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New Jersey Politics – Past, Present, Future

Prof. Adam Zellner

New Jersey has produced more political leaders, scientists, actors, athletes and academic leaders than any other state in our Nation. New Jersey is a melting pot of socio-economic, ethnic and racial history that has helped to shape the United States. These and other factors have helped to produce a state where, today, top leaders throughout the world look to New Jersey, and its innovative ways of tackling problems, as a blue print for their own challenges. Energy, the environment, politics and regulations all come together to help create an atmosphere that has fostered both good and bad throughout the State's history.

In addition to the history of New Jersey, the class will examine the political process and help to educate students on the various levels, responsibilities, powers and influence that the different levels of government in our State and Nation have. Political science, marketing, economics, press, public relations and finance are all a part of the system that helps make New Jersey an engine of innovation. The class will also study the current state of our national political system and what New Jersey's role will be in the coming years.

Governors, Supreme Court Justices, famous and infamous Mayors, Prosecutors, gangsters and even an occasional rock star, along with hundreds of other names, are all helping to make, or shape, the news and policies we see and talk about. These influential people's careers and backgrounds were shaped in New Jersey and this class will look at the good, the bad and the ugliness that sometimes is New Jersey politics.

Course structure

Class will meet regularly at the appointed times.

Assignments and Grading

Your attendance is very important. This class will be interactive and attendance and public participation count for 50% of your grade. The other 50% will be made up of a mid term paper and a final exam. The final exam will require each student to give a year-end presentation on one of two topics that will be assigned during the year.

Breakdown:

Attendance 25%, Public Participation 25%, Mid-term essay. 5-8 pages double-spaced 25%, Final Exam Presentation 25%

Contact Information:

I will try and make myself available 30 minutes before every class. In addition, I have an office in New Brunswick and students are encouraged to call and make an appointment if they need time. The best way to get me is either by phone 732-253-7717 or by email adamzllnr@gmail.com.

Reading Materials:

On Line Assignments and Additional Newspaper or on-line sources of information will be distributed for background information during each class.

New Jersey Politics Class Outline: RU-NB Thursday PM

Date _____ Class Topic and Required Reading

Thursday January 21: Class Topic: History of NJ Politics – How did we get here?
State Powers, Political Parties, Government Subdivision and Powers

Reading Due: http://www.state.nj.us/nj/about/history/short_history.html

A Brief discussion of New Jersey's past, present and future and what makes New Jersey such a unique place.

Thursday, January 28: Class Topic: Local Governments – Municipal Madness
Powers of local government, changes over time, home rule, state vs. local authority.

Reading Due: http://www.njslom.org/bureau_mun_info.html
<http://www.njslom.org/>

Students are to look at the web site and examine the services offered, the topics discussed and the get a general understanding of what the League of Municipalities does.

Note: Guest Speaker

Thursday, February 4: Class Topic County Government – Freeholders – County Executives – County Managers
Note: Midterm Papers will be discussed – they are due 3/3

Reading due: <http://www.njac.org>

Students should familiarize themselves with what County Government's do and the major issues the NJAC, the lobby arm for New Jersey's Counties, is interested in.

Note: Guest Speaker

Thursday, February 11: Class Topic Voters, Constituents, Interests – Who are they?
2 Party system, political bosses, committee system

Reading due: <http://www.njelections.org/publications/elections-faq-0921-2012.pdf>

This class will look at who can vote and why. Students should read the above link and be prepared to discuss the basics of the election process.

Thursday, February 18: Class Topic: The power of the Governor
Cabinet, Appointments, Rules, Regulations
EO

Reading Due: <http://www.state.nj.us/governor/>

New Jersey has the most executively powerful Governor in the United States based on overall power to implement policy. Students should come prepared to discuss the Governor's powers and what Governor Christie's cabinet and his office do.

Thursday, February 25: Class Topic: The Legislature

Breakdown, power, committee's, partisan staff

Reading Due <http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/legislativepub/history.asp>

This class will focus on the power of the legislature and its history. Where are they from? What do they do? What powers do they have – Senate vs. Assembly.

Guest Speaker

Thursday, March 3: Class Topic Lobbying / Special Interest

Go over mid term papers due following week

Reading Due: <http://www.elec.state.nj.us/index.htm>

The New Jersey Election Law Enforcement Commission helps to track and regulate what candidates can raise and spend money on. Students should look at the web site and browse through the some of the candidate, party or industry contribution reports to get an understanding of who gets money and who gives money in New Jersey's political world.

NOTE: MID TERM PAPERS DUE

SPRING BREAK MARCH 10

Thursday, March 17: Class Topic Independent Authorities

Reading Due: <http://www.state.nj.us/nj/gov/deptserv/>

New Jersey has a long tradition of placing policy, financial and political power in the hands of Independent Authorities. Turnpike, Sports Authority, Economic Development Authority and many others control billions of dollars worth of contracts and decisions. Students should focus on what those authorities are and how they are different from the Cabinet and other offices we have discussed.

Thursday, March 24: Class Topic Federal Representatives – House and Senate and how they work with New Jersey's representatives. Federal offices and their interaction with state offices and authorities. Who trumps whom!

We will begin discussion on the final presentation

Reading Due: Students are expected to look up their Congressional Representatives web site and look at the issues he or she supports.

Students should become familiar with who their Congressional Representative is and what he or she's major issues are. We will discuss why Congress is so important and what New Jersey's role had been in helping to shape some of the major decisions. We will also look at issues like term limits and how congress raises money and why.

Thursday, March 31: Class Topic: Power of Money, appointment and contracts
Bidding laws, public disclosure, OPRA, financial Disclosures.

Required Reading:

http://www.state.nj.us/treasury/purchase/doing_business_brochure_NEW1.pdf

This class will look at who does work with the state, local or county governments. How does the state award contract and for how much? Who gets them and why? Students should look at the state's procurement website and be prepared to discuss how the state and local governments do business.

Thursday, April 7: Class Topic: The Courts and Education
Education and the Courts – why are they linked?
Powers of Courts, Powers of School Boards
Politics of the Board

Reading Due:

<http://www.edlawcenter.org/cases/abbott-v-burke/abbott-history.html>

New Jersey has a long history of progressive education and continues to be one of the best-educated and most expensive school systems in America. Students should read the history of the abbott v burke case that tested New Jersey's education funding system.

Thursday, April 14: Class Topic Elections, Referendum – I and R – Ballot Questions
Issue Framing
Who participates, why and how they control policy.

Reading Due:

http://ballotpedia.org/New_Jersey_Initiative_and_Referendum_on_Fiscal_Policy_Amendment_%282014%29

This class will focus on the Initiative and Referendum issue. What does a Ballot question mean here in New Jersey? Is it binding? Who participates? Should citizens have the right to change the law without the legislature and governor?

PREP FOR FIRST ROUND OF ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Thursday, April 21: The politics meets the policy – A look at the support behind the machines:
Lawyers, professional services, consultants, engineers, education, etc.
Reading Due: NJ Biz Handout provided
Note: Oral Presentations will begin for some

Thursday, April 28: Oral Presentations

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