

San Jose State University
Fall 2011
PolS 001: Introduction to American Government

Mondays, August 24, 2011 - December 12, 2011
9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.

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OFFICE: Clark 402-D

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SOFTWARE STANDARD: Microsoft Office 2007 or compatible

NOTE: THIS IS A GREEN CLASS
MOST PAPERS WILL BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY
THROUGH THIS E-MAIL ADDRESS.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Every American and resident of the United States should understand how the government works. The United States is a federal democratic republic, and California has extended democracy further through the referendum and initiative process. The United States has multiple levels of government from small, one-school districts like the Luther Burbank School district in San Jose to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, from Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania to Los Angeles, from Rhode Island to Texas. In this course we will discuss the organization of the United States, the roles of the different elements of the government, with an emphasis on the constitutional basis for our government. Note: Satisfies American Institutions requirements in American and California government.

METHODS:

The class will be a combination of reading, writing, personal research, lecture and discussion. Students may be called upon by name to address concepts from the readings. Students should take the time and effort to read the materials when they are assigned, and be prepared to actively participate in discussion. Regular attendance is expected. Participation in class is 15% of your grade. Participation in the class and related discussions will enhance your grade simply because you will have knowledge necessary to pass the test that might not otherwise be available.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Political Science

- To understand the components and functions of American government
- To understand the components and functions of California government
- To understand the roles and responsibilities of a citizen in the United States

General Education

- To develop analytical skills and reasoning powers
- To increase the ability to communicate ideas effectively both in speaking and in writing;
- To enhance the ability to live and work intelligently, responsibly, and cooperatively in a multicultural society and an increasingly interdependent world
- To promote citizenship through knowledge of the forces that shape the individual and modern society
- To develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using disciplined analytic skills and creative techniques

REQUIRED READING:

Larry Gerston and Terry Christensen, *California Government and Politics*.

James Q. Wilson, *American Government: Brief Edition, 2008*, ISBN-13:978-0-547-21276-0

You will also need a writing handbook for use in creating your letter, your council meeting report, and your Edwards Lecture reflection paper. Most of you have a writing handbook from your English Writing class. If not, I recommend purchasing Diane Schmidt, *Writing in Political Science*. Used copies are readily available on the internet. It has a guide to writing different types of documents, as well as an **APA citation guide**, which is the citation standard for this class. APA citation guides are also available for free at the library website, of which the Long Island University is probably the easiest to use: <http://www2.liu.edu/cwis/cwp/library/workshop/citapa.htm>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Please review this at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct. "Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical development."

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism, presenting the work of another as your own, or **the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit**, will result in a **failing grade and sanctions by the University**.

For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student. **IF YOU CHEAT, PLAGIARIZE, FAIL TO ATTRIBUTE DIRECTLY COPIED OR PARAPHRASED MATERIAL, BUY A PAPER, USE SOMEONE ELSE'S PAPER, OR IN ANY OTHER WAY VIOLATE THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY, YOU WILL FAIL THIS COURSE, regardless of previous standing!**

CLASSROOM COURTESY:

Students come to class to learn. The professor comes to class to teach. If you are not focused on the activities of the class, please do not come. As a courteous person you will be sure that your cell phone is turned off during class. If your phone rings during class

you will be expected to leave to answer it and not return for the rest of the class. Texting is not acceptable in class. Playing games, e-mailing, reading non-class material is all unacceptable behavior. The class is only one hour and fifteen minutes long, and we want to use that time as a learning community. Please respect each other and the professor.

DROPPING AND ADDING:

You are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drops, academic renewal, and other information found at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct. You should be aware of the new deadlines and penalties for adding and dropping classes.

RESOURCES:

San Jose State University Library has research tools. One class session will be devoted to an introduction to the research support and literature resources available through the library. All students, regardless of previous experience with the library **are expected to attend this session**, and are expected to be familiar with these research tools, and to access them to support required research activities.

