

# Political Science 001 – Introduction to American Government Section 05, Fall 2016 – Dr. James Brent

Office: Clark Hall 457  
Phone: (408) 924-5572  
Email: james.brent@sjsu.edu

Office Hours:  
Mondays 8:00-9:00 and 10:30-12:00  
Wednesdays 8:00-9:00 and 10:30-12:00

It is very important that all students read this syllabus closely and completely, because you are responsible for all of the information contained therein.

This is a GE course that fulfills the American Institutions Requirement. As a result, the learning objectives for this course are established by university policy. At the end of this course, all students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of”

- 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 powers 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
- 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.

## Textbooks

The main “textbook” in this course is an online (electronic) multimedia textbook entitled *Globalyceum*. I am using it for the first time this semester, and the cost is about \$40. I will follow up with additional details about how to access the site.

In addition, there is one traditional textbook that can be purchased at Amazon.com or other retail sites.

Van Vechten, Renee. (2016) *California Politics: A Primer* (4th edition). Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-1483375595

## Course Modules (What You Are Responsible For)

This course is divided into 9 topics, or “modules.” Most of the modules last for two weeks, except for Modules #2 and #5, which each last for only one week. Each module begins at 11:00 a.m. on a Monday and ends at 11:00a.m. one or two weeks later.

**Assignments related to each module are always due at 11:00 a.m. on Monday.**

Each of the 9 modules contains the following elements. You must complete each element of each module:

1. Assigned Readings – Each module has an assigned reading from the textbook that you will be responsible for on the exams.
2. Lectures – Each module has between one and five short lectures that you must view. You will be responsible for the content of these videos on the exam.
3. Web-Based Activity (Research Assignment) – In each module, you will be asked to write a short paper based on internet research on a particular issue related to that module. **Web-based activities are always due at 11:00 a.m. on their respective due dates**
4. Presidential Election Journal – explained below

In addition, there will be a midterm, a final exam, and a final paper.

There are a maximum of 220 possible points, which are distributed accordingly:

Web-Based Research Assignments	80 points
Midterm Exam (October 20 & 21)	40 points
Final Exam (December 15 & 16)	40 points
Research Paper (due Nov. 28 or Dec. 12)	40 points
Presidential Election Journal	20 points

**Calculating Your Grade** – For this class, I grade on a traditional 90/80/70 scale. Grades within 2 points of any number divisible by 10 will earn a “plus” or “minus” depending on whether it is higher or lower than the number. For example, you must earn a 93% or higher to earn an “A.” Grades between 90% and 92% will receive an “A minus.” Grades between 88% and 89% will earn a “B+.” Grades between 83% and 87% will earn a “B”, grades between 80% and 82% will receive a “B minus.” And so on.

## The Assignments Explained

**Web-Based Research Activities** -- For each of the 9 modules of this course, you will be given a web-based activity assignment relevant to that particular module. Usually, the activity will require you to locate and retrieve information from the Internet and present an analysis of that information to your classmates. More information about the specific activities can be found from the course homepage by clicking on the icon that says "assignments".

Students must complete 8 of the 9 research activities. Assignments are worth 10 points each, meaning that the assignments in total are worth 40% (80 points out of 200) of your overall grade in the course. These assignments will not be accepted if submitted later than the end of the “grace period” (explained below), no matter what the reason. However, students can skip one assignment without suffering any damage to their grade in the course. If a student submits more than 8 assignments, I will count only their 8 highest scores

**The Midterm and Final Examinations** -- In this course, you will be required to take a midterm exam and a final exam. These exams will be administered on-line and are, therefore, open-book, open-note exams. Each exam will be a combination of short-answer, multiple-choice and essay questions. The final exam is NOT cumulative. The midterm covers modules 1-5 and the final exam covers modules 6-9. Each exam will be available on-line for a 48-hour period. You must begin the exam within that 48-hour period. You will have 90 minutes to complete each exam. Access to course lectures will be disabled once the exam period begins.

