.9-87 = B+	76.9-73 = C	62.9-60 = D-
86.9-83 = B	72.9 -70 = C-	59.9-0 = F

### 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.” (UNLV Policies)

**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” (approved December 9, 2005) located at: <http://studentconduct.unlv.edu/misconduct/policy.html>.

Plagiarism, in any form and to any degree, will not be tolerated. Be sure you understand exactly what constitutes plagiarism (see me directly on this issue if you have any questions or concerns) as violation of this policy will subject you to the most severe penalty the University allows. Note that such penalties range from a zero on the assignment to a grade of F for the entire course, and in addition, may include university sanctions.

### III. Course Schedule

The grid below displays the planned schedule for the Spring 2017 semester. However, please note that these dates are open to revision, as the flow of the course itself will dictate the speed with which we progress. All changes will, of course, be clearly announced well ahead of time. If you are planning to miss a class due to religious holiday observance or a UNLV sanctioned event (see “policies” below), please let me know as soon as possible. In the schedule below, “WTP” refers to *We The People* while “SS” refers to *The Sagebrush State*. Occasional additional readings may be assigned as necessary, and will be provided. Readings should, of course, be completed *before* the scheduled class.

Date	Topic	WTP	SS	Other
January 17	Introduction   Political Culture [UULO:1,2]	1	--	
January 24	The U.S. Constitution [UULO:1,2]	2	--	
January 31	Federalism [UULO:1,2]	3	--	
February 7	NV Constitution   Pub Opinion [UULO:4]	6	2	
February 14	The Media [UULO:1,2, 3, 5]	7	--	<b>Paper 1 Due  Midterm 1</b>
February 21	Interest Groups   Political Parties [UULO: 1,2,3,4,5]	11   9	5	
February 28	Campaigns and Elections [UULO:1,2,4,5]	10	4	
March 7	Presidency   NV Executive [UULO:1,2]	13	7	

March 14	Congress   NV Legislature [UULOs:1,2]	12	6	
March 21	The Bureaucracy [UULOs:1,2]	13		<b>Paper 2  Midterm 2</b>
March 28	The Courts [UULOs:1,2]	14	8	
April 4	Civil Liberties [UULOs:1,2, 3, 5]	15   4	3	
April 11	Spring Break - No Classes	--	--	
April 18	Civil Rights [UULOs:1,2, 3,5]	4  5	3	
April 25	Civil Rights   Social Policy [UULOs:1,2,4,5]	5   17	–	
May 2	Economic Policy [UULOs:1,2,4]	16	--	
Finals Week	<b><u>Final Examinations: Day and Time TBA</u></b>			

#### IV. Course Policies:

1. **Communication:** There are times when it may be beneficial for me to communicate with you during the week prior to class meeting. University policy requires that I only use your **Rebelmail e-mail account**. Therefore, you should check this account regularly during the course of the semester. Above all else, I strongly encourage you to contact me with **ANY** questions, concerns or comments. You can meet with me before and after class, during my office hours (which will be extended by appointment if my regular schedule does not work for you), by email, or by phone. Your success is important to me, and I can help you achieve it – but you must make the first step!
2. **Visitors:** Children, girlfriends/boyfriends, wives/husbands, etc. are not allowed in the class.
3. **Food/Drinks:** No in-class dining allowed. Water is suggested – please use bottles with lids/caps.

#### University Policies

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**Copyright**—The University requires all members of the University Community to familiarize themselves **with** 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. Additional information can be found at: <http://www.unlv.edu/provost/copyright>.

**Disability Resource Center (DRC)**— **Disability Resource Center (DRC)**—The UNLV Disability Resource Center (SSC-A 143, <http://drc.unlv.edu/>, 702-895-0866) provides resources for students with disabilities. If you feel that you have a disability, please make an appointment with a Disabilities Specialist at the DRC to discuss what options may be available to you. If you are registered with the UNLV Disability Resource Center, bring your Academic Accommodation Plan from the DRC to the instructor during office hours so that you may work together to develop strategies for implementing the accommodations to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. Any information you provide is private and will be treated as such. To maintain the confidentiality of your request, please do not approach the instructor in front of others to discuss your accommodation needs.

**Religious Holidays Policy**— Any student missing class quizzes, examinations, or any other class or lab work because of observance of religious holidays shall be given an opportunity during that semester to make up missed work. The make-up will apply to the religious holiday absence only. It shall be the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor **within the first 14 calendar days of the course for fall and spring courses (excepting modular courses), or within the first 7 calendar days of the course for summer and modular courses**, of his or her intention to participate in religious holidays which do not fall on state holidays or periods of class recess. For additional information, please visit: <http://catalog.unlv.edu/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=531>.

**Transparency in Learning and Teaching**—The University encourages application of the transparency method of constructing assignments for student success. Please see these two links for further information:

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/teachingandlearning>

<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>

**Incomplete Grades**—The grade of I—Incomplete—can be granted when a student has satisfactorily completed three-fourths of course work for that semester/session but for reason(s) beyond the student’s control, and acceptable to the instructor, cannot complete the last part of the course, and the instructor believes that the student can finish the course without repeating it. The incomplete work must be made up before the end of the following regular semester for undergraduate courses. Graduate students receiving “I” grades in 500-, 600-, or 700-level courses have up to one calendar year to complete the work, at the discretion of the instructor. If course requirements are not completed within the time indicated, a grade of F will be recorded and the GPA will be adjusted accordingly. Students who are fulfilling an Incomplete do not register for the course but make individual arrangements with the instructor who assigned the I grade.

**Tutoring and Coaching**—**The Academic Success Center (ASC)** provides tutoring, academic success coaching and other academic assistance for all UNLV undergraduate students. For information regarding tutoring subjects, tutoring times, and other ASC programs and services, visit <http://www.unlv.edu/asc> or call 702-895-3177. The ASC building is located across from the Student Services Complex (SSC). Academic success coaching is located on the second floor of the SSC (ASC Coaching Spot). Drop-in tutoring is located on the second floor of the Lied Library and College of Engineering TEB second floor.

**UNLV Writing Center**—One-on-one or small group assistance with writing is available free of charge to UNLV students at the Writing Center, located in CDC-3-301. Although walk-in consultations are sometimes available, students with appointments will receive priority assistance. Appointments may be made in person or by calling 702-895-3908. The student’s Rebel ID Card, a copy of the assignment (if possible), and two copies of any writing to be reviewed are requested for the consultation. More information can be found at: <http://writingcenter.unlv.edu/>.

**Rebelmail**—By policy, faculty and staff should e-mail students' Rebelmail accounts only. Rebelmail is UNLV's official e-mail system for students. It is one of the primary ways students receive official university communication such as information about deadlines, major campus events, and announcements. All UNLV students receive a Rebelmail account after they have been admitted to the university. Students' e-mail prefixes are listed on class rosters. The suffix is always [@unlv.nevada.edu](mailto:unlv@unlv.nevada.edu). **Emailing within WebCampus is acceptable.**

**Final Examinations**—The University requires that final exams given at the end of a course occur at the time and on the day specified in the final exam schedule. See the schedule at: <http://www.unlv.edu/registrar/calendars>.

**Library statement:**

Students may consult with a librarian on research needs. For this class, the Subject Librarian is ([https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians\\_by\\_subject](https://www.library.unlv.edu/contact/librarians_by_subject)). UNLV Libraries provides resources to support students' access to information. Discovery, access, and use of information are vital skills for academic work and for successful post-college life. Access library resources and ask questions at <https://www.library.unlv.edu/>.