

SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY – SPRING 2012
POLITICAL SCIENCE 20 – CONTROVERSIAL LEGAL ISSUES
SECTIONS 80 AND 81 • ON-LINE ONLY

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Virtual Office Hours on D2L: By arrangement

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*, 10th Edition. M. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keeley. Textbook companion web site: http://wps.ablongman.com/long_browne_atq_10/
2. *Pols 20 Reader*, Compiled and Edited by Dr. McKenzie. Obtain from the A.S. Print Shop located in Hoover Hall.

“Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try.” - Yoda –

*“There’s a mighty big difference between good, sound reasons and reasons that sound good.”
- Burton Hillis -*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course satisfies the University’s General Education A3 requirement in Critical Thinking. As a result, in order to pass this class, the University requires that students must receive a grade of **C or better** in the course. The completion of English 1A is strongly recommended as a prerequisite or a co-requisite for the course.

Because this is a General Education course in critical thinking, the primary focus is on learning and applying basic concepts in **critical thinking**. Controversial legal issues are used to facilitate discussions and analysis as a means of applying critical thinking skills to current political issues. Topics that will be analyzed and discussed will include, but not be limited to: abortion, legalization of “recreational” drugs, offensive speech, gay marriage, freedom of religion, pornography, and the death penalty.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

There are eight learning objectives of the course which have been established by the University:

- Students will learn to distinguish between reasoning (e.g., explanation, argument) and other types of discourse (e.g., description, assertion).
- Students will learn to identify, analyze and evaluate different types of reasoning through the study and understanding of the differences between inductive and deductive reasoning, and the differences between fact, opinion and belief.
- Students will learn to find and state crucial unstated assumptions in reasoning.
- Students will learn to evaluate factual claims or statements used in reasoning and evaluate the sources of evidence for such claims.
- Students will learn and be able to demonstrate an understanding of what constitutes plagiarism.
- Students will learn to evaluate information and its sources critically and incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

- Students will learn to locate, retrieve, organize, analyze, synthesize and communicate information of relevance to the subject matter of the course.
- Students will be able to reflect on past successes, failures and alternative strategies.

The ability to think critically about what you read, see and hear is not an innate talent but rather, it is a learned skill. Thus, unlike most other classes, this course is primarily a skills-based rather than a content-oriented course. Learning to recognize fallacies and inconsistencies in your arguments and the arguments of others, as well as being able to respond with clear, concise, well supported, and reasoned arguments, can serve as a powerful tool throughout your college, professional, and personal life. I challenge you to take the first step in this life long journey.

SYLLABUS

It is your responsibility to **read the Syllabus in it's entirety**. If you find anything that is unclear, it is your responsibility to seek clarification. The instructor reserves the right to make changes at any time during the course. If changes are made, they will be posted in the "News" section on the D2L class web site.

DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) ON-LINE CLASS FORMAT

You may, have had previous experience with D2L blended classes but, this may be your first time in taking an **entirely** on-line course on D2L. Since you have signed up for an on-line class, it is assumed that you have basic computer knowledge and **good study habits**. On-line learning is quite different than classroom learning because it requires different attitudes, responsibilities and communication skills. Therefore, it is expected that you are:

- Knowledgeable about your computer;
- Knowledgeable about your word processor;
- Knowledgeable about your internet service provider;
- Experienced in composing, sending, and receiving email and email attachments;
- Experienced with forums or discussions groups;
- Highly motivated;
- Able to work independently; and
- Able to devote the time necessary to complete all assignments.

This class is NOT for anyone whose goal is to simply "slide by."

WEEKLY LEARNING MODULES

This on-line D2L course will be divided into weekly "Learning Modules", each beginning at 7am each Monday morning and ending at 11:59 pm the following Monday evening. This will allow study time over each weekend, if needed, to complete weekly assignments. You are free to complete the assigned work in each module at your own pace within each weekly period. There is a "Check List" associated with every Learning Module that must be completed. There are some assignments within each weekly module that must be completed before you can move on to the next assignment.

A word of caution: do not wait until Saturday or Sunday to begin your weekly assignments. Students often fail to take unexpected personal, computer, printer or work problems into account when planning their time. Procrastination usually results in a missed deadline which will result in a zero (F) for the missed assignment.

NOTE: Required work begins the **FIRST WEEK OF CLASS**. Therefore, you are encouraged to explore the site and become familiar with the various links within the blue navigation bar at the top of the Home Page. You should also make a habit of checking D2L frequently to be sure you stay up-to-date.

