MDA 475 – The Future of California

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Introduction and Purposes

- Can California fix itself? Spend a semester helping to determine how the Golden State can regain its luster.

- Students spend the fall semester learning about the state’s policy, cultural and structural challenges, and begin the process of identifying both issue-based solutions as well as options for more underlying government, political and structural reform. In addition to the instructor, students have the opportunity to hear from and question several of USC’s leading faculty members and policy experts from a range of different schools. They also meet with many of Los Angeles’ and California’s most respected public and private sector policy experts, who will offer their insights as to possible solutions for these challenges.

- In addition to traditional classroom lecture, students will convene a half-day “Fixing California” conference, in which academic, political, and government experts will participate in a series of policy discussions and be questioned by students in their areas of expertise. Students will participate in the planning of these events, but also join in the panel discussions, offering their own ideas and insights as part of the conference program.

- The course structure is framed around six two-week policy “pods”, framed by a week of introduction, a midterm week and a wrap-up week. Each pod contains four class meetings, including an overview on the topic, a guest lecture from a USC professor (or professors) working in the relevant field, an interview or panel discussion with two or more private sector and public sector policy experts in that area, and an overview in which the class would learn how this issue interrelates with other policy challenges, and how it must be accompanied by various types of governmental, political or constitutional reform.

- Students will read books or book sections about California history, culture, politics, and government, as well as a variety of assigned readings on the various public policy matters covered over the course of the semester. The booklist is supplemented by articles and other assigned reading from the USC faculty members who visit the class to discuss their academic or issue specialty.

- Students are required to write a semester paper based on the policy, cultural or governance challenge of their choice. Those who choose to enroll in the accompanying MDA 476 research course in the spring will use this paper as the foundation for a semester long group research and analysis project culminating in the development of a range of alternative solutions to the challenge on which they have focused.
Background and Thematic Overview

- Throughout its history, California has periodically faced social, economic, political and cultural challenges and the state has always been able to identify and implement a course of action to continue moving forward and upward to progressively greater levels of success and achievement. In recent years, however, these difficulties seem more insurmountable, and an increasing number of public and private sector leaders have come to believe that the state’s structural and governmental inadequacies prevent our current challenges from being successfully addressed.

- California is a nation-state of 38 million people with an abundance of natural and human resources at our disposal. Yet the state’s economic recession ran much deeper than the national downturn and our recovery lags far behind that of the rest of the country. The state’s budget is in a perpetual state of crisis, and policy debates rage without resolution in the areas of education, energy, environment, health care, transportation, housing and public safety. The dysfunctional relationship between state and local government, the over-reliance on the ballot initiative for policy debate, and the increased polarization between the parties all contribute to the paralysis that now exists and has given rise to talk of the potential need for political, government and constitutional reform.

- The state faces significant cultural and demographic challenges as well, as our community’s work to adapt to an influx of new arrivals from other states and other countries. Rapidly increasing Hispanic-American and Asian-American populations are changing the makeup of the state’s population, providing opportunities for Californians to strengthen our role as a global center for trade and commerce, while also providing a cultural diversity that has historically provided the impetus for the state’s forward progress. But these changes have created tensions as well, which Californians of all ethnicities and origins must confront for the full potential of this diversity can be realized.

- A select group of USC students, with the guidance of faculty, public sector leaders and private sector experts, will learn about California’s myriad challenges. This course is designed to help students understand those challenges, the opportunities and obstacles to successfully confronting those challenges, and equip them with the knowledge to outline possible solutions to them.
Course Grading

1. **Class participation** 10%
   This includes questions and comments during the lecture session of each class, as well as active involvement in class discussion. Students will be expected to be prepared to discuss each week’s assigned reading and to be sufficiently familiar with course material to ask questions of guest speakers.

2. **Homework assignments** 10%
   Students are also assigned weekly short written assignments over the course of the semester to facilitate class discussion and completion of the assigned reading. The homework will not be graded, but completion of the assignments is a prerequisite for this portion of the semester grade.

3. **Authors’ conference preparation** 10%
   Students will assist in the organization of a half-day “Fixing California” conference in September. Each student will play a role in both the logistical preparations for the conference and the preparation of written materials for the participants.

4. **Midterm** 20%
   Overview of material introduced in first portion of semester, including the first three areas of public policy and the accompanying cultural and governance/structural challenges.

5. **Final Paper** 20%
   Students choose a policy, cultural or governance challenge from one of the fields of study covered throughout the semester, and apply the lessons developed from reading, lectures and research to framing the scope of the challenge as well as possible solutions.

6. **Final Exam** 30%
   Overview of material introduced throughout the semester, including all six areas of public policy and the accompanying cultural and governance/structural challenges.

