POLITICAL SCIENCE 101
American Government
Section XX
Course date & time, Course Location
Fall 20XX Syllabus

Dr. Eric Herzik
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Course Description:
This is a course on the fundamentals of the American political system. The emphasis is on how the system operates (or attempts to operate) in contemporary society. Attention is directed at formal structures and procedures as well as on the behavior of people who interact with and make policy within the official framework. The basis for nearly all of the formal structures and even many informal processes are rooted in the US Constitution so discussions of constitutional principles are covered throughout the course. As the course is also a social science “core” offering, we will also examine how contemporary elements of public opinion, partisanship and corporatization affect contemporary American politics and how such factors are measured and evaluated.

There is not a prerequisite, corequisites or other recommended preparation to required to enroll in this course. Credit cannot be earned for both PSC 101 and PSC 103.

Required Texts and Course Materials:

- Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright, Keeping the Republic, The Essentials, 6th edition (required)

- Morris Fiorina et al., Culture War? 3rd edition (required)

  Both books are available at the UNR Bookstore.

- The Nevada Constitution (required and available through webcampus)
Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

- Students will be able to discuss the major factors leading to both the settlement of the United States and the development of the US Constitution:
- Students will be able to discuss the importance of the 14th amendment and how this change to the constitution expanded and continues to expand civil rights and liberties.
- Students will be able to explain how the development of the US Constitution influenced the development of the Nevada Constitution. With respect to the Nevada Constitution students will be able to describe the similarities and differences in the basic structures of the US and Nevada Constitutions.
- Students will be able to discuss the basic elements of how citizens are “linked” to their government through voting, public opinion, parties, interest groups and the media; and apply social science methods used to measure citizen participation and attitudes.
- Students will be able to identify and describe the three basic “branches” of the US Government and be able to articulate how the system of checks and balances operates.
- Students will be able to identify and describe the basic structure of the constitution; the basic content matter of each Article; the development and basic outline of the Bill of Rights; and how the principle of Federalism is embodied in the constitution and how Federalism has changed over time.

This course satisfies the following Core Objectives of the Silver Core Curriculum:

CO6. Cultures, Societies, and Individuals. Students will learn how to systematically analyze human social conditions (e.g., individuals, groups, communities, and cultures). In particular, students will learn to observe, theorize, model, experiment, and/or interpret as a means of inquiring into human social relations.

CO8. Constitution. Students will demonstrate familiarity with the origins, history, and essential elements of the Constitutions of the United States and Nevada, as well as the evolution of American institutions and ideals.

In addition, the course develops competency in CO1 (Effective Composition and Communication) and CO3 (Critical Analysis and Use of Information). These objectives are reinforced throughout the curriculum in other courses students take to fulfill core and major requirements.

To satisfy CO6, throughout the course students are exposed to how social science both poses and addresses questions concerning political behavior. The entire middle third of the course specifically covers demographic and contingent variable analysis to the point of even presenting a basic OLS equation (linear regression). As a specific assignment, student will discuss whether American politics is as deeply divided on political issues as
portrayed in the media. This exercise requires students to first understand how 'hot button' issues are perceived but also evaluates the role of third parties (like interest groups and political parties) with a critical reading, analysis and interpretation but also to formulate conclusions and this through written composition and oral participation in the course. The analysis involves an understanding of human and societal conditions, including the individual and groups. The requirement heavily falls on the student’s ability to interpret the subject matter, drawing up their own conclusions, as means of inquiring into human problems.

This course also satisfies –CO8, the American and Nevada Constitution requirement. Students are required to demonstrate a working knowledge of the origins, history, evolution, and essential elements of both the American and Nevada Constitutions. As outlined in the syllabus, students will progress through the course through understanding how power and political systems are created and how that has shaped the American political culture, as a precursor to the US Constitution. Through a deeper understanding of the origins, history and evolution, students then look at the essential elements of the Constitution and American Government. Students will both compare and contrast how these aspects of US history and culture have influenced the development and application of the Nevada Constitution.

Class Policies and Procedures:

- **Attendance is strongly encouraged as you are responsible for all lecture material and/or any changes in exam dates, course structure or required reading.** Late papers cannot receive an "A" grade or full credit and after a stated deadline will not be accepted.
- All University rules concerning accommodations for disabilities are in effect and students in need of accommodation are encouraged to work with the instructor and DRC to maximize their success in the course.
- All University rules concerning plagiarism and classroom decorum are in force. Students alleged to be in violation of such policies will be formally notified and referred to the appropriate officials concerned with such violations.
- The Political Science Department has also converted to an online course evaluation process. Administrative Assistant, Kristen Kabrin, will send out email reminders when the online evaluations will be available. Please make sure your email in MyNevada is up-to-date.) If you have any questions regarding the process or the evaluation, please contact Ms. Kabrin at kkabrin@unr.edu.

Description of Assignments:

**Writing Assignment**

The course text, *Culture War?*, discusses whether American politics is as deeply divided on political issues as often portrayed in the media. The book discusses how Americans
perceive issues and especially “hot button” social issues. The text also examines how parties, interest groups and the media may be using perceived differences for specific partisan or policy advantage. Using the analysis and data provided in *Culture War?* answer the following points in essay form. A superior answer may bring in outside data linked to the last election or other public opinion studies.

Your essay must be typed, double space in no less than 11 point font. Your essay may not exceed 10 pages. (An essay less than three pages is likely not fully addressing the points.) *Outside sources need to be cited in a consistent fashion* (although I do not prescribe a particular format) such that I can verify they exist. *The paper is due one week after the second test (DATE XXX).* *Papers will be accepted up to one week after the initial due date but cannot receive an ‘A’ grade.* Any papers handed in later than one week from the assigned due date will not receive credit.

