

**American People and Politics**  
**POSC 104.03**

Fall 2007  
TF 2:00-3:50 p.m.  
AC 244  
Office Hours: TWF 4:00-5:00  
and by appointment

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Bulletin Description: Provides a broad overview of the American political system, focusing on the historical and cultural content of its development. Intended to develop a basic understanding of the Constitutional foundations of the government of the United States, the role played by parties and interest groups throughout American history, the functions of the various branches of government and the evolution of their relations *inter se*, the methods by which public policy is formulated, and the role that diverse groups play in the policy process. In addition, the course seeks to enhance the ability of students to use historical and cultural understanding as a basis for the formation of independent judgments on current political issues. Partial fulfillment of the general education requirement in the American Experience.

Prerequisites: None.

Objectives: This class aims to introduce students to the logic and function of the American constitutional system and to the major political struggles of U.S. history. The course should also help explain Americans' political behavior and develop an appreciation for constitutional means to protect individuals and minorities. Finally, the class should familiarize participants with the political structure of California, local, and Native-American governments.

Requirements: Successful completion of this class will require attending the class and participating regularly (10% of grade), reading the assigned texts, writing a 7-10 page critique of a major Supreme Court decision (25% of grade; due Friday, Nov. 30), orally defending a given policy position (10% of grade; graded on a modified pass/fail basis), and performing creditably on the midterm (25% of grade) and final (30% of grade) examinations. Readings for a given week should normally be completed by the beginning of Tuesday's meeting. The midterm will be given in class on Tuesday, Oct. 16, and the final will take place on Thursday, Dec. 13, from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.

During most weeks, classes on Tuesday will be at least half lecture with the possible addition of a video or similar activity, and Friday's meeting will be half debate and half lecture. On weeks marked Adebate, some students will orally defend one side of the policy debate selected for that week (e.g., capital punishment), while others will advocate the other side. Following the formal debate, the rest of the class may join the discussion. Each student is responsible for the material in a given week's debate-related reading from McKenna and Feingold even if she or he is not assigned to debate the topic formally that week.

Students with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in class activities or meet course requirements should contact the Disabilities Services Office (x6500) as soon as possible. Students needing to be absent during a religious holiday should also notify the instructor beforehand.

**Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated!** Examples include writing notes on one's extremities and consulting said notes during a closed-book exam, forging the professor's signature, fabricating a doctor's note, down-loading term papers from the Internet, copying a paper from a previous student, hiring a graduate student to write your term paper for you, and submitting the same term paper for two classes without having previously obtained the permission of both instructors. If you are caught cheating in this course, I will do my best to see that you at least receive an F for the course and are referred to the Academic Ethics Committee for further disciplinary action. In short, don't even think about it!

A student requesting a grade change on substantive grounds (e.g., the number of points earned for a particular answer on an exam; substantive grounds do not include errors in adding up the total number of points for an exam) must submit her or his request to me in writing within one week of the date I returned the graded assignment to her or him. My response will be in writing and is subject to review by and carbon-copying to the chair of the Social Science Division.

Readings: The following works are *required* and may be purchased at the campus bookstore:

Gerston, Larry N., and Terry Christensen. 2007. *California Politics and Government: A Practical Approach*, 9th ed. (some versions marked "revised"). New York: Thomson Wadsworth.

McKenna, George, and Stanley Feingold. 2007. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Political Issues*, 15th ed. Dubuque: McGraw-Hill.

Susan Welch et al. 2008. *American Government*, 11th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Schedule:

Week 1 (Aug. 28): Introduction; Constitution

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 1: AThe American People,@ pp. 2 - 25; Welch et al., AThe Declaration of Independence,@ pp. 672 - 673; Welch et al., AFederalist Paper #10,@ pp. 683 - 685; Welch et al., AFederalist Paper #51,@ pp. 686 - 687.
- **Note:** No Friday class: annual meeting of American Political Science Association.

Week 2 (Sept. 4 & 7): Constitution (cont'd)

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 2: AThe Constitution,@ pp. 26 - 55; Welch et al., AThe Constitution of the United States of America,@ pp. 674 - 682.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AShould the Courts Seek the 'Original Meaning' of the Constitution?@ pp. 106-121.

Week 3 (Sept. 11 & 14): Federalism

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 3: AFederalism,@ pp. 56 - 87.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AIs Free Trade Fair Trade?@ pp. 298 - 317.

Week 4 (Sept. 18 & 21): Native American Government

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 6: AInterest Groups,@ pp. 164 - 201.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AIs 'Middle Eastern' Profiling Ever Justified?@ pp. 174 - 189.

Week 5 (Sept. 25 & 28): American Political Culture

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 5: ANews Media,@ pp. 118 - 163.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AShould Abortion Be Restricted?@ pp. 190 - 205.

Week 6 (Oct. 2): Public Opinion

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 4: APublic Opinion,@ pp. 88 - 117.
- **Note:** No Friday class: faculty retreat.

Week 7 (Oct. 9 & 12): Elections; Midterm Review

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 8: AElections,@ pp. 236 - 283.
- **Note:** Most of Friday's class will be devoted to review for the midterm exam. Be sure to come prepared with questions about the previous weeks' material.

Week 8 (Oct. 16 & 19): Midterm; The Presidency

- **Note:** Midterm exam given in Tuesday class.

Week 9 (Oct. 23 & 26): The Presidency (cont'd)

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 11: AThe Presidency,@ pp. 360 - 401.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, ADoes the Patriot Act Abridge Essential Freedom?@ pp. 250 - 273.

Week 10 (Oct. 30 & Nov. 2): Congress

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 10: ACongress,@ pp. 316 - 359.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AIs Capital Punishment Justified?@ pp. 140 - 157.

Week 11 (Nov. 6): The Judiciary

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 13: AThe Judiciary,@ pp. 434 - 467.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AMay the President Wiretap Without a Warrant to Protect National Security?@ pp. 122 - 137.
- **Note:** No Friday class: Joel off-campus leading field trip for East Asian politics course.

Week 12 (Nov. 13 & 16): The Judiciary (cont'd); Civil Liberties

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 14: ACivil Liberties,@ pp. 468 - 517.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AIs the Use of Torture Against Terrorist Suspects Ever Justified?@ pp. 342 - 362.

Week 13 (Nov. 20): Civil Liberties (cont'd)

- **Note:** No Friday class: Thanksgiving break.

Week 14 (Nov. 27 & 30): Civil Rights

- Readings: Welch et al., chapter 15: ACivil Rights,@ pp. 518 - 567.
- Debate: McKenna & Feingold, AStopping Illegal Immigration: Should Border Security Come First?@ pp. 274 - 294.
- **Note:** Critique of Supreme-Court case due at beginning of class Friday.

Week 15 (Dec. 4 & 7): California and Local Government

- Readings: Gerston & Christensen, pp. 1 - 42, 55 - 95 & 109 - 134.

Final examination takes place on Thursday, Dec. 13, from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m.