

San Jose State University
Essential US and CA Government (POLS 015 B)
Professor Dominic J. Caserta, M.A.
Fall Semester 2016, 3 Units, Lecture in Sweeney Hall 100, Thursday
nights from 6:00-8:45 PM
Office Hours: Before and/or after class on Thursday evenings in
CLARK HALL 406 J.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is a course in American and California government, which will cover the foundations and philosophy on the American and California system of government. Special attention will be given to the federal and California constitution and its creation. Moreover, this course will focus on the Legislative Branch; democratic participatory processes: electoral politics and the media; democratic participatory organizations: political parties, interest groups, the media, and think tanks, and influencing decisions: lobbying and opinion polls; social policy, civil liberties and civil rights, the Executive Branch, the Bureaucracy, Public Policy and the Judicial Branch, and the role of the California government.

If you have the ability to listen, speak, read, and write carefully and objectively, you will then be empowered civically, and you will know how to distinguish between the authentic and the fraudulent in human discourse. Hence, the goals of the semester are to involve you in your own learning process; to respect differing viewpoints; to further develop critical thinking, reading, writing, verbal communication, and technology skills; to expose you to issues, processes, institutions and politics, ultimately with the design of making each one of you responsible citizens and, hopefully, involved in the political process.

TOPICS

The course will focus on 6 major topics. These topics are:

- I. Constitutional Foundations/Federalism/California Government
- II. Public Policy
- III. The Judicial Branch/Civil Rights & Civil Liberties
- IV. The Legislative Branch
- V. The Presidency & the Bureaucracy
- VI. Political Behavior & Participation, Interest Groups, & the Mass Media

HOMEWORK

Students will have homework on a weekly basis. It is imperative for the student's success in the class that he or she keeps up with weekly homework assignments. It is also necessary for students to pay attention to the news and current events. **NO LATE HOMEWORK WILL BE ACCEPTED.**

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS & MATERIALS

- American Government by James Q. Wilson and John J. DiIulio, Jr., 14th Edition, Boston, MA, Houghton Mifflin Company, ISBN # 9781285195124 or E-Bbook ISBN # 9781305162839. (other editions are fine, as well)
- Guide to California Government, 15th edition by League of Women Voters of California, 2013, ISBN13: 978-0963246516. While I have assigned the 15th edition for this course, you are welcome to use the 16th edition too.
- Both of these required texts are available for purchase at the Spartan Bookstore or from various online retailers.

NOTE: Other reading materials may be issued periodically throughout the semester.

GRADING

The basis of your grade will reflect the **CHOICES** you have made and the **CHALLENGES** you have accepted. The following represents how you will be graded. Each assignment will have a point value to them.

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|---|------------|
| • Weekly Essential Chapter Questions | 30% |
| • Midterm | 25% |
| • Final | 25% |
| • Quizzes and other in class Assessments | 10% |
| • Class Participation and Attendance | 10% |

WEEKLY ESSENTIAL CHAPTER QUESTIONS

There will be weekly Essential Chapter Questions. You will be required to answer the BIG picture questions in approximately 2 pages in length each.

MIDTERM & FINAL

There will be a Midterm and Final Exam. The material covered on each will be announced in class. Makeup exams will not be offered (except under extraordinary circumstances beyond your control, which must be documented).

NOTE: NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED unless it is late because of an excused, documented absence.

Course Requirements

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>."

Because this is a 3-unit course, students can expect to spend a minimum of nine hours per week preparing for and attending classes and completing course assignments.

Careful time management will be required to keep up with readings and assignments in an intensive course such as this one.

Political Science Program Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the Political Science major program, students should be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

PSPLO1: Breadth

Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.

PSPLO2: Application

Students should be able to apply a variety of techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.

PSPLO3: Disciplinary methods

Student should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, have competence in systematic data gathering using library sources, government documents, and data available through electronic sources, should be able to evaluate research studies, and should be able to critically analyze and interpret influential political texts.

PSPLO4: Communication Skills

Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.

PSPLO5: Citizenship

Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San José State University, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy 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 policy on academic integrity can be found with the Office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct CAMPUS POLICY IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT.

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 requesting accommodations must register with DRC to establish a record of their disability.

CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR: STUDENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

See <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/s90-5.htm> about Academic Senate Policy S90-5.

PLAGIARISM

See http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct (Office of Student Conduct & Ethical Dev).

DEPARTMENTAL WRITING POLICY

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. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm.

For assistance, please visit the SJSU Writing Center staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists. 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. It is your responsibility to arrange a time to meet with the instructors. 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.

QUESTIONS?

Finally, if you get stuck, feel overwhelmed, or just want to clarify something from the reading or lectures, ask me. I am here to help.

DOING WELL

If you make a good faith effort to critically engage the reading, constructively participate, and prepare for exams, then you should do quite well in this class. As

with everything else, the more you put into it, the more you will get out of it. This is an opportunity to learn about American government and politics. Take full advantage of it! If I can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to see me before or after class.

Remember the 5 P's: PROPER PREPARATION PREVENTS POOR PERFORMANCE

CONTACT INFORMATION:

If you ever have a question and/or problem, please do not hesitate to contact me at **djcaserta@gmail.com**.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dom J Caserta".

Professor Dominic J. Caserta

Course Schedule (changes will be announced in class)

Date	Topics	Assigned Reading
Week 1: 08/25	Introductions The Study of American Government	Syllabus Chapter 1
Week 2: 09/01	The Constitution & Federalism	Chapter 2 & 3
Week 3: 09/08	American Political Culture & Public Opinion	Chapter 4 & 7
Week 4: 09/15	Political Participation & Political Parties	Chapter 8 & 9
Week 5: 09/22	Elections & Campaigns	Chapter 10
Week 6: 09/29	Interest Groups and the Media	Chapter 11 & 12
Week 7: 10/06	Review for Midterm	
Week 8: 10/13	Midterm: Free Response Questions	
Week 9: 10/20	The Congress	Chapter 13
Week 10: 10/27	The Presidency & Bureaucracy	Chapter 14 & 15
Week 11: 11/03	The Judiciary	Chapter 16
Week 12: 11/10	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	Chapter 4 & 5
Week 13: 11/17	The Policy-Making Process	Chapter 17
Week 14: 12/01	Review for Final Exam	
Week 15: 12/08	Final Exam: Free Response Questions	

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