

San José State University
Political Science/History 15B Essentials of US & CA Government
Section 07 Code 44683 Fall 2017

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Jeremy Abrams
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Office Hours:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:15am – 8:45am, 10:30am – 11:30am, and by appointment
Class Days/Time:	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00pm – 1:15pm
Classroom:	HGH116
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	US2, US3, D3

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You are responsible for regularly checking with the messaging system through MySJSU to learn of any updates.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to United States national government. The course is designed to introduce students to the constitutional basis, institutions, politics and processes of United States government. Although the primary focus of this course is on modern United States government, in order to understand contemporary events it is essential to examine their historical antecedents and evolution. Thus, this course will begin by exploring the origins and early development of the Constitution and how it influenced the development of American democracy. From there we will see how the Constitution has affected our understanding of rights and liberties over time. After that we will learn about the three branches of our government, and examine how they operate in our current understanding of democracy and rights. Finally, we will explore how the citizenry can exert their influence on the political process.

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. GELO 1 (US2) Explain how political decisions are made, their consequences for individuals and society, and how individuals and groups may affect the decision-making process. Analyze the meaning and content of the democratic process as it has evolved in the United States and California, describe the foundations of the political system, the links between the people and government and the operations of California government.
2. GELO 2 (US3) Identify the tools of political action and collective decision-making at the local, state, national, and global level and articulate the values and assumptions that inform their civic engagement.

3. GELO 3 (D3): Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts.
4. GELO 4 (D3): Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them.
5. GELO 5 (D3): Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues.
6. GELO 6 (D3): Apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national, and/or international levels.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon completion of this course the student (you) will be able to:

1. explain the Constitutional institutions, structure, processes, and functions of government set up by the US Constitution and the California constitution, and explain how those institutions historically evolved.
2. define, cite and analyze: The Bill of Rights, The 1st ten amendments and the compromises of 1787, Famous Supreme court decisions vis a vis the Bill of Rights, How Judges Make Law, Judicial Activism versus judicial restraint, The clash between individual rights and the rights of the community.
3. Students will be able to differentiate between civil rights and liberties; define each and evaluate American democracy in its protection of and expansion of the rights. Recognize the significance of the the 14th Amendment as an augmentation to the Bill of Rights. Discuss and analyze how rights have impacted minorities and women, namely, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native American, women, the elderly, the disabled.
4. Students will be able to define federalism, identify the major Supreme Court decisions the have contributed to its evolution, contrast the powers of the national government with those of the states, recognize and explain the role of the states in modern federalism and discuss the operation of and institutions of California's state and local government vis a vis the national government and discuss supremacy.
5. Students will be able to define and discuss the functions of: Interest Groups, PACS, political parties, the media, and other organizations in both national and state government.
6. Students will be able to define and analyze the relationship between the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government at the national, state and local levels, with an emphasis on the concepts of separation of powers, checks and balance, and judicial review.

Assessment of these outcomes will be measured as follows:

- GELO 1: Outline, Exams, Final Exam
 GELO 2: Discussion Board 1, Exams, Final Exam
 GELO 3: Exams, Final Exam
 GELO 4: Exams, Final Exam
 GELO 5: Discussion Board 2, Exams, Final Exam
 GELO 6: Discussion Board 2, Exams, Final Exam

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

[*We The People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*](#), 11th edition, by Thomas E. Patterson; McGraw-Hill, 2015. ISBN: 978-0078024795 .

[*Guide to California Government*](#), 15th edition, by League of Women Voters of California: League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, 2013. ISBN: 978-0963246516

Other Readings

There will be additional handouts provided by the instructor during the course of the semester which will be available on Canvas.

You may also want to subscribe to one of several email newsletters focused on California politics and news.

Two of the better ones are the L.A. Times' Newsletter: Essential California at

<http://www.latimes.com/newsletters/la-newsletter-essential-california-signup-page-htm1story.html> and the New York Times' California Today at <http://www.nytimes.com/newsletters/california-today> . KQED's The California Report is also worth consulting at <https://ww2.kqed.org/news/programs/the-california-report/> .

Other equipment / material requirements

Please purchase four of the blue T&E answer sheet from the SJSU bookstore. They will be needed for the exams.

You will also need access to the internet outside classroom to complete readings from Canvas, complete online homework assignments, upload assignments, and access syllabus, announcements, and course updates on Canvas. Computer access is available in the campus library and in Clark Hall 102.

Course Requirements and Assignments

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus. More details can be found from [University Syllabus Policy S16-9](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf> and at Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

Your grade will be determined by (1) three exams, each worth 50 points, (2) an outline worth 10 points, (3) two Discussion Boards on Canvas, each worth 20 points, and a final exam worth 100 points. See the section on 'Grading Information and Policy' below for more details.

