

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY  
**POLS 001, Section 03 (#41223)**  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-4pm, and by appt.  
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LECTURER: I. TARIKH

FALL SEMESTER 2009  
**TR 1330-1445 (DMH 149A)**  
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## American Government

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an introductory course. As such, we will cover a great deal of material, but will not go into the depths that are available to you through more advanced Political Science course offerings. We will lay the basic foundation for understanding the creation, development, and perpetuation of our fundamental political institutions. This will be done with an initial focus on our national government, and a subsequent focus on our state government. The course covers the values and operations associated with American political institutions.

At the outset we will review the historical record of the founding of the American body politic, and will quickly move to a structural (what is the government made of), functional (how does its many parts interact), and practical (what is my role as an individual citizen) analysis. This course will expose enrolled students to the text of the United States and California State Constitutions; the evolution and interpretations of their texts; constitutional principles; key and current events; and finally, to the prospects and possibilities for a more inclusive and democratic society within the set framework.

Political Science 1 fulfills the General Education Areas F2-F3 (U.S. Constitution and California Government) Breadth requirement for all California State Universities (CSUs); and the Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) for all CSUs and UCs.

### COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course is designed for any student who wishes to make a serious study of these issues, and is prepared to do the extensive reading, writing, and research that are course requirements. However, the most important objective will always be the encouragement and development of critical reading, writing, and thinking skills.

This course is for three units of academic credit in a lecture format. Of immense importance and emphasis are the policies attendant to Academic Integrity and Academic Freedom. Strict adherence will be followed. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty are required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs. Please read these passages in the most sober and careful manner. In fact, in this course you are not only required to read them, but the University's Academic Integrity Policy is the basis for one of your assignments. The policy on academic integrity can be found at:

[http://sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial/Academic\\_Dishonesty\\_Policy.pdf](http://sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial/Academic_Dishonesty_Policy.pdf)

Unlike much of our contemporaneous society, in this course we will agree, disagree, and agree to disagree while maintaining the decorum befitting a fine institution of higher learning.

## **TEACHING METHODOLOGY**

In most cases, the instructor will develop the subjects of the sessions and place them in proper perspective so that a meaningful discussion can follow among the reader, students, and the instructor. In these discussions, the subject will be viewed from various sides, and a comparison will be made between what the instructor has said and what was written in the required and general references relating to the subject or event. In this course the student will be required to participate in the discussion following the formal lecture. There will also be small group collaborations, and debates.

This course addresses the process of making political decisions in several ways. Most notably, every student will be required to participate in a Mock Congress. This legislative body will engage students in the process of making political decisions through its development of a leadership structure, and the attempt to successfully pass legislation.

This course addresses the consequences of political decisions on individuals and society through the review and evaluation of policy decisions. We will review media that critically exposes concerns about access to the ballot; access to public office; and access to public officeholders.

Finally, this course addresses how individuals and groups may affect the decision making process. Related activities could include attendance at San Jose City government meetings, special lectures, and classroom presentations by government officials and community activists.

The grade the student receives will result from a combination of class participation, a research paper, and examinations. Term paper topics will be chosen by the students on subjects relating to the field of Political Science, with prior instructor approval. The research papers will be submitted via Turnitin.com.

## **TEXTS**

There are three required texts:

Schmidt, S., Shelley, M., Bardes, B.  
American Government and Politics Today, 2008-2009 Brief Edition.  
Wadsworth/Cengage Learning, 2009. ISBN 978-0-4955-0322-4.

Gerston, L., Christensen, T.  
California Politics and Government, A Practical Approach, 10th Edition.  
Wadsworth Publishing, 2009. ISBN 978-0-4955-6650-2.

Tarikh, I.  
Guide to American Government.  
Kendall Hunt Publishing, 2009. ISBN 978-0-7575-7112-1.

## **POINTS OF EMPHASIS**

There will also be occasional handouts, videos, events, and required research. The Department is sponsoring a field trip to view oral arguments at the California Supreme Court in San Francisco. It is a free trip for Poli/Sci majors, and takes place Wednesday, 2 September 2009. It is first come, first served. Students must sign up at the Department office. There is a \$20 (cash only) cost for non Poli/Sci majors. Academic credit will be granted for those who attend.

The Don Edwards Lecture Series which is sponsored by the Political Science Department will be used to offer extra credit for attendance, and a brief write-up. During the Fall, each speaker will be a candidate for Governor of the State of California. The speaker for September will be Tom Campbell on Tuesday, 15 September 2009. The speaker for October will be Steve Poizner on Wednesday, 14 October 2009. The speaker for November has not been decided yet. Each Series Lecture will take place at 7pm on campus at the Morris Dailey Auditorium.

Supplemental reading and research assignments will be given during lecture. Roll will be taken once, during the first 15 minutes of each meeting. Electronic devices are not allowed in lecture, except with prior instructor or Disability Resource Center (DRC) approval. If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, or see me during office hours. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with DRC to establish a record of their disability. Please mute your cell phones before the beginning of our class sessions – they can be tremendously disruptive.

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count! Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions.

The website for a tutorial on citations is available below. Also, the Political Science Department has a designated Academic Services Librarian. Her email address is: [crystal.goldman@sjsu.edu](mailto:crystal.goldman@sjsu.edu).  
[http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info\\_comp/citing.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm).

For writing assistance, the SJSU Writing Center is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Consult with your professor in advance to determine whether you need assistance with your writing.

Arguably the best way to improve your own writing is to read quality material on a regular basis. To that end, students are encouraged to read articles from scholarly sources but also newspapers such as The Wall Street Journal, The Financial Times, The New York Times, and The Economist. These publications also contain articles of direct relevance to their political science classes.

## PERFORMANCE EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT

- 1) Participation
- 2) Short Paper
- 3) Midterm Exam = 45 minutes, 50 item objective test administered 15 October 2009.
- 4) 3- 4 page Research Paper due 19 November 2009.
- 5) Final Examination = 120 minutes, 100 item cumulative objective test administered Tuesday, 15 December 2009.

15% = participation

15% = short paper

10% = Midterm Exam

30% = Research paper

30% = Final Exam

Final Grades will be calculated on a straight grading scale. This means participation is worth 150 possible points; the short paper is worth 150 possible points; the midterm is worth 100 possible points; the Research Paper is worth 300 possible points; and the final is worth 300 possible points. The total possible points is 1000.

A+ = 950-1000 pts    A = 900-949    A- = 875-899    B+ = 850-874    B = 800-849

B- = 775-799    C+ = 750-774    C = 700-749    C- = 675-699    D+ = 650-674

D = 600-649    D- = 575-599    F = below 575 pts

\*\*\*I am also available for meeting by appointment.

Meeting Dates (There are 27 meetings, due to 3 furlough days)

	<u>Topic(s)</u>	<u>Reading /Assignment</u>
Week 1: 8/25, 27	Introduction/Syllabus/Overview	T/Chs. 1-3
	The historical background, and philosophic underpinnings of the American Republic will start our semester. We will begin review of the U.S. Constitution, and compare it with the CA Constitution. We will explore current political issues and policies.	
Week 2: 9/1, 3	Power, Authority, Legitimacy	Chs.1&2, Appendices A, B, C
	Madisonian model, separation of powers, checks and balances, republicanism, federalism, limited government. Any contradictions? The effect of authority on conflict resolution (techniques: force, negotiation, compromise, adjudication, rational analysis)	



