

CASPER COLLEGE COURSE SYLLABUS  
**POLS 2000 – Current Issues in American Government**

**Semester/Year: Fall 2015**

**Lecture Hours: 3**

**Lab Hours: n/a**

**Credit Hours: 3**

**Class Time: 11:00 – 12:15**

**Days: T,Th**

**Room: Liesinger Hall 184**

**Instructor's Name: Dr. Nathan Blank**

**Instructor's Contact**

**Information:** email is best

**Office Phone: 307-268-2272**

**Email:**

nblank@caspercollege.edu

**Office Hours:**

Mon 8:30-9, 12-1

Tues 8:30-9:30

Wed 8:30-9, 12-1

Thurs 8:30-9:30

Fri 8:30-9, 12-1 or by appointment

**Course Description:** This course examines current political topics in the United States. It focuses on key public policy problems, the policy-making process and the final policy choice. Students must keep abreast of political events on a daily basis and apply basic concepts in American government to current affairs.

**Statement of Prerequisites:** Each enrolled student must have completed U.S. and Wyoming Government (POLS 1000), or History of Western Civilization (HIST 1120), or have the permission of the instructor.

**Goal:** This course is designed to provide you with information on the bases for policy-making in the United States as well as the institutional issues that impact policy-making. This information will provide the context for our study of a variety of important public policy problems confronting this country in the 21st century. We will explore the principal facets of each problem and the possible solutions to them. Some of the problems that we will address include immigration, poverty and wealth, race and ethnicity, democracy, and our political institutions. Much of what you learn in this course is dependent upon you. Your full participation through completing the readings and assignments, taking part (and attending) in class discussion and work, and keeping informed of current political events will make this course a fruitful endeavor for everyone involved.

**Course Objectives/Outcomes:** It is expected that completion of this course will assist each student in becoming:

1. knowledgeable of the organization, bases, and processes of policy-making in the federal government;
2. knowledgeable of the organization, bases, and processes of policy-making in state and local governments in the United States;
3. better able to understand political affairs and their implications;
4. knowledgeable of the key policy issues confronting the United States in the 21st century;
5. familiar with the policy options that could be utilized to address public problems and concerns;

6. better able to meet the reading, writing, researching, and speaking demands essential for a college experience (this relates to the college's general education outcomes #1 "Demonstrate effective oral and written communication" and #6 "Use appropriate technology and information to conduct research").

**\*Casper College may collect samples of student work demonstrating achievement of the above outcomes. Any personally identifying information will be removed from student work.**

**Methodology:** Lecture/discussion, some homework assignments (quizzes in particular) will be conducted through Moodle. Your feedback is valuable as I use course evaluations in determining course methodology.

**Evaluation Criteria:**

Final Course Grade – Grading Scale – Grade Determination – Grade Weight

This point breakdown is an estimate only:

First Exam	100 Points
Second Exam	100 Points
Third Exam/ Final Exam	100 Points
Term Papers (2 x 50)	100 Points
Quizzes, Assignments, Presentation, & Participation	200 Points
Attendance	50 Points

- A = 650-585
- B = 584-520
- C = 519-455
- D = 454 -390
- F = 389 and below

Your grade will be calculated according to the point values listed above based on the total points possible and the total points you have accumulated throughout the semester. It is therefore possible for you to keep an accurate record of your grade in the course.

\*\*\*\* Each and every quiz, test, assignment, etc. not completed will receive a 0 (zero) and will be added in accordingly.

**Required Text, Readings, and Materials:** Bruce Miroff, et. al. *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics*, Seventh Edition (Wadsworth Cengage) ISBN: 9780495913474  
Joffe, Joseph. 2014. *The Myth of America's Decline: Politics, Economics, and a Half Century of False Prophecies*. New York: W.W. Norton.  
Computer with word processing software (i.e. Microsoft Word), Moodle

**Class Policies:**

First and foremost I anticipate that you will enjoy this class! Don't believe me? I only ask that you give me a chance to prove you wrong, and that you keep an open mind regarding the activities we engage in.

*Readings:* All assigned readings should be completed **BEFORE** the class period at which they will be discussed. **ALL students are expected** to participate in class discussions. Unannounced quizzes will cover current course material as well as articles handed out in class. It is highly recommended that students keep up with the reading in order to do well on the quizzes.

*Exams:* Exams in this course MAY consist of any combination of multiple choice, true / false, short answer, and essay type questions. The **Final Exam WILL NOT** be cumulative and will only cover material from the final portion of the semester. EXAMS will cover required text material, material presented in class lectures/discussions, and other supplementary material, including hand-outs, and videos.

