



Ron Doyle ~ 303-253-2150 ~ ronald.m.doyle@gmail.com ~ <http://www.rmdoyle.com>

Master’s Capstone Project:

Colorado’s Policy & Plan: High School Civics for Lifetime Commitment

ABSTRACT:

Colorado is one of many states attempting to correct a growing error in our educational curriculum over the past forty years. The importance of civics education has faded away among lesson plans valuing standardized test results for schools. Civic content, when included, is found amid history, government, and/or economics courses. Colorado is part of a nation that fails to understand what civics is and its significance to the functionality of all levels of government as well as broader life in community. Specifically, schools have failed to account for and instruct students about the functioning of their local governments. Colorado has newly updated Model Content Standards for all of the basic units of education including civics. Implementation of these standards can provide students with the skills to evaluate public policy, including the Model Civics Standards themselves.

This project reviews current classroom practice and active resident participation from different areas of Colorado to determine civic inadequacies and how they can best be remedied. Specifically, the project evaluates and compares instruction, comprehension, and engagement in Colorado’s Front Range, northern, south-central, and southwest area. These areas were selected for their unique community values, classroom environment and educational opportunities currently available. Upon identifying different civic setbacks in each classroom and community, the goal of this project is to develop policy suggestions to enhance the civic education and well-being of students and residents in their communities.

Courses:

Summer, 2009
American Politics (PSC 5014)*

Spring, 2009
Politics of the Budgetary Process (PSC 5008)

Fall, 2008
Local Government & Administration (PSC 5084)
Environmental Politics & Policy (PSC 5354)*

Summer, 2008
Comparative Public Policy (PSC 5085)

Spring, 2008
Research Methods in Political Science (PSC 5468)
American Political Thought (PSC 5457)*

Fall, 2007
Organizational Change Agents (PSC 5414)
Politics, Public Policy & Leadership (PSC 5324)

* - Denotes a Seminar Course

Course Descriptions:

American Politics (PSC 5014) – Summer, 2009

When politics is commonly discussed, people generally are thinking on a national level and how that trickles-down to local society. This course was designed to discuss national politics, comparative selectivity in politics and how that impacts our lives. Students reviewed several court cases and had to write a defense paper on them. I argued and wrote on **Kelo vs. City of New London** (2005) on eminent domain. I argued for Kelo, whose home was being moved for a scenic shoreline. Looking back, she lost the case and the process to redevelop the land was significantly delayed. Students had a friendly debate about this case in-class as well as the **San Antonio Independent School District vs. Rodriguez** (1973). Position papers could be written on either case for a final grade.

Politics of the Budgetary Process (PSC 5008) – Spring, 2009

The heading of this course offers a slightly different perspective than most would initially believe. *Politics of the Budgetary Process* did not go through accounting or budgeting books to specifically determine how numbers were generated. It does, however, look at information behind the books to determine why they look the way they do, what can be done to improve in the future (if anything) and how efficiently books need to be managed. The fundamental message from this course was that books are a living representation of the organization and that organized and efficient management can provide greater long-term values to the organization in its entirety. The class helped students direct their attention to efficient budget management and management itself, writing papers and learning collectively from the teacher and other students.

Local Government & Administration (PSC 5084) – Fall, 2008

Perhaps this course best describes the intent of the *Center for New Directions* Program at the *University of Colorado Denver*. Similar to the first class I enrolled in, this course also utilized simulations, problem-solving skills and management techniques through dynamic situations. The bulk of class assignments came from these simulations, allowing students to work collectively and individually to determine, write and learn from some common and not-so-common problems. The large project from this class also came from simulations and where our management style would fit, as young people entering into different administrative roles.

Environmental Politics & Policy (PSC 5354) – Fall, 2008

With “green” becoming a popular word in today’s and future society, environmental politics, processes and products are increasingly becoming more important. This class evaluated some of those politics, processes and discussion, also taking the class to the *National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)* to tour latest technologies. The large paper and project I did for this course also evaluated recycling technology and renewable energy as well. Again, this was presented and discussed in class for others to learn from as well.

Comparative Public Policy (PSC 5085) – Summer, 2008

Comparative Public Policy can evaluate many different components to life, society, government and even history. This course gave students a basic understanding of how to compare these different items, recognize different variables and utilize them in an argument. Collectively, we looked at three different subjects, but the largest one was healthcare, a subject more closely evaluated and revised by the Obama administration a year-and-a-half later. The class did a comparative global study on healthcare, recognizing the world’s strengths and weaknesses and what could potentially work for the United States in a selective process. Our large project for the class was a comparative analysis perspective paper on a “hot” issue. I wrote a paper comparing recycling programs in

Denver, Colorado (test variable) to Portland, Oregon (positive variable) and Houston, Texas (negative variable) and presented it to the class.

Research Methods in Political Science (PSC 5468) – Spring, 2008

This course set the stage for the Program requirements and specifically the Master's Capstone Project which would be attached to our names forever. Immediately, I started writing my proposal for *Colorado's Policy and Plan: High School Civics for Lifetime Commitment*, which at the time was called: *High School Civics to Lifetime Commitment*. The change in a name, a fifteen page proposal (later incorporated into the final project), project framework, sources and timeline set the stage for the final project for the class and Program.

American Political Thought (PSC 5457) – Spring, 2008

Many of today's political concepts are developed from the United States' founding and some of the early debacles following. Lessons learned from the nation's founding and growth are invaluable to many of today's struggles, objectives and perhaps most importantly; processes which was the primary discussion in a class reviewing previous legislation, legal cases and much more. The large project for this course was to develop a legal argument/precedent based on previous cases and evidence. Our projects were submitted and presented to the class for greater dialogue and potential future research.

Organizational Change Agents (PSC 5414) – Fall, 2007

How does government and management change from within and during the time you are involved with it? Well, in *Organizational Change Agents*, we had the opportunity to review who we are and identify strengths and weaknesses we can bring into a professional environment. The large class project for this course was a personal portfolio discussing ourselves, how we came to be that person and how to utilize strengths for the future within one or more organizations. Our personal portfolios were submitted for a final grade in the class and presented for other students to understand where their other classmates came from, how they can be of assistance/reference in the future and most importantly, what to learn from them.

Politics, Public Policy & Leadership (PSC 5324) – Fall, 2007

This was an introductory course to the Program, discussing the basics to local government, its challenges and processes and how we could effectively attempt to resolve those issues. In addition, the class taught us about efficient policy, the process and politics behind it and leadership methods to advance different measures. Perhaps the most challenging assignment was a small-town management scenario we had to collectively participate in as a class and management group. The assignment effectively incorporated the class topics previously discussed and offered a dynamic discussion on leadership opportunities to mediate conflict with different groups, organizations and problems in their entirety.