**Presidential Election Journal** – This is an exciting time to be learning about American politics, as we’ll be electing a new president this semester.. Part of your responsibility as a student of American government is to follow the presidential election as it happens, and to record your thoughts in a journal open to comment by your peers. Here are the details:

1. For each module from Module #1 to Module #7, you should use the Internet to locate a new story about something happening that week in the presidential election. The article that you locate should be from a *credible, unbiased* news source. The story that you locate can either be in print, or it may be a video. The story may be about the actions of a presidential candidate, or about some other aspect of the presidential election.
2. Post a link to your article in the “Election Journal” portion of the course website, along with a 150-word summary of the article that you’ve posted. You should briefly explain what their video is about, along with your own thoughts about it. This can be found by clicking “discussions” on the left-hand side of the homepage.
3. Wait at least 24 hours.
4. Comment upon an article that has been posted by another student with a response of at least 100 words. **Your response to another student’s article must be posted at least 24 hours after you post your own article in order to receive credit.**
5. The journal will only run during Modules 1 through 7

Participation in these discussions is worth 4 points each. You are required to participate in at least 5 of the 7 discussion modules. You will receive 2 points for posting your article and commentary, and you will receive another 2 points for responding to another student’s article. Once a module ends, the presidential journal for that module also ends. Therefore, *there is no way to make up for missed journal assignments.* However, you may skip two (2) of these journal entries without penalty.

## Research Paper

Many complain that American politics is “broken” in some way, and should be fixed. For your research paper, please pick some proposed political and write an argumentative paper in which you explain why we should either embrace or reject the proposal you’ve chosen. A partial list of acceptable topics would include:

- Should term limits for members of Congress be adopted?
  - Should we adopt a balanced budget amendment?
  - Should we adopt public financing for congressional campaigns?
  - Should the president be given a ‘line-item veto’?
  - Should California adopt a “part-time” legislature?
  - Should we adopt proportional representation?
  - Should the First Amendment’s “freedom of speech” be modified to permit regulation of campaign spending?
  - Should the government provide free airtime to political candidates?
  - Should Proposition 13 be amended or repealed?
  - Should the ability to filibuster judicial nominations be restricted?
  - Should we abolish the initiative system in California?
  - You may pick other topics not listed here *if you consult with me in advance.*
- Please not that you may NOT write about the Electoral College**

Please note five important aspects of this assignment.

- This paper must be about the structure or functioning of government or politics itself, and not merely an interesting question of public policy. Issues such as gay marriage, the legalization of marijuana, and similar issues are very interesting, but they would not be appropriate topics for this particular paper.
- This is an analytical paper. In other words, your paper should be devoted to defending your conclusion using logic and evidence. It should use only credible sources, and it should back up its assertions with facts. It should also consider both sides of the issue.
- This is a research paper. That means that you should conduct research to find relevant information to support your conclusion. Although I am interested in your opinion, you must be able to support that opinion with facts and figures and evidence. You will obtain these facts and figures and evidence from your research. Please note that the better and more numerous your sources, the higher your grade is likely to be. Academic sources are especially encouraged. *Papers that use only web sites as sources cannot receive a “A” or “B.” Papers that use Wikipedia as a source cannot receive an “A.”*
- You must provide attribution. In an academic paper, you must cite your sources within the text of the paper, as well as provide a “works cited” page at the end. This applies both to direct quotes from other authors AND circumstances in which you merely use the ideas or information reported by another author. *Please note: all papers are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com.*
- Your writing counts. Points will be deducted for poor spelling and grammar.

- Effort counts. This paper should be at least 8, typed, double-spaced pages long, and it should use a minimum of 8 sources. Papers that demonstrate more effort are more likely to receive a higher grade than papers that demonstrate less effort.

### My Late Policy

**The Research Paper** – I do accept the research paper if submitted late. In fact, there are two alternative due dates for the research paper. If you submit the paper by 11:00 a.m. on Monday, November 28, you will receive written feedback from me along with your grade (although you will not receive the opportunity to revise the paper – merely feedback that explains how your grade was arrived at). If you want extra time to work on your paper, you may submit it by 11:00 a.m. on Monday, December 12 and it will be considered “on time,” but it will not receive any written feedback from me. Papers submitted after 11:00 on December 12 will be considered late and will receive a penalty of one letter grade.

**The Web-Based Research Activities** – I do NOT accept these assignments late, regardless of the excuse. There are no exceptions to this policy whatsoever. However, to accommodate students who have technical difficulties, you do enjoy a 60-minute “grace period.” If you miss the submission deadline due to technical issues, you may email it to me instead at [james.brent@sjsu](mailto:james.brent@sjsu). However, I must receive the submission within 60 minutes of the original due date and time (in other words, no later than 12:00 p.m. on the due date). Under no circumstances will I accept assignments submitted after the grace period expires.

