

Pols 1: Introduction to American Government Spring 2012

**DMH 149A
M 6:00-8:45 p.m.**

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Introduction

This course is designed to introduce you to the institutions, workings and politics of American Government from its beginnings to the current era. We will consider national, state and local government institutions in terms of structures, their various functions and how they cope with our increasingly complicated political world.

While American Government is a required course to go forward in higher education, this class is important both in informing you how government works and in what role you as a citizen play within it. It is my hope that at the end of this course, you will gain an interest in how the political system functions in the U.S., how it affects you as part of it, and inform you as to what you can do as a participant within it.

Learning Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be understand how political decisions are made, their consequences for individuals and society, and how individual groups may affect the decision-making process. As students study the meaning and content of the democratic process as it has evolved in the United States and California, at a minimum, they should recognize:

- the foundations of the political system, including the evolution of the philosophies of the U.S. and California constitutions, political culture, separation of powers, bureaucracy, federalism, and relations among various levels of government. Students should also analyze the evolving institutions of government, including a study of the power of the President, Congress, and the Judiciary;
- the links between the people and government, including participation and voting, political parties, interest groups, and public opinion and socialization. Students should also analyze the rights and obligations of citizens, the tension between various freedoms of expression and due process and the maintenance of order, and the efforts to end racial and gender discrimination in both the public and private sectors of society; and
- the operations of California government, including the similarities and differences between the California and U.S. Constitutions, the relationship between state and local government in California, the basic issues of California politics, and a careful assessment of the impact of demographic changes on the history and politics of the state and the nation.

Students should also show “an understanding of tools of political action and collective decision-making at the local, state national or global level,” and be able to articulate the values and assumptions that inform their civic engagement.

Readings

The required texts for this course are Neal Tannahill’s Think American Government, 2012 Edition (ISBN: 978-0-205-85600-8) and Larry Gerston and Terry Christensen’s California Politics and Government: A Practical Approach, Eleventh Edition (ISBN: 978-0-495-91345-0). Both of these texts are required and will be available in the Spartan bookstore; it is possible to rent the texts. If you wish to substitute the 2011 edition of Tannahill (which may be available used) you may do so; please note that the chapter numbers may be different. You should come to lecture prepared to discuss issues and ask questions in each section, having done the necessary reading. Although we will not discuss the California book until the very end, do not put off purchasing this text until then; it may not be available.

You will note in the syllabus that the topics for this class tend to be split over two weeks; this scheduling is deliberate, to allow you time to read and review the reading. There is a lot of information in this class and given limited class time, you should be prepared to do independent work to prepare for the exams and final. Use the class to ask questions and to clarify your reading. You may want to review material in the text and from your lecture notes as we go along in the course, rather than just reading through it once.

Evaluation for this Course

Students will be evaluated in the following ways for this course:

Participation	50 points
Exams 1, 2, 3	100 points x 3
Final Exam	<u>150 points</u>
	500 points

Grading Policy

All grades for participation, analyses, final paper and the debate will be based on a point system. If you divide the number of points you receive by the points per assignment, you can generate a percentage to determine your letter grade: 97-100% is an A+, 93-96% is an A, 90-92% is an A-, 87-89% is a B+, 83-86% is a B, 80-82% is a B-, etc. Keep track of your points over the course of the semester as noted above, and you should have an idea how you stand in the class.

All grades are final for this course.

Exams 1-3: Given the limited amount of time for the course, exams in this class will be a combination of in-class, multiple-choice sections and a take-home portion with short answer and essay sections. Each exam will follow this format:

Part 1: The first section will be held in class during the last half hour of the class day (see Schedule). This section will be comprised of 20 multiple-choice questions worth 2 points each, plus one extra credit question. You will need a Scantron 882-E form to answer this part of the test; please make sure you have one of these forms plus a pencil to complete it. This part of the test will be worth 40 points excluding extra credit.

