

POLS 200 – American Politics
Jessica T. Feezell, PhD
Spring 2016 – University of New Mexico

Email: jfeezell@unm.edu
Office: Social Science Building #2046
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
Class Time: MWF 10:00 am – 10:50 am
Class Location: CTLB 210
Final Exam: Friday 5/13 at 7:30 am – 9:30 am
Teaching Assistant: Bárbara Gomez Aguinaga, barbarag@unm.edu
TA Office Hours: Monday 11-1 in

Course Overview:

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to American government and politics. It prepares students to think analytically about the interplay of concepts, people, institutions, and theoretical explanations in American politics. This course covers how American citizens interact with governmental institutions to form public policy, the principles on which the U.S. government rests, and the dynamics of American institutions such as: Congress, the presidency, the judiciary, bureaucracy, political parties and interest groups. We will also examine the roll the media play in shaping public opinion as well as the value of political knowledge and civic engagement.

This course is formatted to first cover the founding of the Constitution and the structure of federalism, followed by political behavior and political participation in the U.S., then we will explore the institutions of the federal government, and finally we will conclude with public policy. This ordering is intentional on the part of the professor and concepts are designed to build upon each other.

The classes on Mondays and Wednesdays will take a lecture format, while the classes on Friday will involve more discussion. You are expected to stay up to date on current events and to bring relevant stories to class to share when appropriate.

Grading:

This course has several assignments that are all designed with the intention of helping you understand American politics and government, develop as a writer in the social sciences, and think critically about the political world around you.

3 Short Papers	30%	Due Monday after the prompt posts
Midterm Exam	20%	March 11 th in class
Final Exam	30%	Friday 5/13 at 7:30 am
Participation	20%	Lecture Attendance and Discussion

Midterm and Final Exams: Two exams are required for this course; both will be multiple choice and short answer and will be cumulative. If you anticipate a scheduling conflict for one of the exams, you are responsible for making prior arrangements with the professor to

facilitate a make-up exam. If you have an emergency, and cannot provide advance notice, you must provide official documentation for the professor to arrange a make-up. Accidents and emergencies happen, please maintain an open discourse with your professor and TA.

Participation: Participation at the “A-level” means attending all classes and coming prepared by having completed and thought critically about the reading for that day. You are expected to participate actively in the discussion and contribute towards a positive learning experience for the class. Attendance will be taken randomly. Your participation grade will also reflect your engagement in the course via Twitter using the course hashtag #UNMpols200.

Short Papers: You will be responsible for writing three, 3-page papers over the course of the semester. These papers are designed to get you to think more critically about the assigned readings for the week and gain some analytical writing experience. Each week we will upload questions to the course website that correspond to the topic addressed in the week’s readings. In three pages, you must address one or more of those questions with specific references to the readings and class discussion. The papers will be due at the start of class on the Monday following the week that we discuss the topic. Late papers will not be accepted except in the event of documented, extenuating circumstances. You are free to choose any three weeks wherein we are covering new material (i.e. not the weeks of spring break or the final exam review). We encourage you to choose weeks that cover topics that you are interested in and not to wait until the last three weeks of class to complete your papers.

Required Text:

Fiorina, M, et al. (2009). *The New American Democracy, 7th Edition*. New York: Longman Publishers.

Also strongly recommended is:

Any quality writing guide - I prefer to use *A Pocket Style Manual* by Diana Hacker

Course Website:

I will use Learn.unm.edu to share announcements and additional course readings beyond the textbook. Additionally, all paper assignments will be posted to the Learn site one week before they are due.

Course Policies:

- All course readings should be completed by the beginning of the class for which they are assigned.
- Come prepared with thoughts and questions on the readings.
- Limit email correspondence to brief business matters (absences, quick clarifications, emergencies). Substantive questions and exchanges should happen during office hours.
- Attendance is required in class.

Academic Integrity:

It is expected that students attending the University of New Mexico understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity, and are willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Any work (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill an academic requirement must represent a student's original work. Any act of academic dishonesty such as cheating or plagiarism, will subject a person to university disciplinary action. Using or attempting to use materials, information, study aids, or commercial "research" services not authorized by the instructor of the course constitutes cheating. Representing the words, ideas, or concepts of another person without appropriate attribution is plagiarism. Whenever another person's written work is utilized, whether it be a single phrase or longer, quotation marks must be used and sources cited. Paraphrasing another's work, i.e., borrowing the ideas or concepts and putting them into one's "own" words, must also be acknowledged.

Academic Freedom:

You are strongly encouraged to participate in this course in a constructive fashion. Any class that addresses politics and opinion, is bound show us that we all have different individual politics and opinions. You may find that at times you disagree with other student's positions or the position of the professor. In this class you will be graded on the *quality* of your discussion, not on your point of view. It is my hope that the diversity we all bring to the classroom, discussed in a welcoming and non-judgmental environment, will benefit us all. Every effort will be made by me to facilitate a healthy environment of diverse opinions and *disrespectful commentary will not be tolerated.*

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. The students will demonstrate an ability to think critically regarding political problems, trends, and developments.
2. The students will demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively.
3. The students will demonstrate strong analytical writing skills.
4. The students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts and theories in political science.
5. The students will be able to apply political science theories and/or concepts to real-world cases or be able to apply a case or set of cases using an appropriate theory.
6. The students will be able to evaluate theories, either in light of empirical evidence or on theoretical grounds.
7. The students will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their rights and obligations as a citizen.

