PSC 383.01: Montana Politics - The Real Story

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POLITICAL SCIENCE 383
MONTANA POLITICS: THE REAL STORY

SPRING 2007

Instructors:  Bob Brown and Mike Halligan

Class time:  Wednesday, 4:10 – 6:30 p.m.

Room:  Gallagher Building L11

Course description:

The course introduces students to modern and significant developments in the foundations of Montana politics and state government, how Montana politics function from a practitioner’s standpoint and opportunity for reform.

Course objectives:

1. To acquire an understanding of the Montana political landscape and the factors and trends that continue to influence public policy in 2007.
2. To introduce students to 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 acquire a substantive knowledge of the structure and operation of state government and how Montana’s political system functions and guides public policy.

Course requirements:

A. Submit two plans: Each plan should be approximately 10-12 pages in length, double-spaced. They should be concise, tightly written and to the point.
   2. Strategic plan to secure the enactment of either of two proposals: a bill to enable Montana to coordinate our presidential primary with other western states, or a bill mandating all-day kindergarten in all public schools in Montana. Deadline: May 2.

B. Personal journal
   1. Keep a personal journal of impressions of Montana politics for the duration of the course.
   2. Prior to each class, record ideas and concepts you found most interesting from the required readings. After each class record impressions about the ideas and concepts presented in class.
Grading:

1. 40% for each plan (total 80%)
2. 20% for the journal

Schedule:

January 24  Review course outline and objectives
Overview of recent Montana history

January 31  Constitutional Reform
Readings:


Guests:

1. Jean Bowman, Member – Montana Constitutional Convention.

February 7  Party Politics: How the Montana Republican and Democratic Parties Function and Influence Montana Politics

Readings:

5. Montana Republican Party website
6. Montana Democratic Party website

Guests:
1. Carl Ohs, Chairman – Montana Republican Party;
2. Bob Ream, former Chairman – Montana Democratic Party.

February 15  Campaign Plan Development: How to Organize and Conduct a Successful Campaign for the Montana Legislature

Readings:

Guests:

February 21  Montana Legislature: Structure and Processes

Readings:

Guests:
1. Fred VanValkenburg, former president of the Montana Senate
2. John Mercer, former speaker of the Montana House of Representatives

February 28  Lobbyists: How the Montana Legislature functions from a lobbyist’s perspective

Readings:

Guests:
1. Mike Pichette, Registered Lobbyist
2. George Ochenski, former registered lobbyist

March 7  Significant Legislative enactments in recent legislature session
Readings:

Guests:
1. Bob Raney, Member, Montana Public Service Commission
2. State Representative Alan Olson

March 14  Human Rights and Montana Minorities

Guests:
1. Janice Doggett, Chief Legal Council, Montana Secretary of State
2. Dr. Ray Cross, law professor, University of Montana

**Note: First paper due — Campaign plan against incumbent**

March 21  Executive Reorganization: Structure before and after Reorganization

Readings:

Guests:
1. Duke Crowley, former director – Montana Executive Reorganization Commission
2. Mark Simonich – Member of 1994 Blue Ribbon Committee to Renew State Government

March 28  Spring Break.

April 4  Money: the Budget and Appropriations Processes

Readings:

Guests:
1. Clayton Schenck, Director, Legislative Fiscal Division
2. Mick Robinson, Associate Commissioner of Higher Education for Fiscal Affairs, and former director of the Montana Department of Revenue
April 11  
Judiciary: Structure and Operation  
Readings:  

Guests:  
1. Jim Rice, Associate Justice, Montana Supreme Court  
2. Karen Townsend, former Chief Deputy County Attorney, Missoula County  

April 18  
The Initiative and Referenda Processes and their places in the political process  
Readings:  
5. Federal Court decision overturning two referenda proposing to change the signature gathering process (Constitutional Revision – C 37) and (Statutory Revision – C 38) adopted by the 2001 Legislature, referred to the voter and approved by the voters in November 2002.  

Guest:  
1. Montana Secretary of State Brad Johnson  

April 25  
Board of Public Education: Autonomy, Powers and Function  
Readings:  

Guest:  
1. Diane Fladmo, Chair, Montana Board of Public Education  

Board of Regents: Autonomy, Powers and Functions  
Readings:  


Guest:
1. Steve Barrett, Member, State Board of Regents

May 2
Reinventing the Legislature

Guests:
1. State Senator Dave Wanzenreid
2. State Senator Jim Shockley

Note second paper due: Plan to secure enactment of a bill by the legislature.

May 10
Final Class – 3:20-5:20 p.m.