Students must plan on taking this part of the test when it is scheduled; no Part 1 will be given ahead of schedule, and if you miss this test due to a verified emergency, you have one week to make it up by arranging a time with the instructor to meet with her and take it. If you do not make up this section by the next class, you will be ineligible to do so and it will be a loss of 40 points from your total grade.

Part 2: The second section is take-home, comprised of a short answer section with four questions to answer in 3-4 sentences, and an essay question. There will be an extra credit question in the short answer section. You will pick up this part of the test when you turn in your Scantron for Part 1, and then this part of the exam is due at the start of the following class in typewritten hard copy form for both the short answer and essay sections. The essay also needs to be uploaded to Turnitin.com by 11:59 p.m. the day of class in order to qualify for grading. The short answer section is five points times four questions for 20 points; the essay is worth 40 points total. For more on how to write the essays, please see the handout appended to this syllabus.

A note on take-home exams: this section is meant to allow you to use extra time to review the texts and lecture notes to inform your answers. That said, you are not allowed to collaborate with other students in answering questions. If you have questions on how to answer a particular part of the test, you may communicate only with the instructor in office hours or via e-mail. Rough drafts of your essay can be brought to the instructor in office hours or previewed by official tutors such as the Writing Center, but you should avoid running them by your colleagues in this class. Each effort must be your effort.

If you are not in class the day exam questions are distributed, it is your responsibility to contact the instructor to get a copy of Part 2 via e-mail; it will still be due on the date in the syllabus. Only students with a verified emergency may turn in Part 2 later than the due date.

Final Exam: The final exam for this class is on **May 21st, 2012** at 5:15 p.m. It is a closed-book test comprised of a Scantron 882-E section with 50 multiple-choice questions, plus a short-answer question with five questions worth 10 points each. This exam is meant to be comprehensive for the course, covering both American and California politics. Students who miss the exam due to a verified emergency need to contact the instructor immediately to arrange a make-up test; time and location will be arranged by the instructor and must occur by the end of Finals Week.

Late Work Policy

As noted above, no work may be submitted in this class late without a verifiable emergency. Part 1 of Exams 1-3 must be made up within a week of the scheduled test date, or will count as a zero. Part 2 may be submitted late only with a verified emergency, and ideally should be submitted within a week of the due date in the syllabus; any later will require a discussion with the instructor. The last day to submit any late work for the course is the last day of lecture (May 14th). All late work must fulfill the requirements of the assignment, such as being in hard copy form and/or uploaded to Turnitin, in order to be accepted for credit.

A Note About Written Work in This Course

Students at the college level are expected to submit written work that fits the grammatical, stylistic and citation expectations for college-level work in English. All essays in this course are therefore graded in two ways: both in terms of content (information in terms of logic, quality of evidence, etc.) and in terms of writing. If you are at all uncomfortable with writing at the college level, you need to take steps to rectify this. The instructor is willing to preview rough drafts of work in office hours before assignments are due to provide feedback. You may also want to see the instructor after assignments are handed back if comments indicate that there are specific errors in argument or writing.

In addition to instructor assistance, tutoring when you are writing assignments is available through the SJSU Writing Center in Clark Hall. If you have a specific assignment you need assistance on, you can make an appointment with a Writing Specialist to go over your work before submitting it. See the appointments page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/tutoring/requestforappointment/index.htm> for more information on this service.

Citations are important in this course, even if you are citing class materials such as lecture or the assigned texts. **Failure to cite in this course may result in penalties ranging from a failing grade on an assignment to a failing grade in the course, and possible report to the Office of Student Conduct.** Due to the rigorous schedule of topics, there are no opportunities for re-writes in this course. At this level of academic work, you should be prepared to submit work that is ready for scrutiny in your first effort.

University Policies on Accommodating Student Disability and Academic Integrity

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me or visit me during office hours as soon as possible. Presidential Directive 97-03 (http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must be registered with the Disabled Resource Center to establish a record of their disability.