Each Learning Module will have one or more of the following elements:

- Reading assignments
- Lecture and other videos
- Paper assignments
- Forum Discussions
- Quizzes/Exams

TIME REQUIREMENTS

This is a three unit class which means that if you were taking the class on-campus, you would be attending class two days a week for a total of 2.5 hours. In terms of the required amount of outside study, the “rule of thumb”, is, 2-3 hours a week for each class unit. Thus, you should plan your week so that you will be able to devote an average of between 8.5-11.5 hours a week on this class (2.5 hours “on-line class time” + 6-9 hours study time).

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

My Virtual Office hours are by mutual arrangement. You can access my Virtual Office through the “Chat Rooms” on the blue navigation bar at the top of the class website. A “Private Chat Room” has been established for my “Virtual Office”. You will need to send me an email indicating the most convenient **weekday** date and time you would like to meet in my Virtual Office. Once we have confirmed a date and time, we will be able to carry on a **PRIVATE** real-time conversation. If we are unable to resolve your issue or concerns in my Virtual Office, we can make an arrangement to meet in person in my Clark Hall Office.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

All email communication should be done through the D2L class web site. Using D2L email will facilitate saving and retrieving all class related emails. It is possible for you to forward your D2L mail to an alternate email address by clicking on the “Email” link and then looking under “Settings”.

D2L email will be the fastest way to receive a response from me if you have a question. I usually check my D2L email one or more times a day during the week. If you ask a question of general importance to the entire class, I will most likely return a response by way of a global email to all students in the class.

NEED FOR SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

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 contact me as soon as possible. Presidential Directive 97-03 requires that students with disabilities register with Disability Resource Center (DRC) to establish a record of their disability. You can obtain information about the DRC at: www.drc.sjsu.edu

Class/test accommodations can only be made based on receipt of an official accommodation form from the DRC. Therefore, you are urged to seek counseling from the DRC as early in the semester as possible and make sure you provide me with your accommodation form or forms.

DROP POLICY

It is important that you decide early whether or not you want to stay in this class. Please note that **February 5th** is the last day to drop a class without an entry on your official record. After that date, students may only drop a class for “serious and compelling reasons beyond the student’s control.” For example, students may not drop a class simply because of poor grades. Even if the Professor and the student agree that dropping the class would be in the student’s best interest, the University Administration makes the final determination and can deny a student’s late drop request, even if it is approved by the Professor and the Department Chair.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Departmental Writing Policy

All students should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English which includes the appropriate use of words and phrases. Spelling and grammar count! Students must also learn to master the use of appropriate citations. Direct quotations must always be indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which the quote was taken. Failure to cite sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. You will find resource links on D2L to websites providing information on proper citation and the use of paraphrasing as well as links to the SJSU Writing Center located in Clark Hall.

The SJSU Writing Center is a free resource offered to all SJSU students and is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate level writing specialists from each of the seven SJSU colleges. Each Writing specialist has met a rigorous GPA requirement and each is well trained to assist all students, in each of the seven colleges, to become better writers.

Arguably, the best way to improve your own writing is to read quality materials on a regular basis. To this end you are encouraged to read articles from scholarly sources as well as newspapers such as The Wall Street Journal, The Financial Times and The Economist. As part of class assignments, you will be reading excerpts from U. S. Supreme Court decisions, as well as other relevant and well written materials from the required Reader.

Short Written Papers

There will be 8 short written assignments (between 500-600 words each) worth 25 points each for a total of 200 points which represents 20% of your total grade.

Major Argumentative Essay

Within the first few weeks of class, each student will be assigned a partner and your “team” will have a separate “Group” folder on D2L. You and your partner must mutually agree on a contemporary “Controversial legal Issue you would like to write about. You will find a link to a website which lists many controversial issues. However, not every issue on this website is appropriate for this class which is why you must obtain advance approval before you begin your research. You and your partner must decide which side of the issue each of you will take and each of you will then write a separate Argumentative Essay defending and supporting your side of the issue.

This is a major research project which is intended to demonstrate your critical thinking skills and your ability to construct a strong and persuasive argument. Each paper is to be no less than 2500 words in length and will be worth 200 points which represents 20% of your final grade. There are more detailed guidelines about this assignment on the class website including the Rubric against which your work will be judged and graded.

If you need library assistance, you can contact the Political Science Library Liaison:

Crystal Goldman
(408) 808-2015
Crystal.Goldman@sjsu.edu

Required Peer Review

Each student must carry out a Peer Review of their partner’s paper. Due dates for draft exchanges and submission of Peer Reviews will be posted on D2L. You will have approximately three weeks to make changes based on your partner’s Peer Review critique of your work before submitting it to the class Dropbox. Your Peer Review is worth 100 points.

