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PSC 383.01: Montana Politics - The Real Story

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The University Of Montana

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POLITICAL SCIENCE 383
MONTANA POLITICS: THE REAL STORY

SPRING 2009

Instructors: Bob Brown

Class time: Monday, 4:10 – 6:30 p.m.

Room: LA 337

Course description:

The course introduces students to modern and significant developments in the foundations of Montana politics and state government, and how Montana's political process functions from the viewpoints of those directly involved within it.

Course objectives:

1. To provide an understanding of the Montana political landscape and the factors and trends that continue to influence public policy in 2009.
2. To introduce to students a wide array of public figures who shape electoral politics and public policy in Montana, and to allow for an exchange of thoughts and ideas during each class.
3. To impart a substantive knowledge of the structure and operation of state government and how Montana's political system functions and guides public policy.

Course requirements:

Class attendance and participation	20 points
Midterm exam	80 points
Final Exam	100 points
Legislative report	50 points

The midterm and final exams will be a combination of objective questions and short answer essays on material presented in class and any assigned readings.

Using the Montana legislature's LAWS bill tracking system, choose one Senate bill and one House bill. Prepare a 2-3 page report on each in which you indicate the bill's number, title and your own descriptive analysis of its contents. Include the bill's current status, and your view of why the bill should or should not become law.

Present a brief summary to the class of one of the two bills in your written report. Two or three of these can be presented each class period, allowing some time for discussion. The first

legislative reports to the class will be presented on February 9. Notify Mr. Brown the week prior to when you will present your bill summary in class accompanied by your written report.

Schedule:

January 26 Introduction to course and historical perspective on Montana politics.

February 2 The legislative process – How does a bill really become law?

Guests:

1. Former Montana House Minority Leader and Speaker John Mercer
2. Former Montana Senate Majority Leader and President Fred VanValkenburg

February 9 Legislative reapportionment and the balance of power. How important is partisan control?

Guests:

1. Susan Fox, Director of the Montana Legislative Services Division and past chief of staff to the Montana Reapportionment Commission
2. Former Senate Majority Leader Fred Thomas

February 16 President's Day – no class

February 23 Legislative structure and organization: term limits, open caucuses, annual legislative sessions, single member legislative districts, super majorities, alphabetical seating.

Guests:

1. Former Montana Senate Minority Leader and Judiciary Committee Chair, Mike Halligan
2. Former Montana Senator and Natural Resources Committee Chair Lorents Grossfield

March 2 Legislative Structure Part II: Unicameral, Bicameral and Parliamentary Systems

Guests:

1. Former State Representative and Missoula Mayor Mike Kadas
2. Former Montana Constitutional Convention delegate Bob Kelleher

March 9 The Third House: Lobbyists and Lobbying

Guests:

1. Registered Lobbyist Mona Jamison
2. Registered Lobbyist Stuart Doggett

March 16 The Initiative Process: Direct Democracy

Guests:

1. UM Law School Professor Rob Natelson
2. Attorney Jon Motl

March 23 Midterm exam

March 30 Spring Break.

April 6 The Executive Budget and the Appropriations Process

Guests:

1. Governor's Budget Director David Ewer
2. Legislative Fiscal Analyst Clayton Schenck

April 13 The Office of the Governor: Montana's Chief Executive

Guests:

1. Former Governor Judy Martz

April 20 "The Other Statewides": Montana's elected executives

Guest:

1. Attorney General Steve Bullock
2. Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau

April 27 The Public Service Commission

Guests:

1. P.S.C. Chair Greg Jergeson
2. Commissioner Gail Gutsche

May 4 To be announced

May 14 Final Exam, 3:20 – 5:20, LA 337