The Business of Politics Syllabus

Course Description:

This class is for students who want to better understand the relationship between politics and business. Students of this class will be better prepared to understand business as a political actor, the regulation of business by government, business participation in the policymaking process, and constraints on business as a political power, among other topics. Students taking this class will walk away prepared to help manage their organization through the policy and political landscape in a manner that is advantageous to their business.

Specifically, this course will present:

- The basic structure of federal, state, and local governments (a civics 101 of sorts), including a detailed discussion of how bills become laws, and laws become regulation.

- Consideration of why we have regulation of business; who is regulated, who does the regulating, and the process of regulatory advocacy.

- The structure and purpose of political campaigns, polling, surveys, and the use of political contributions to influence the outcome of campaigns, including Political Action Committees (PACs).

- The role and purpose of in-house government relations programs, trade associations, lobbyists, and interest groups.

- The ethics of business and politics, including the Fair Political Practices Commission and corporate social responsibility.

- A thorough discussion about issues facing states today: the failed state, chronic budget shortfalls, political dysfunction, job losses and relocation to other states, and where we go from here.

  o Note: We will be using California state politics and policy as case studies since 85% of GSM graduates go on to work here in CA, but concepts we are discussing will be applicable to the federal level, all 50 states, and local government.

Concepts and theories will be presented in part through the help of guest speakers. These will include leading elected officials, lobbyists for business and labor groups, regulatory experts, and campaign managers who work with and advise the business community on political strategy and donations.

Students will work individually and in groups to analyze a regulation/statute/election that has profoundly affected the business environment in California. Students will present their research and findings to the rest of the class in the final two weeks of class. Students will also become familiar with political research tools such as the Secretary of State’s online lobbying and campaign tracking website and elections results website.

Classes will generally begin with a short lecture followed by guest speakers and extensive interactive class discussion.
Grading:

This course will be graded on a letter basis, A to F. The grade will be subject to the following components, which must be completed to receive a passing grade. In other words, turning in homework assignments and a final presentation but not attending class will not allow a passing grade. Attendance will not be taken, but due to the extensive and unique nature of invited guest speakers, and the desire to create an interactive environment, attendance is highly recommended. Please clear absences prior to the day of class – I am always available via email or phone for emergency. Having recently been a Working Professional student myself I understand there are times you must miss class, but any student missing more than two classes will not receive a passing grade.

- Class Participation: 30% (attendance, group show and tell)
- Homework Assignments: 40% (short 1-2 page assignments)
- Final Presentation: 30% (group presentation)

Assignments:

In addition to assigned readings, which should be completed prior to class, students will be responsible for individual and group assignments, including bi-weekly group class presentations, 4 short writing assignments and one final group presentation.

- Students will organize into groups of 3-4 people (depending on class size). Each group will be responsible for finding an issue of interest related to business and politics (show and tell) to discuss for 5 minutes at the beginning of every other class. These short presentations should integrate the concepts we have, or will be, discussing in class, and should demonstrate to others the inter-relationship that policy and political decisions have on business activity at the state and national level.

- Various modules will require students to complete individual homework assignments on the topic of taxation, political reform, campaigns, etc. None of these assignments will be longer than 1-2 pages, and we will discuss them in further detail during the lecture. Anticipate 3-4 of these short assignments.

- For the final group presentation students will work in their teams to do an in depth analysis of a statute / regulation / political election that they feel has changed the face of conducting business in California. No written report is required, but groups should prepare a PowerPoint or other electronic presentation to present their findings to the class. Students should feel free to use current or historic examples, but should clear the topic with me prior to beginning their research (I will ensure that no two presentations are similar to each other for maximum impact and analysis). Group presentations will occur during the last two classes of the quarter. Presentation should be approximately 15 mins in length, with 5 minutes devoted to Q&A.