Useful Campus Services:

- Center for Academic Program Support (CAPS): <http://caps.unm.edu/> for help with writing or other tutoring needs.
- Student Health & Counseling: <http://shac.unm.edu/> for all physical and mental health needs.
- *Qualified students with disabilities needing appropriate academic adjustments should contact me as soon as possible to ensure your needs are met in a timely manner. Handouts are available in alternative accessible formats upon request*

Course Reading and Assignment Schedule

Date:	Day:	Topic:	Readings for class:	Assignments Due:
18-Jan	Monday	No Class - MLK Jr.		
20-Jan	Wednesday	Course Introduction	Course Syllabus	
22-Jan	Friday	No Class		Get book, get ahead!
25-Jan	Monday	Democracy in the U.S.	Fiorina, Chapter 1	
27-Jan	Wednesday	Establishing a Constitutional Democracy	Fiorina, Chapter 2	
29-Jan	Friday	Discussion: Constitutionality of the death penalty	Fiorina, pp. 56-59	
1-Feb	Monday	Federalism	Fiorina, Chapter 3	Paper 1
3-Feb	Wednesday	Federalism		
5-Feb	Friday	Discussion: The Politics of Marijuana	[LEARN] Legalization of marijuana: Vox.com and NYT article on	
8-Feb	Monday	Civil Liberties	Fiorina, Chapter 16	Paper 2
10-Feb	Wednesday	Civil Liberties		
12-Feb	Friday	Discussion: School Vouchers & Charter Schools	Fiorina, pp. 488-490 and [LEARN] Article on charter schools	
15-Feb	Monday	Civil Rights	Fiorina, Chapter 17	Paper 3
17-Feb	Wednesday	Civil Rights		
19-Feb	Friday	Discussion: Affirmative Action	Fiorina, pp. 519-521 [LEARN] Article on poverty preference admissions	

22-Feb	Monday	Public Opinion	Fiorina, Chapter 5	Paper 4
24-Feb	Wednesday	Public Opinion		
26-Feb	Friday	Discussion: Social Media and Public Opinion	[LEARN] Facebook and the fight for gay marriage and article from <i>Foreign Policy</i> on "Slacktivism"	

29-Feb	Monday	Media	Fiorina, Chapter 9	Paper 5
2-Mar	Wednesday	Media		
4-Mar	Friday	Discussion:	[LEARN] Monkey Cage Blog debate on political polarization and the news media (Arceneaux & Levendusky)	

7-Mar	Monday	Individual Participation	Fiorina, Chapter 6	Paper 6
9-Mar	Wednesday	Individual Participation		
11-Mar	Friday	MIDTERM		Exam

14-Mar	Monday	No Class - Spring Break		
16-Mar	Wednesday	No Class - Spring Break		
18-Mar	Friday	No Class - Spring Break		

21-Mar	Monday	Interest Groups	Fiorina, Chapter 7	
23-Mar	Wednesday	Political Parties	Fiorina, Chapter 8	
25-Mar	Friday	Discussion: Who really matters in our democracy?	[LEARN] VOX.com report on Gilens & Page article	

28-Mar	Monday	Campaigns & Elections: Congress	Fiorina, Chapter 11	Paper 7
30-Mar	Wednesday	Campaigns & Elections: President	Fiorina, Chapter 10	
1-Apr	Friday	Discussion: Campaign Spending	[LEARN] VOX.com post "40 Charts that Explain Money in Politics"	

4-Apr	Monday	The Presidency	Fiorina, Chapter 13	Paper 8
6-Apr	Wednesday	The Federal Bureaucracy	Fiorina, Chapter 14	
8-Apr	Friday	Discussion: TBD	TBD	

11-Apr	Monday	The U.S. Judicial System	Fiorina, Chapter 15	Paper 9
13-Apr	Wednesday	The U.S. Judicial System		
15-Apr	Friday	Discussion: Constitutional Interpretation: Is it a living or a dead Constitution?	[LEARN] Scalia - <i>Common-Law Courts in a Civil System: The Role of the United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution</i> ; Breyer - <i>Our Democratic Constitution</i>	

18-Apr	Monday	Congress	Fiorina, Chapter 12	Paper 10
20-Apr	Wednesday	Congress		
22-Apr	Friday	Discussion: Congressional Reform	[LEARN] Monkey Cage post on polarization in Congress	

25-Apr	Monday	Domestic Policy	Fiorina, Chapter 18	Paper 11
27-Apr	Wednesday	Domestic Policy		
29-Apr	Friday	Discussion:	TBD	

2-May	Monday	Economic Policy	Fiorina, Chapter 19	Paper 12
4-May	Wednesday	Economic Policy		
6-May	Friday	Review for Final		

13-May	Final Exam	Friday 7:30 am - 9:30 am		Exam
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