**Attendance Policy:**

STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND CLASS REGULARLY. **It is your responsibility to sign the roll sheet each class meeting.**

Each student is allocated 50 attendance points for the semester. Each student will receive 2 “free” absences after which each successive absence will result in a 10 point deduction from the attendance point total. Students with perfect attendance (excused absences allowed) will receive a further 20 point bonus. Exams and quizzes administered in this course will cover both required text materials and information presented in class. Students are responsible for any material missed due to an absence. Quizzes and in-class written assignments will be used to further “encourage” class attendance. No make-up of the quizzes or in-class written assignments will be allowed. There is a direct correlation between attendance and success in academic courses. We are all adults and are free to make our own decisions in regard to attending class. This policy is meant to reward you for being a good student.

**Missed Exam Policy:**

Make-up exams will be administered and late papers will be accepted **ONLY** in case of **EXTREME** emergency. **PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE MADE IF AT ALL POSSIBLE.** Proof of the emergency will be required from the student and **the decision whether to administer a make-up exam or accept a late paper will be made by the instructor.** UNANNOUNCED QUIZZES and in-class projects will be given during the semester. **NO MAKE-UP QUIZZES or MAKE-UP OF IN-CLASS WORK** will be given. The student **MUST** be in class during the quiz in order to receive credit for the quiz. **All approved test make-ups will be given during the last week of regular classes by appointment.** It is in your best interest to be present for exams in order to avoid taking them during the final week. It is your responsibility to keep track of which exams you need to make up and to remind me before the final week of class.

\*Please note: EXAMS during the semester **MAY NOT** be given only at the beginning of class. If the exams are given at the beginning of class, any student arriving late **WILL NOT** be allowed any extra time to complete the exam. All students will be expected to complete the exam in the allotted time.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Please see above

**Cell Phones:** Students are not permitted to use phones during class. No text messaging is permitted in the classroom. Since text messaging is distracting to the instructor and fellow classmates, students found using phones during class will be removed from the classroom which will result in a loss of participation/attendance points for the session.

**Last Date to Change to Audit Status or to Withdraw with a W Grade: November 12<sup>th</sup>.** From the last day to drop a course without a grade through mid-term (11/12), students, at their discretion, may officially withdraw from this class and receive a grade of W. After the withdraw deadline I will allow a student to withdraw only under extenuating circumstances such as illness or accident.

**Student Rights and Responsibilities:** Please refer to the Casper College Student Conduct and Judicial Code for information concerning your rights and responsibilities as a Casper College Student.

**Chain of Command:** If you have any problems with this class, you should first contact the instructor to attempt to solve the problem. If you are not satisfied with the solution offered by the instructor, you should then take the matter through the appropriate chain of command starting with the Department Head/Program Director, the Dean, and lastly the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

**Academic Dishonesty:** (Cheating & Plagiarism) Casper College demands intellectual honesty. Proven plagiarism or any form of dishonesty associated with the academic process can result in the offender failing the course in which the offense was committed or expulsion from school. See the Casper College Student Code of Conduct for more information on this topic.

**Official Means of Communication:** Casper College faculty and staff will employ the student's assigned Casper College email account as a primary method of communication. Students are responsible to check their account regularly. This is also, where you will find course evaluation links during course evaluation periods.

**ADA Accommodations Policy:** If you need academic accommodations because of a disability, please inform me as soon as possible. See me privately after class, or during my office hours. To request academic accommodations, students must first consult with the college's Disability Services Counselor located in the Gateway Building, Room 344, (307) 268-2557, [bheuer@caspercollege.edu](mailto:bheuer@caspercollege.edu). The Disability Services Counselor is responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting accommodations, determining eligibility for accommodations, and helping students request and use appropriate accommodations.

**Calendar or schedule indicating course content:**

Dates (Tentative)	Activities/ Assignments (Tentative)
8/24 – 8/30	Miroff chapter 1
8/31 – 9/6	Miroff chapter 2, Joffe chapter 1
9/7 – 9/13	Miroff chapter 3, Joffe chapter 2
9/14 – 9/20	Exam 1, Miroff chapter 4
9/21 – 9/27	Miroff chapter 5, Joffe chapter 3
9/28 – 10/4	Miroff chapter 6
10/5 – 10/11	Miroff chapter 7, Joffe chapter 4
10/12 – 10/18	Miroff chapter 8, Joffe chapter 5
10/19 – 10/25	Miroff chapter 9, Exam 2
10/26 – 11/1	Miroff chapter 10
11/2 – 11/8	Miroff chapter 11, Joffe chapter 6
11/9 – 11/15	Miroff chapter 12
11/16 – 11/22	Miroff chapter 13, Joffe chapter 7
11/23 – 11/29	Miroff chapter 14 & 15
11/30 – 12/6	Miroff chapter 16 & 17
12/7 – 12/13	Final Exam (Exam 4) during finals week