Text and Course Material:

- Power and Politics in California, Debow and Syer, 9th Edition
- California’s Legislature 2006 (provided in class on the first day free of charge)
- CA Political Maps 2013-2014 California Legislative Districts map/headshots of elected officials

Instructor Background and Contact Information:

Mark Smith is a UCD GSM alum and Director of Government Relations for the American Council of Engineering Companies of California, a trade association representing 1100 companies and 23,000 employees in California. The primary mission of the association is to influence policy and politics on behalf of the values of its member organizations. ACEC CA is a state member of ACEC, a national association headquartered in Washington, D.C. As the lead lobbyist at ACEC California, Mark’s primary duties include policy advocacy at the state and local level, managing contract lobbyists, oversight and distribution of political contributions through the ACEC CA PAC, and grassroots coordination of the membership throughout the state.

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**Class Schedule**

**Class 1:**

Part 1:
Class Introductions / Review Syllabus / Purpose of the class

Part 2:
A historical perspective on California’s political background. The major political powers in California and how they have changed over time.

Part 3:
Review of the government organizational structure at the Federal / State / County / City (local).

Reading:
Debow and Syer, Chaps. 1, 2, 4

**Class 2:**

Part 1:
Civics 101 – Bill process. How a bill becomes a law: Federal and state lawmaking and committee process. County and local government regulations and ordinances.

Part 2:
Propositions (citizen or legislative initiatives). Paid circulators. Voice of the people?

Reading:
Debow and Syer, Chaps 3, 6

**Class 3:**

Part 1:
Government budget process. Revenues and expenditures.

Part 2:
Government budgets: An insider perspective on California’s systemic budget problems.

Guest speaker
- Thomas Sheehy, Director, Government Affairs GreenbergTraurig

Part 3:

Reading:
Debow and Syer, Chap 9, 10
**Class 4:**

Part 1:  
Judicial 101: The role of the Judiciary branch in the political process. The structure of the legal system at the federal and state level. Recourse and remedies for business against statute and regulations.

Part 2:  
The California Civil Justice Association of California will provide a picture of the California business climate from a legal perspective.

Guest Speaker  
- Kim Stone – President of the Civil Justice Association of California.

Reading:  
Debow and Syer, Chaps 5

**Class 5:**

Part 1:  
Campaign 101. Political parties, money How campaigns are structured, from local races all the way up to Presidential campaigns. Rules governing political campaigns. The business role in Independent Expenditure ads, Issue Advocacy ads, direct campaign contributions at all levels. Other topics include Political Action Committees (PACs), polling, soft and hard money and their uses.

Guest speaker  
- Rob Stutzman – Principle, Navigators LLP.

Part 2:  
Elections: Redistricting. electoral reform. Representative vs. direct democracy, electoral college, is reform really possible?

Part 3:  
Social Media in Politics

**Class 6:**

Part 1:  
Life as an elected official – An insider’s perspective from the local, state level. Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce. The political and policy purpose of regional business associations.

Guest speakers  
- Roger Niello – Former Sacramento County Supervisor and State Assemblyman, current President of the Sacramento Metro Chamber of Commerce.

Part 2:  
Case Study: Apple
**Class 7:**

Part 1:
Regulations: The role of unelected regulators and regulations in the business environment. The philosophy of regulation vs. competitive selection in the marketplace. How regulators use their power to pick winners and losers in the marketplace, and how business can adapt.

Guest speaker
- Andy Puzder, CEO CKE Restaurants (video)

Part 2:
The media (traditional and social media) as a trendsetter. Impact of social mobilization and interest groups on political and business actions.

Case study: Nike

Reading:
Debow and Syer, Chaps 7

**Class 8:**

Part 1:
Lobbying 101 - Government relations and advocacy. The role of government relations in the business environment. The purpose of public relations firms, internal government relations departments, and trade associations.

Guest speakers
- Marc Burgat – Vice President for Government Relations for the California Chamber of Commerce (CONFIRMED)

Part 2:
Mock legislative hearing. Buy American policies.

**Class 9:**

Part 1:
California: Is it as dysfunctional as people say it is? California faces massive structural budget deficits, a declining economy, an aging infrastructure, and a polarized legislature in Sacramento. Can California be governed? Why would or should anyone start, locate, or expand a business in California?

Guest speakers
- Jim Mayer, Executive Director, California Forward

Part 2:
Group presentations

**Class 10:**

Part 1:
Group presentations