ADA ACCOMMODATION:

It is the goal of this class to be a positive learning experience for every student! If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need special accommodations 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 requesting accommodations must register with DRC to establish a record of their disability. <http://www2.sjsu.edu/senate/S05-14.pdf> . Special accommodations for exams require ample notice to the DRC testing office and must be submitted to the instructor well in advance of the exam date.”

LEARNING ASSISTANCE RESOURCE CENTER:

The Learning Assistance Resource Center is designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. The center provides support services, such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. The Learning Assistance Resource Center is located in Room 600 in the Student Services Center on 9th Street. For more information about LARC go to <http://www.sjsu.edu/larc/>.

SJSU WRITING CENTER:

The SJSU Writing Center in Clark Hall, Room 126, is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Their writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. For more details go to <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>.

GRADING COMPONENTS:

Participation	15 points
Plagiarism tutorial	5 points
Council Meeting Report/presentation	15 points
List of Representatives/Letter to a public official	5 points
Edwards Lecture paper	10 points
Quizzes	20 points
Final Exam	20 points
Pre-test/post test (5 pts each)	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

GRADE VALUES:

A+	99 and above
A	93-98
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	82-87
B-	80-81
C	75-79
D	70-74
F	69 and below

MAKE-UP POLICY:

Serious personal or dependent family illness that can be documented is the only acceptable excuse for not turning in work on time. If you are ill, you will be given a reasonable extension for submission of missing work. **There are no make-ups for missed presentations.** Incompletes are discouraged.

PARTICIPATION:

Students may be called upon by name to address concepts from the readings. Students should take the time and effort to read the materials provided by the presenters when they are assigned, and be prepared to actively participate in discussion of the topics, using both citations of the readings and their own defended views. Regular attendance is expected and will enhance your grade simply because you will have knowledge necessary to complete the final exam that might not otherwise be available except from class discussion.

THE EDWARDS LECTURE:

There will be no class on Monday, October 31. This is in place of your **mandatory attendance at the Edwards Lecture**. Each student will write a 2 page reflection paper on the lecture. Page 1 will be a summary of the speaker's presentation. Page two will be your reflection on what the speaker said and how that fits in with what we have discussed in class about government.

PLAGIARISM TUTORIAL:

Every student will take the plagiarism tutorial at the library's website. Access it from this URL: <http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/plagiarism/index.htm>. At the end you will receive a page with a score. You must get an 80 or better to complete the assignment. Repeat the tutorial until you get 80 or better. Be sure you understand the rules for citing materials. Print out the score sheet showing your **name and your acceptable (80 or better) score**. Bring that sheet to class **on September 7**.

QUIZZES:

There will be a 10 question quiz at the beginning of selected classes. The average of the quizzes will be 25% of the final grade. There are no make-ups for quizzes, except for documented severe illness. Missed quizzes will be counted as "0".

PUBLIC MEETING REPORT:

On Oct. 11 at 1:30 p.m. you will attend the San Jose City Council meeting (instead of class on Oct. 10). Get a copy of the agenda at the back of the council chamber. Select one agenda item that causes discussion during the council meeting and take notes on which council members speak and what position they take on the issue. Was there public testimony or comment on the topic? Was there an obvious stakeholder group participating? (e.g., Friends of the Library, a neighborhood association) Did the public or stakeholder testimony seem to influence the Councilmembers?

If you have a class or work conflict with that time and date see me to set up an alternate city council meeting to attend. For example, Cupertino City Council meets on Monday nights. It is up to you to find an alternative meeting to attend. Once we agree to an alternate meeting you must confirm the city, date and time in an e-mail to me at this class address, and that becomes your assigned attendance.

Write a 5 page report on your experience. Discuss the following issues:

Select an action item on the agenda that generated discussion (not consent, not committee reports) and write about it as follows, using the observations from the meeting and the staff report obtained from the website <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/agenda.asp>. (You will be able to access the agenda about 10 days before the meeting, and the staff reports the Friday before the meeting. Review both before you go to be familiar with the topics at hand.) See if the Mercury News had an editorial about any of the topics before or after the meeting.