SJSU has a policy of Academic Integrity for all its students. Please see the campus website for the specific policy: http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/docs/Academic_Integrity_Policy_S07-2.pdf. You may not collaborate with other students on exams or any assignments. Resubmitting written work from other classes as work for this class or submitting someone else's work as your own are also considered cheating. Instances of cheating could result in penalties ranging from a failing grade on the assignment to a failing grade in the course. The instructor is required to approach the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development when there are clear infractions of the Academic Integrity policy. This is the least pleasurable task the instructor has to do in her profession, but given the number of other students willing to "play by the rules" and the requirements of the University, she will do it.

Electronic Device Policy for This Course

Laptops may be used during class for the purpose of taking notes, but students are expected to stop typing and participate in discussions when they occur. Cell phones and pagers must be turned off for the duration of class. No texting is permitted during class for any reason. If a cell phone rings during class, the instructor reserves the right to answer it; if you are texting, the instructor reserves the right to ask you to leave the classroom.

Important Add/Drop/Withdrawal Dates

Students need to be aware that SJSU requires strict adherence to due dates for adding, dropping and late withdrawals from class. Please note that in the Fall semester, the last day to drop without penalty is February 6th, the last day to add is February 13th, and the last day to withdraw from any course is April 26th.

Course Webpage

There is a webpage for this course connected to my faculty webpage at SJSU, where I post important documents such as the syllabus. The direct URL is <http://www.sjsu.edu/people/sabrina.pinnell/courses/pols1/>. Please note that no part of the exams will be uploaded to this site.

Disclaimer

All information in this syllabus may be subject to change with fair notice by the instructor, the Department of Political Science or San Jose State University.

Course Schedule

Topic 1: Course Introduction, the Constitution (January 30-February 6)

Tannahill, Introduction, Chs. 1-3

Topic 2: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (February 6-February 13)

Tannahill, Chs. 4-5

**Exam 1: Part 1 in class on February 20th
 Part 2 due February 27th at the start of class, uploaded to Turnitin**

Topic 3: The Legislative Branch (February 20-27)

Tannahill, Ch. 12

Topic 4: The Judicial Branch (February 27-March 5)

Tannahill, Ch. 15

Topic 5: The Executive Branch: Presidency, Bureaucracy, Economic Policy (March 5 – March 19)

Tannahill, Chs. 13-14, 16

Exam 2: Part 1 in class on March 19th
Part 2 due at the start of class, uploaded to Turnitin on April 2nd

Spring Break is March 26-30; NO CLASS on March 26th

Topic 6: Public Opinion, Participation and Elections (April 2 – April 9)
Tannahill, Chs. 6-7, 11

Topic 7: Interest Groups and Political Parties (April 9 – April 16)
Tannahill, Chs. 9-10

Topic 8: The Media (April 16)
Tannahill, Ch. 8

Topic 9: American Foreign and Defense Policy (April 23)
Tannahill, Ch. 17

Exam 3: Part 1 in class on April 23 (will not include foreign policy)
Part 2 due at the start of class, uploaded to Turnitin on April 30th

Topic 10: California Politics I: Institutions (April 30 – May 7)
Gerston & Christensen, Chs. 5-7
Optional: Gerston & Christensen, Ch. 1

Topic 11: California Politics II: Budget Politics and Elections (May 7 – May 14)
Gerston & Christensen, Chs 8, 2-3

Topic 12: California Politics III: Local Government, Final Discussion (May 14)
Gerston & Christensen, Ch. 9

Final Exam (California Politics, American Politics): May 21st, 5:15 p.m.

Part 2 Essay Format

American Government is more than just a course where you learn information; one of the goals of this class is to see how well you can apply information to specific topics. Also, students in any political science course should exercise their writing skills to become comfortable with discussing political issues in their own words. Consequently, a major part of Exams 1, 2 and 3 is an essay worth 40 points, to be done at home using class materials such as lecture notes and the texts when necessary. Each essay should be 2-3 pages in length, double-spaced in 12 point font (approximately 250-750 words) with a additional page for any lecture or texts cited.