Submission Policy

Written assignments must be submitted through the D2L “Dropbox” which is automatically integrated with Turnitin.com. Assignments **cannot** be submitted by way of a hard copy or email. **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY REASON.** Assignments are to be a product of your own thinking and writing and not a collaborative effort. If you have any concern about your writing ability, you are strongly encouraged to seek help at the University’s Writing Center located on the first floor of Clark Hall.

Due dates for all assignments are clearly indicated under the D2L “Contents”, “Events” and “Calendar” sections on D2L as well as indicated in the D2L Dropbox under each assignment.

Format Requirements for Written Assignments

- You name, class and section number must be on the top right hand corner of each paper.
- The main text of your assignments must be **double spaced.**
- Margins must be 1” on all sides.
- Font – 12 point Arial or Times New Roman.
- Your paper **MUST** be saved in one of the following formats/file extensions:
 - MS Word (.doc)
 - WordPerfect (.wpd)
 - PostScript (.eps)
 - Portable Document Format (.pdf)
 - HTML (.htm)
 - Rich Text (.rtf)
 - Plain Text (.txt)

The above formats/file extensions are the only formats accepted by Turnitin.com. Documents written in Microsoft “Open Office” **ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE** and must be converted to one of the above noted formats before being submitted to the Dropbox. ***DOCUMENTS WHICH ARE NOT SUBMITTED IN THE ABOVE FORMAT/FILE EXTENSIONS WILL NOT BE GRADED.***

Because it is unfair to students who have done whatever is necessary to meet required deadlines, ***LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.*** Therefore, you are urged to plan your time accordingly. Because papers are accepted on-line through D2L, no later than 11:59 p.m. on the date they are due, do not wait until the last minute to submit your work in order to avoid any untimely computer, server or internet technical issues.

SJSU On-Line Library Tutorials

The SJSU Library offers a number of on-line tutorials. You must take the **following three** Tutorials by the scheduled due date which is under the “Content”, “Event” and “Calendar” sections on D2L as well as noted in the Dropbox.

- Library Basics
- InfoPower (3 modules)
- Plagiarism

You can repeat the tutorials without penalty, as many times as you wish in order to improve your scores. However, only **submit ONE file with all of your scores in the Dropbox.** This can be accomplished by cutting and pasting each of the reports from the library into a single file. This assignment is worth 100 points and your grade will be based on the average of your scores on these three tutorials. If you have taken one or more of these tutorials within the last academic year you may submit a copy of your prior scores.

There are **FIVE** separate Library Tutorial scores:

1. One score for Library Basics;
2. One score for Plagiarism; and
3. Three scores for InfoPower.

EXAMS/QUIZZES

In preparation for taking on-line exams, you should read the file “Tips for Taking an On-Line Exam” and take the ungraded “Practice Exam” which can be taken up to 5 times. There is nothing you need to study in order to take the Practice Exam. Quizzes/exams may contain a combination of short or long essay questions; multiple choice; fill-in-the-blank, and/or true-false questions.

All quizzes/exams are given under the Student Code of Conduct. Before taking each exam or quiz you will be acknowledging and affirming your understanding:

“. . .that this is NOT an open book or open note examination and that you understand that you are not to consult ANY outside resources. Any breach or violation of the University's Academic Integrity Policy may result in a zero for this exam and could result in an "F" for the course."

There will be a number of short on-line quizzes based on material from each chapter in the text, *Asking the Right Questions* as well as from the video lectures. While there are a different number of questions in each quiz, the total available cumulative points is 100. Quiz dates are noted on the Class Calendar, in the “Content” and “Event” areas and under “Quizzes”.

In addition to the Quizzes, there will be a Midterm and Final Exam, each worth 100 points each.

Each Quiz or Exam will be available from 7am until 11:59 pm on the assigned date. **DO NOT** take any quiz or exam on a **WIFI** connection since it is more likely that you could experience a technical issue that will interfere with your completion of the exam and your WIFI connection may not be SECURE. If you do not have a wired connection available at home, you should take the Quiz/Exam at school in the computer lab in Clark Hall. The only excuse for having a “technical” issue while taking an exam will be if there has been a D2L system problem which is verified by the D2L Technical Staff.

Once you begin taking a Quiz or Exam, time will continue to run even if you leave and return to the exam. Thus, plan ahead and be prepared to start and finish the exam without a break.