1. Introduction:
 - a. How many Councilmembers were present? Who else was on the dias?
 - b. About how many people were in the audience?
 - c. How long did the meeting last?
 - d. How many items on the agenda generated discussion?\

- e. How many items on the agenda were passed with little or no discussion (not counting consent)?
2. Analysis of the item:
 - a. Name and number of the item
 - b. Who sponsored the item? A city department, Councilmember, stakeholder group? (see staff report)
 - c. What was the discussion of the item focused on?
 - d. What stakeholders spoke about the item?
 - e. Did the public testimony appear to influence the Council?
 - f. Was there newspaper coverage of the item before the council meeting, or an editorial on the item?
 - g. Which Councilmembers spoke about the item and what positions did they take?
 - h. Was the proposed staff recommendation accepted? Were there any amendments?
 - i. How much will it cost?

Students must take care that appropriate APA citations are used. You will be using staff reports and newspaper reports, and possibly quotations from people at the meeting. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the meeting date and time or the page in the source from which it was taken. Ideas from others may be paraphrased and must also be referenced, although quotations marks are inappropriate.

On Oct. 12 instead of class, go to the library and research the newspaper reports regarding your selected topic from the October 11 Council meeting, both pre-meeting coverage and post meeting coverage. On Oct 17 be prepared to discuss the council meeting, and report on the item you selected for your report.

The paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Points
a) The professionalism with which the essay is presented: clarity, appearance, grammar, spelling, appropriate word choice, "voice".	3
b) The comprehensiveness and care with which the council topic is described	3
c) The demonstration of understanding of the council members' positions	3
d) The demonstration of understanding of the stakeholders' positions: members of the public, city staff members, business groups	3
e) Analysis and completeness of the "introduction" items above	3
TOTAL	15

LETTER TO A PUBLIC OFFICIAL:

On 9/19 you will turn in a list of the elected officials that represent you now: congress member, state senator, state assemblymember, Board of Supervisors member, city council member or mayor. You will then use that list to access one of these officials. Write a letter to a local, state or federal elected official on your list on any policy matter

UNDER HIS/HER CONTROL that is of concern to you. Research a topic of personal interest to you, understand the current status of the matter, and address your letter to the appropriate elected official. Have a clear question or request that will generate a response. You should write the letter no later than Sept 26, when you will turn in a draft to the professor, to allow time for a response to your letter to be received before the end of the semester. When you get the comments back, correct your letter and send it. To get full credit for this assignment you must turn in a copy of the letter that you sent and a copy of the answer. Possible topics could include financing of higher education, subsidy for solar power, homeless issues, affordable housing issues or development plans for the city. Examples: Congressmember Zoe Lofgren on immigration or high speed rail funding; Assemblymember Jim Beall on the death penalty or higher education tuition; Supervisor Ken Yeager on Medical care, mental health services or juvenile justice services; your councilmember on an issue that is important in your district (e.g., need for better park maintenance, pot clubs, gang diversion program, potholes in the street).

The paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Points
a) Completeness of the name and address list for your representatives	1
b) The professionalism with which the essay is presented: clarity, appearance, grammar, spelling, appropriate word choice, "voice".	1
c) The comprehensiveness and care with which the request for assistance is framed.	2
d) The demonstration of understanding of the topic leading to the creation of a well-written letter	1
TOTAL	5

FINAL EXAM:

The final exam will be in two parts. The first will be multiple choice, short answer or fill in the blank. There will be 45 minutes allotted for this part. The second part will be essay. You will have a choice of questions to write on.

For the essay portion you may have **one sheet of notes, double sided**, that contains notes from any portion of the course or course materials, with your name on it. Bring at least 2 bluebooks and at least 3 pens or pencils to class. **You may not leave for any reason during the exam.** You will turn in your sheet of notes, the exam paper and your bluebooks together when you are finished, or at the end of class.