Class Requirements

1. Students are expected to attend all classes. Unexcused absences, lateness in arriving, leaving early (i.e. at the break) and failure to meet the deadlines will have a negative impact on the student’s final grade. We appreciate being notified in advance if a student plans to miss a class.

2. Students who unavoidably miss a class are responsible for getting assignments and notes from a classmate. If an assignment is due, the student is responsible for turning assignments in to me before a class is missed. No excuses. No exceptions.

3. Grammar, spelling and writing ability are extremely important. Students are expected to have learned from prior courses and experience how to produce
written materials that are error-free and meet the quality of standards of this school and the profession.

4. All written assignments must be typed.

5. Participation in class discussion is not optional, but mandatory. Students are expected to have read all course assignments and be prepared to discuss them.

6. There are no make-ups for late assignments. No excuses. No exceptions.

**Course Readings**

California in the New Millennium by Mark Baldassare

The New Political Geography of California by Frederick Douzet

California Politics and Government – A Practical Approach by Larry Gerston and Terry Christiansen

The Next Hundred Million: America in 2050 by Joel Kotkin

Global California: Rising to the Cosmopolitan Challenge by Abraham F. Lowenthal

California: A History (Modern Library Chronicles) by Kevin Starr

Note: Because of the nature of the course material, students are expected to be familiar with daily news developments in the areas of government, politics, business and sports. In addition to the assigned reading, students are encouraged to read at least one daily newspaper per day, watch both local and national news programs, and monitor on-line news coverage of events relevant to the course material.
Class Sessions

August 22 – Class Introduction and Overview

- Course Overview: Weekly Assignments, Reading and Discussion, Final Paper
- Introduction to Six Policy Challenges
- Introduction to Governance/Political/Structural Issues
- Introduction to Cultural/Demographic Factors
- Reading Assignments for August 24: Starr (pp.3-130)
- Writing Assignment for August 24: Questions from Starr reading for class discussion

August 24/29 – Policy Challenge: Economic Growth and Job Creation (I)

- Economic Growth and Job Creation Overview – successes, failures, and opportunities
- Guest lecture (USC faculty)
- Reading Assignment for August 31: Starr (pp.131 – 244), PPIC economic growth analyses
- Writing Assignment for August 31: Questions from PPIC reading for class discussion

August 31/September 7 – Policy Challenge: Economic Growth and Job Creation (II)

- Structural and Political Obstacles to economic policy change
- Economic Growth – Interrelationship with Other Policy Challenges
- Guest panel (public and private sector experts)
- Reading Assignment for September 7: Starr (pp.245 – conclusion)

September 12/14 – Policy Challenge: Education/Workforce Development (I)

- Education/Workforce Development Overview – successes, failures, and opportunities
- Guest lecture (USC faculty)
- Reading Assignment for September 12: (Gerston, pp.1-79) PPIC education policy analyses
- Writing Assignment for September 12: Questions from PPIC reading for class discussion

September 19/21 – Policy Challenge: Education/Workforce Development (II)

- Structural and Political Obstacles to education policy change
- Education/workforce development – Interrelationship with Other Policy Challenges
- Guest panel (public and private sector experts)
- Reading Assignment for September 19: (Gerston, pp.80-158)
- Writing Assignment for September 19: Questions from Gerston reading for class discussion

September 26/28 – Policy Challenge – Environment/Energy/Resources (I)
• Environment/Energy/Resources Overview – successes, failures, and opportunities
• Guest lecture (USC faculty)
• Reading Assignment for September 26: Douzet (pp. 1-70) PPIC environment/energy policy analyses
• Writing Assignment for September 26: Questions from PPIC reading for class discussion

October 3/5 – Policy Challenge: Environment/Energy/Resources (II)
• Structural and Political Obstacles to environmental/energy policy change
• Environment/Energy/Resources – Interrelationship with Other Policy Challenges
• Guest panel (public and private sector experts)
• Reading Assignment for October 3 – Douzet (99-240, 309-325)
• Writing Assignment for October 3: Questions from Douzet reading for class discussion

October 10 – Midterm

October 12 – Structural/Constitutional Challenges
• Summary of Structural and Governmental Obstacles
• Review of Existing Proposals for Structural Reform – Initiative Process
• Guest lecture
• Writing assignment for October 12: topic for final paper

October 17/19 -- Policy Challenge: Transportation/Housing/Infrastructure (I)
• Transportation/Housing/Infrastructure Overview – successes, failures, and opportunities
• Guest lecture (USC faculty)
• Reading Assignment for October 17 – Baldassare (pp. 1 - 98), PPIC transportation/housing policy analyses
• Writing Assignment for October 17: Questions from PPIC reading for class discussion
October 24/26 – Policy Challenge: Transportation/Housing/Infrastructure (II)