SPECIAL NOTE: You should be aware that an activity “Log” is created and saved each time you log into D2L. This log is available only to the instructor, and to the D2L Technical Support Staff. The “Log” provides information about your online activities. Any log activity that is suggestive of an attempt to cheat will be thoroughly investigated.

DISCUSSION FORUMS

There will be a series of 10 controversial legal issues posted in the “Discussion Board” section of D2L which you must participate in. There are 10 available points for each issue for a total of 100 available points. In order to receive credit for this assignment you must:

- Post an initial substantive response, of at least 150 words, to the question posed on each issue.
- Wait at least 24 hours to give other students time to post their initial responses.
- Post a substantive reply, of at least 150 words, to at least two other student’s initial posting. Whether you agree or disagree, you must explain your reasons.

Your Discussion Forum score will be based on the QUALITY of your posts to each issue using the following scale:

10	Excellent
8	Good
6	Fair
4	Poor
2	Unacceptable
0	No Post

Each issue will be open for approximately two weeks. Dates that each Forum will be open are clearly posted. Once the “cut-off” date for each issue is reached, the discussion will be “locked” and no further posts can be made. The instructor reserves the right to remove any postings deemed inappropriate. Removed postings will not receive any grade points.

LEARNING ASSISTANCE RESOURCE CENTER (LARC) AND SJSU WRITING CENTER

If you believe you have difficulty with either your writing or oral skills, you are strongly urged to check out the information and resources available to on the LARC and SJSU Writing Center’s web pages and/or visit these Centers in-person as early as possible in the term. Both LARC and the Writing Center provide free tutoring, workshops and on-line resources to students. Links to the on-line web sites for LARC and the Writing Center are provided on D2L. LARC is located in SSC 600. The Writing Center is located in Clark Hall 126.

GRADING POLICIES AND ASSESSMENT STANDARDS

Online Participation

Regular and active online participation is an essential and unmistakably important aspect of this online course. The expectation of the instructor is that students will log on a minimum of three times every seven days. It is critical that you read all of the assigned materials, watch the online lectures and any other posted videos, and complete all work in a timely manner.

No Extra Credit or Make-Up

There are no options to submit work for extra credit. It also is NOT possible to make-up missed assignments, quizzes or examinations.

Assessment Standards

Grading Rubrics will be used to assess your performance. All Grading Rubrics are posted on D2L and will be an integral part of the “Feedback” you will receive in the Dropbox once your work is graded. You are encouraged to become familiar with these Rubrics and keep the grading standards in mind as you prepare and submit your assignments.

Academic Integrity Policy

Your own commitment to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University’s Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty is required to report all infractions to the Office of Judicial Affairs. The University’s policy on academic integrity can be found at: http://sa.sjsu.edu/download/judicial/Academic_Dishonesty_Policy.pdf

Academic integrity is a serious matter and is essential to the University’s mission. As such, students are expected to perform their own work, except when collaboration is **expressly** permitted. Students are not permitted to use old tests or quizzes when preparing for exams, or consult with students who have already taken the exam. When practiced, academic integrity ensures that all students are fairly graded.

Plagiarism will lead to grade penalties, may result in your failing the course and/or in having the incident permanently noted in your SJSU student record.

Plagiarism is the act of representing the work of others as your own (without appropriate credit) and submitting it to fulfill academic requirements. Plagiarism is a very serious offense in both academic and professional environments. In addition to the King Library Plagiarism Tutorial, there are links on D2L to informative websites that provide concrete examples of proper paraphrasing, the use of quotations and proper citation.

Grading Policy

Grading is not based on a “curve”. Therefore, you are not in competition with any student other than yourself! As a result, the overall grade distribution in the class is irrelevant and will remain confidential. Your final grade will be based on your personal overall performance across all required work. The total points and weight of each required element of your final grade is indicated below:

Task	Available Points	% of Final Grade
8 Short Written Papers (25 Points Each)	200	20%
Textbook/Lecture Quizzes	100	10%
Midterm Exam	100	10%
Library Tutorials	100	10%
Discussion Forum Participation	100	10%
Argumentative Essay	200	20%
Peer Review of an assigned partner’s Essay	100	10%
Final Exam	100	10%
Total	1000	100%

Your total points will be summed at the end of the term and a letter grade equivalency will be applied as follows:

Final Grade	Determination
Overall Points	Letter Grade
930-1000	A
900-929	A-
870-899	B+
830-869	B
800-829	B-
770-799	C+
730-769	C
700-729	C-
670-699	D+
630-669	D
600-629	D-
599 and below	F

THE CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE DETAILED IN THE “CONTENT”, CALENDAR, AND “EVENTS” AREAS OF THE D2L CLASS WEBSITE.