Make up finals will only be available during finals week unless arrangements are made for an Incomplete before the end of finals period. Make up finals are only offered for those with a serious medical condition that is documented. The make up will be all essay and not the essays used for the class final.

Week	Date	Class Plan
1	8/24	Introduction Attendance, add codes, pre-test
	8/29	Welcome Introduction of students, review of syllabus and course expectations.
2	8/31	Library Day with Crystal Goldman
	9/5	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY – NO CLASS
3	9/7	PLAGIARISM TUTORIAL DUE. Readings: George Orwell essay; critical thinking materials. (e-mailed) Good writing in political science; what is critical thinking?
4	9/12 & 14	Wilson, Chapt 1: Meaning of Representation Who represents you at the federal, state and local levels? What do the different levels of government do?
5	9/19	LIST OF YOUR REPRESENTATIVES Bring to class a single sheet of paper (word processed) with your name at the top and a list of the following names and mailing addresses: Your congressman; your state senator; your assembly member; your member of the Board of Supervisors; the mayor/councilmember who represents your district. Wilson, Chapt. 2: The Constitution; bring a copy of the US Constitution to class
5	9/21	NO Class- Research Day. Research the information to write a letter to your chosen elected official, making sure that you understand the problem and exactly what power the person you address has to take the action you want. Use the address you found for your list.
6	9/26& 28	Draft letter to elected official due- e-mail professor. Wilson Chapt. 3: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Wilson Chapt 4: Federalism
7	10/3& 5	Final draft letter mailed to professor; original mailed to elected official. Quiz on Chapt 3 & 4 Local government in California – charter cities, general law cities, “All politics are local.” Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill; council meetings and their purpose. San Jose City Hall video tour. Roles of different departments.
8	10/10& 12	No class: Attend the San Jose City Council meeting on October 11 instead of 10/10 class. On 10/12 go to library to review the news coverage of the day before’s council meeting; research other information needed for the report on the city council meeting.
9	10/17	COUNCIL REPORT DUE 10/17/11 Student oral reports/discussion on the council meeting.
	10/19	Wilson Chapt 5: Public opinion and the media Give the professor a copy of the reply from the elected official.
10	10/24& 26	Quiz on Chapt. 5 Wilson Chapt 6: Political parties and interest groups Wilson Chapt 7: Campaigns and Elections

Week	Date	Class Plan
11	10/31	No class – attend Edwards lecture.
	Nov 2	Quiz on Chapt 6&7 Wilson Chapt 8: Congress
12	11/7	Quiz on Chapt 8 The Executive branch of government Wilson Chapt 9: The Presidency
	11/9	Wilson Chapt.10: The Bureaucracy
13	11/14	Quiz on Chapt 9 & 10 Wilson Chapt 11: The judiciary
	11/16	Reading: e-mailed articles. Guest speaker: Capt. Tim Quigley, USN (Ret) How cities work with non-profit organizations.
14	11/21	Quiz on Chapt 11. Wilson Chapt 12: Domestic policy
	23	Wilson Chapt 13: Foreign policy
15	11/28& 30	Quiz on Chapt. 12 & 13 Gerston p. 1-100 – The unique features of California, its history, its governance. Governor, legislature and Supreme Court
16	12/5	Quiz on Gerston Wilson, Chapt 14: Initiative process, term limits, issues for future concern Post test
	12/7	In class review
	12/12	Final Exam

Spelling and Grammar Guidance

Common Student Mistakes!!