- Structural and Political Obstacles to transportation/housing policy change
- Transportation/Housing/Infrastructure – Interrelationship with Other Policy Challenges
- Guest panel (public and private sector experts)
- Reading Assignment for October 24 – Baldassare (pp. 99 – conclusion)
- Writing Assignment for October 24: Questions from Baldassare reading for class discussion
- **Writing Assignment for October 26: Outline for Final Paper**

October 31/November 2 – Policy Challenge: Health Care/Prevention (I)

- Health Care/Prevention Overview – successes, failures, and opportunities
- Guest lecture (USC faculty)
- Reading Assignment for October 31 Kotkin (pp.1 – 88), PPIC health care analyses
- Writing Assignment for October 31: Questions from PPIC reading for class discussion

November 7/9 – Policy Challenge: Health Care/Prevention (II)

- Structural and Political Obstacles to health care policy change
- Health Care/Prevention – Interrelationship with Other Policy Challenges
- Guest panel (public and private sector experts)
- Reading Assignment for November 7: Kotkin (pp. 89 -204)
- Writing Assignment for November 7: Questions from Kotkin reading for class discussion
- **Writing Assignment for November 9: Thesis Page, Detailed Outline for Final Paper**

November 14/16 – Policy Challenge: Public Safety/Criminal Justice (I)

- Public Safety/Criminal Justice Overview – successes, failures, and opportunities
- Guest lecture (USC faculty)
- Reading Assignment for November 14: PPIC transportation/housing policy analyses
- Writing Assignment for November 14: Questions from PPIC reading for class discussion

November 21/28 – Policy Challenge: Public Safety/Criminal Justice (II)

- Structural and Political Obstacles to public safety/criminal justice policy change
- Public Safety – Interrelationship with Other Policy Challenges
- Guest panel (public and private sector experts)
- Reading Assignment for November 21: Lowenthal (pp.1 – 140)
- Writing Assignment for November 21: Questions from Lowenthal reading for class discussion

November 30 – Looking back and Final Thoughts
Summary of Course Material
Overview of State’s Policy Challenges
Final Papers Due
Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

USC seeks to maintain an optimal learning environment. General principles of academic honesty include the concept of respect for the intellectual property of others, the expectation that individual work will be submitted unless otherwise allowed by an instructor, and the obligations both to protect one’s own academic work from misuse by others as well as to avoid using another’s work as one’s own. All students are expected to understand and abide by these principles.

Students will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards for review, should there be any suspicion of academic dishonesty. Their guidelines are at http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/SJACS/forms/AcademicIntegrityOverview.pdf

SCampus, the Student Guidebook, describes the review process for violations of academic integrity at: http://web-app.usc.edu/scampus/1400-academic-integrity-review-process/
DAN SCHNUR

Dan Schnur is the Director of the Jesse M. Unruh Institute of Politics at the University of Southern California, where he works to motivate students to become active in the world of politics and encourage public officials to participate in the daily life of USC. In June of 2010, he was appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger as Chairman of the California Fair Political Practices Commission.

For years, Dan was one of California’s leading political and media strategists, whose record includes work on four presidential and three gubernatorial campaigns. Schnur served as the national Director of Communications for the 2000 presidential campaign of U.S. Senator John McCain and spent five years as chief media spokesman for California Governor Pete Wilson.

Schnur began his political career in the press office of the Reagan-Bush ’84 presidential campaign. He later served as a spokesman for the Bush-Quayle ’88 presidential campaign, and worked in the press offices of the Republican National Committee before moving to California in 1990 to take on the position of Communications Director of the state Republican Party. Following Wilson’s election as Governor that year, Schnur joined the Administration and subsequently served Wilson as both Press Secretary and Communications Director. In 1994, he served as Press Secretary to Wilson’s successful gubernatorial re-election campaign.

In addition to his position at USC, Schnur is an Adjunct Instructor at the University of California at Berkeley’s Institute of Governmental Studies. Schnur has also held the post of Visiting Fellow at the John F. Kennedy School of Government’s Institute of Politics at Harvard University and taught an advanced course in political campaign communications at George Washington University’s Graduate School of Political Management. In addition, he was the founder of the Center for Campaign Leadership, a non-partisan effort to equip young people with the skills essential for professional involvement in political campaigns.

He has served as an advisor to the William & Melinda Gates Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Broad Education Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the Stuart Foundation on a variety of K-12 education, college and workforce preparedness, governance and political reform efforts. He is also the Co-Chairman of the Voices of Reform project, a bi-partisan statewide organization devoted to making state government more responsive to the needs of California voters.

Schnur’s commentaries have appeared in the New York Times, The Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the Sacramento Bee. In addition, he has been an analyst and political commentator for CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and National Public Radio.

Schnur is a graduate of the American University in Washington, D.C.