Students will write on an assigned topic, usually a question that requires you to make an argument when you answer. Questions may have multiple parts that need to be tackled on the body of the essay, but there should be an overall argument that answers the topic. For example:

“Why did the Founders decide upon *federalism* to divide power between the states and a national government? What were the alternatives? Had alternatives been tried before, and what were the results? Is federalism a good system of governance, given the differences between states?”

Clearly, this question requires you to understand the topic of federalism as well as the circumstances surrounding the decision to create a federal system in America’s infancy. But you will also need to take some time and come up with an argument to answer the question, especially given the last part of it. You should review the lecture and text information on this topic while you are creating an outline for your essay, then bring in your ideas and organize the whole before you begin to write.

The primary sources for these essays should be the class texts and your lecture notes. You may use outside sources for the essays, but they are neither necessary nor encouraged; the class materials should be sufficient. No question will be asked that you can’t answer with the lecture notes and/or the text.

Citations are expected for any information in an essay that does not come directly from you. Lectures should be cited as well as written material. If you are citing lecture, you can do an in-text citation such as (Pinnell, Pols 1 Lecture, Date), a footnote or an endnote. If you are using the textbook, you can do either an in-text citation (Tannahill 2012, 4), a footnote or an endnote. All quotes must be cited, although I strongly recommend avoiding using quotes unless the exact language is needed to make your point. The ability to write in your own words is part of the content portion for this paper grade. Quotes over two sentences should be indented and single-spaced in the text; quotes under two sentences can be in the body of the paragraph. Any information that is not in quotes, whether ideas clearly not your own, paraphrases or summarized information also requires citation. Lack of citations will result in a deduction for the writing part of your paper grade. If there are no citations at all, you will receive no points for the writing part of the paper grade (-10 points). Please get in the habit of citing while you are writing; do not leave out citations with the intention that you will put them in later.

In terms of grading your essays, 10 points of the paper grade is for actual writing of the essay, with an additional 30 for content. I may deduct points for writing if there are problems with any or all of the following:

- Spelling or poor word choice;
- Errors with verb tense or agreement;
- Fragment or run-on sentences;
- Paragraphs with more than one topic;
- Incorrect or lacking punctuation;
- Unclear phrasing;
- Poor citation, either in the body of the paper or because you omitted a reference page at the end.

The content portion of your essay is worth much more of the grade as it requires considerably more effort on your part. You need to have a well-organized argument that utilizes class materials where necessary to inform your points, and your answer must tackle all parts of a paper question. I may deduct points for content if the following surfaces in a paper:

- Lack of organization, as an argument should have an introduction that indicates your position on a topic, gives an idea what your reasons are, and what you plan to discuss; you should also have a clear conclusion that summarizes your position.
- Lack of information from the class materials. A paper that is just an opinion, written in haste and that does not show comprehension of the issues, will get a substantially lower grade.
- Does not answer all parts of the question. You do not have to tackle a portion per paragraph, but all parts must be answered over the course of the essay.
- Does not have a clear, understandable argument. My advice is not to assume that the reader has any idea what you are talking about; define terms where necessary, explain your reasons and use language that someone who might not have your knowledge would understand.

If you have questions about the essay topic during the period you are writing it, you can contact the instructor via e-mail or see her in office hours. However, due to time constraints the instructor will not peruse actual drafts of writing via e-mail. All answers to Part 2 (short-answer and essay) must be submitted at the start of class the day that they are due in typewritten hard copy form, and uploaded to Turnitin.com by 11:59 p.m. on the due date. No material may be submitted via e-mail, and uploading it to Turnitin without a hard copy does not mean it will be graded. The Class ID for Turnitin is 4705470; the password is liberalism.