1. Never use a long word when a short word will do. (George Orwell)
2. Never use “etc.” in a professional paper. It is meaningless. If you want to indicate that your list is only part of a larger potential list, say, “grapes, peaches and pears, *for example,*” or “*among other things,*” or a similar phrase.
3. Use your grammar checker, THEN proof read to be sure you selected the right usage in context.
 - a. Be careful of the “passive voice rule.” It is often appropriate, and if it should be changed to active voice, the suggested wording almost never makes sense.
 - b. Never use “change all” for a grammar rule, as it will lead to odd usages. Just read each suggestion and decide whether to change based on each sentence.
4. Use your spell checker, THEN proof read to be sure you selected the right word in context.
5. Check to be sure you are using the right homonym: Check especially for these four frequently misused sets:
 - a. Their, there
 - b. Right, write, rite, wright
 - c. Sight, site, cite
 - d. Its, it’s
6. Do not use contractions in formal writing unless it is a direct quote: Don’t, Can’t, It’s, Won’t, and all the others!
7. Check on capitalization. A sentence begins with a capital letter, as does a proper name of someone or someplace or an organization. Federal, state, city and local are only capitalized if they start a sentence or are part of a title or proper name. The federal government is not a proper name but the United States Government is, for example.
8. Capitalize at the start of most quotes, even when they are inside a sentence. Here is an example. I went to class and Professor Edwards said, “Do not ever use a contraction when writing for this class.” Titles are only capitalized when they come before a name: (Professor Edwards, the professor).
9. If you want to use an abbreviation or acronym (e.g., FEMA), be sure to spell it out the first time you use it. For example, “When James Lee Witt was head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), he came to San Jose. He wanted to show FEMA’s support for Mayor Susan Hammer.”
10. Be careful that you use “then” and “than” properly. “Then” is related to time sequences. For example, I went to school, **then** I took a nap.” A mnemonic that will help you to

remember the right order is that “Then” is related to “Time” and both have an “e”. “Than” is a comparison, such as, “I like cherries more **than** bananas.” Both have “a”.

11. Be careful in using the apostrophe for possessive and plural. For a plural word in English you just add the letter “s” or sometimes “es” or “ies.” **There is no punctuation for plural.** In general, to form a possessive you use “’s”. For example, “my **dog’s** bone.” The only exception is the word “its” which means “belonging to it” but does not take the punctuation. **It’s** means “**it is**,” a contraction, and you do not use contractions in formal writing.
12. In general you do not use commas after prepositional phrases. “In support of his position John gave two examples.” However, if you have several prepositional phrases before the main sentence you may set them off with commas to make it clear what relates to what. “In supporting his team for the finals, John wore a Shark’s shirt to school.”
13. Hyphens are used to join words that modify another word. For example, political-science professor, little-used car, pickled-herring merchant. Without the hyphens it might be hard to tell if the science professor was running for president, the used car was small, or the fish seller was drunk!
14. Abbreviations are only used for titles (Mr., Ms., Dr.) or standard suffixes (Jr., Sr., Ph.D.). States are abbreviated only when using a proper address, not in prose.
15. Numbers: spell out the word for numbers up to two words, and all numbers that begin a sentence (One hundred fifty boys went to school.) Write out the numbers if over 100 (e.g., 101 because that would be “one hundred one”). Always use the numerals for percentages, money, road routes or scientific calculations.
16. Italics within a sentence should be used for titles of works (books, movies, plays, poems, television programs), but not for Bible or Constitution. Italics are also used for foreign words, such as *vis a vis*. Avoid foreign words unless you are very sure you are using them correctly.
17. None and neither are always singular words. They were originally contractions that became their own words – none= no one, not one, and neither = not either one. So, singular verb forms are used with none and neither.
18. The verb agrees with the subject number. “There is one child here.” “There are no children here.” The verb does not agree with the complement. “**None** of the boys **is** going to the game.”
19. Gerunds are always singular. “**Encouraging** good writing **is** important.”
20. Pronouns must match the noun and verb. “The doctors finished their rounds.” “The doctor finished his rounds.” When you do not know the gender, use masculine. Singular generic nouns must take “he” or “she.” Do not use “they” to avoid the gender problem!