All of the following should be addressed in your essay:

- What is the Culture War? What are the important components of this perceived part of American politics? Why does it persist as a key part of American politics?
- Discuss the question of whether America is deeply divided or evenly divided. Discuss the difference between elite opinion and mass public attitudes.
- Assess Fiorina’s evidence about American public opinion on key issues of the so-called Culture War. Is he persuasive? Can you find counter evidence that disputes his analysis?
- How might a campaign use elements of the Culture War to their advantage? Does this distort the campaign and, if so, how?
- What are the negative effects (outlined by Fiorina but you might find others) for voter choice of the Culture War? What are the negative effects for American politics if cultural warriors are leading public policy making?

**Grading Criteria:**

The course requirements are 3 exams -- two hourly exams and a final -- and a writing assignment. Each exam will be "objective" in format (multiple choice). Exam questions will be drawn primarily from lectures and the main course text, *Keeping the Republic.* (There may be specific questions from *Culture War?* on both the second exam and final.)

The writing assignment will address topics from the other course text, *Culture War?* (Additional information about the writing assignment is given below.) Each exam is worth 25% of the total course grade; the writing assignment is worth 25% of the total.

Exam #1: 25%
Exam #2: 25%
Exam #3: 25%
Writing Assignment: 25%
All grading will be on a 0-100 scale. The following correspond to the approximate letter grades in my class:

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<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93.99</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89.99</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84-86.99</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-83.99</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79.99</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>74-76.99</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>70-73.99</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<tr>
<td>67-69.99</td>
<td>D+</td>
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<td>&lt;60</td>
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Please note: Make-up exams will not be offered. Late writing assignment papers will be accepted up to one week after the due date. However, the grade will be impacted by a 1/3 of a letter grade for each day it is late.

**Course Calendar / Topics and Readings:**

**Topic 1: Date XXX - XXX**  
Course description, introduction and overview  
No Readings Required

**Politics, Power and the Political System**  
Reading: Barbour, chapter 1

**Topic 2: Date XXX - XXX**  
The American Political Culture  
Reading: Barbour, chapter 2

**Precursors to the Constitution Framework**  
Reading: Barbour, chapter 3,  
Appendix 1: The Articles of Confederation;  
Appendix 2: The Declaration of Independence

**Topic 3: Date XXX - XXX**  
The Constitutional Framework  
Reading: Barbour, chapter 3;  
Appendix 3 The Constitution of The United States;  
Appendix 4: Federalist No. 10; Appendix 5:  
Federalist No. 51  
Nevada Constitution Ordinance and Preamble

**Topic 4: Date XXX - XXX**  
The Federal System  
Reading: Barbour, chapter 4

**Rights and Liberties**  
Reading: Barbour, chapter 5  
Michael Bowers “Civil Rights and Civil Liberties in Nevada” (webcampus)
Nevada Constitution Articles 1 & 2

**Topic 5: Date XXX - XXX**
The 14th Amendment and Civil Rights
Reading: Barbour, Chapter 6

**FIRST EXAM**

**Topic 6: Date XXX - XXX**
Public Opinion and Socialization
Reading: Barbour, chapter 11;
Culture War?, Chapters 1 - 6

Voting, Campaigns and Elections
Reading: Barbour, chapter 14;
Culture War?, Chapters 7 – 9
Nevada Constitution Articles 7, 16 & 19

**Topic 7: Date XXX - XXX**
Political Parties
Reading: Barbour, chapter 12;
Culture War?, Chapter 10

Interest Groups
Reading: Barbour, chapter 13

**Topic 8: Date XXX - XXX**
The Role of the Media
Reading: Barbour, chapter 15

**SECOND EXAM**

**Topic 9: Date XXX - XXX**
Congress
Reading: Barbour, chapter 7
Nevada Constitution Articles 3 & 4

The Presidency
Reading: Barbour, chapter 8
Nevada Constitution Article 5

**Topic 10: Date XXX - XXX**
The Courts
Reading: Barbour, chapter 10
Nevada Constitution Article 6

The Bureaucracy
   Reading:  Barbour, chapter 9
   Nevada Constitution Articles 9-15

Topic 11: Date XXX - XXX
Political Outputs: Domestic and Foreign Policy
   Reading:  NONE

*** FINAL EXAM, XX, DEC. XX, from XX-XX ***
(Exam is held in the regular classroom: XXX)

Exam 1: September XX
Exam 2: October XX
Writing Assignment: November XX
Exam 3 (final exam): December XX

Academic Dishonesty:

Cheating, plagiarism or otherwise obtaining grades under false pretenses” constitute academic dishonesty according to the code of this university. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and penalties can include canceling a student’s enrollment without a grade, giving an F for the course or for the assignment. For more details, see the University of Nevada, Reno General Catalog and the Office of Student Conduct (http://www.unr.edu/student-conduct/policies/university-policies-and-guidelines/academic-standards/policy)

Disability Services:

Any student with a disability needing academic adjustments or accommodations is requested to speak with me and the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations. You can refer to the Disability Resource Center website at http://www.unr.edu/drc.

Academic Success Services:

Your student fees cover usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring-center) and University Writing Center (784-6030 or
http://www.unr.edu/writing-center). These centers support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

**Audio and Video Recording:**

Surreptitious or covert videotaping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class might be recorded.