### Contacting Me

I am happy to receive your questions and feedback. I would ask that you contact me in one of two ways:

- 1) via email at [james.brent@sjsu.edu](mailto:james.brent@sjsu.edu)
- 2) From Canvas -- click “Inbox” and then the “new message” icon at the top to send me a message

Please do NOT use the “comment” feature to send me messages, as I do not receive all of them.

## List of Course Modules and Assigned Readings

### Module #1 – The American Constitution (August 24 through September 5)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 1
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: September 5 at 11:00 a.m.

### Module #2 – Federalism (September 5 through September 12)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 2
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: September 12 at 11:00 a.m.

### Module #3 – Civil Liberties & Civil Rights (September 12 through September 26)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 3
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: September 26 at 11:00 a.m.

### Module #4 – American Elections (September 26 through October 10)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 4
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: October 10 at 11:00 a.m.

### Module #5 – Political Parties & Interest Groups (October 10 through October 17)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 5
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: October 17 at 11:00 a.m.

MIDTERM ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20 AND 21

### Module #6 – Congress (October 17 through October 31)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 6  
Van Vechten, Chapter 4
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: October 31 at 11:00 a.m.

### Module #7 – The Presidency & the Executive Branch (October 31 through November 14)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 7  
Van Vechten, Chapter 5
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: November 14 at 11:00 a.m.

### Module #8 – The Judiciary (November 14 – November 28)

- READING: Globalyceum, Module 8  
Van Vechten, Chapter 6
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: November 28 at 11:00 a.m.

### Module #9 – California Politics and Government (November 28 – December 12)

- READINGS: Van Vechten, Chapters 2, 3, 7, 8 and 9
- ASSIGNMENTS DUE: December 12 at 11:00 a.m.

FINAL EXAM ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15 AND 16

# University Policies

## General Expectations, Rights and Responsibilities of the Student

As members of the academic community, students accept both the rights and responsibilities incumbent upon all members of the institution. Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with SJSU's policies and practices pertaining to the procedures to follow if and when questions or concerns about a class arises. See [University Policy S90-5](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S90-5.pdf>. More detailed information on a variety of related topics is available in the [SJSU catalog](http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-12234.12506.html), at <http://info.sjsu.edu/web-dbgen/narr/catalog/rec-12234.12506.html>. In general, it is recommended that students begin by seeking clarification or discussing concerns with their instructor. If such conversation is not possible, or if it does not serve to address the issue, it is recommended that the student contact the Department Chair as a next step.

## Dropping and Adding

Students are responsible for understanding the policies and procedures about add/drop, grade forgiveness, etc. Refer to the current semester's [Catalog Policies](http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html) section at <http://info.sjsu.edu/static/catalog/policies.html>. Add/drop deadlines can be found on the current academic year calendars document on the [Academic Calendars webpage](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/) at [http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic\\_calendars/](http://www.sjsu.edu/provost/services/academic_calendars/). The [Late Drop Policy](http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aars/policies/latedrops/policy/>. Students should be aware of the current deadlines and penalties for dropping classes.

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>.

## Consent for Recording of Class and Public Sharing of Instructor Material

[University Policy S12-7](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf), <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course and the following items to be included in the syllabus:

- “Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him/her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your private, study purposes only. The recordings are the intellectual property of the instructor; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.”
  - It is suggested that the greensheet include the instructor's process for granting permission, whether in writing or orally and whether for the whole semester or on a class by class basis.

- In classes where active participation of students or guests may be on the recording, permission of those students or guests should be obtained as well.
- “Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.”

### Academic integrity

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The [University Academic Integrity Policy S07-2](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S07-2.pdf> requires 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. The [Student Conduct and Ethical Development website](http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/) is available at <http://www.sjsu.edu/studentconduct/>.

### Campus Policy in Compliance with the American Disabilities Act

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, or if you need to make 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](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) at [http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD\\_1997-03.pdf](http://www.sjsu.edu/president/docs/directives/PD_1997-03.pdf) requires that students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the [Accessible Education Center](http://www.sjsu.edu/aec) (AEC) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/aec> to establish a record of their disability.