The examinations and final are designed to measure your understanding of basic concepts and Course Learning Outcomes related to American government and political science as listed above. As such, the exams will draw on materials from the books as well as class discussions and additional readings available on Canvas. The writing assignments will delve deeper into key concepts that require more thoughtful treatment and reflection on the part of the student to understand some of the core problems the founders faced when the Constitution was written. Taken together they will help you, at the completion of the course, to better understand how political decisions are made and major obstacles to policy development. The deadlines for these assignments are listed in the course schedule below.

NOTE that [University policy F69-24](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F69-24.pdf> states that “Students should attend all meetings of their classes, not only because they are responsible for material discussed therein, but because active participation is frequently essential to insure maximum benefit for all members of the class. Attendance per se shall not be used as a criterion for grading.”

In a course that examines American politics and government discussions are very important, especially since we just concluded a presidential election and a new administration is taking office. You will be better able to learn from these discussions by having a command of current events. Please keep up-to-date with national and world events by reading daily newspapers and listening to the news. I anticipate spending time in many classes discussing current political events and linking them to theories and ideas discussed in the course.

Final Examination

The final exam is scheduled for **Wednesday, December 13 from 9:45am – 12:00pm** in our classroom. The final exam in this course will be cumulative and will cover course readings, lectures, activities, and discussions for the entire term. It will consist of short answer, multiple choice and other questions and will comprise one-third of your course grade. You will need to bring a blue T&E answer sheet.

Grading Information and Policy

There is a possible total of 300 points. Your final grade will be determined by your total accumulation of points as follows:

Total Points	Percentage	Grade
291-300	97-100	A+
279-290	93-96.9	A
270-278	90-92.9	A-
261-269	87-89.9	B+
249-260	83-86.9	B
240-248	80-82.9	B-
231-239	77-79.9	C+
219-230	73-76.9	C
210-218	70-72.9	C-
201-209	67-69.9	D+
189-200	63-66.9	D
180-188	60-62.9	D-

Below 180 points is a failing grade. There will be no extra credit available. Please note that you must take all exams and turn in all assignments to pass the course. In addition, you must complete the multiple choice portion of the exams on the appropriate Scantron form. Exams that do not have the correct Scantron form will not be graded. Further, I will not give make ups for any of the exams except in the most extreme of cases (e.g. verifiable medical emergencies, etc.). If you miss an exam, you must contact me immediately to schedule a make-up. If you know you will be gone in advance (for university related or other excusable reasons) you must consult with me beforehand so that you can make arrangements to take the exam at another time. It is your responsibility to make sure you are available to take the exams. Late papers will be penalized one point per calendar day. **Please retain ALL of your exams, papers, and other assessments until after you have completed the course and received your grade.**

Note that “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See [University Policy F13-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details.

Classroom Protocol

E-mail: Each student must have an e-mail address which they check regularly. Please make sure you have updated your records in MySJSU. You must monitor your account on a regular basis. When I send out classwide messages it will be to this account. Failure to monitor this account may result in you missing important messages such as class cancellations, change of exam dates, and requests for timely information.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken. If you are not present when your name is called, you will be marked as absent. It is your responsibility as a student to be in class on time. Further, it is common sense that by not attending regularly, you will miss important lectures, clarifications, handouts, scintillating discussions and brilliant insights from your instructor and fellow students.

Exams: If you arrive late for an exam, you will have only the remainder of the period to complete the exam. Once the first person has completed the exam and left the classroom, no new exams may be started. You may not have any electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, mp3 players, etc) on your desk or otherwise be using them during the exam. Please have them off and stowed away in your backpack/pocket/purse.

Academic Freedom: Each student is strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions. In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical writing, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may not only disagree with each other at times, but the students and the professor may also find that they have conflicting views on sensitive and volatile topics. It is my hope that these differences will enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere in which students and professor alike will be encouraged to think and learn. Therefore, be assured that students' grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in class or in assignments. Rather, we will all respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions.

Electronics: I allow the use of computers for taking notes, [though it is not the best way to take notes](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/) <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/> . Other electronic devices are not allowed and must be put away. Serious students often complain of the distraction caused by their fellow students' web browsing, IMing (if that is a verb) or who are otherwise preoccupied by electronics in class. We have a limited amount of time together during the semester and we should maximize the utility of that time. Please respect the class and your classmates and do not use these devices during class. **Recording of any portion of the class is prohibited unless permission is received from the instructor prior to class.**

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' Syllabus Information web page at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>”

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas. It is your responsibility to sign into Canvas regularly and check for any important announcements and updates.

Other Useful Information

Voter Registration (From <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/frequently-asked-questions/>)

Who can register to vote?

To register to vote in California, you must be:

- A United States citizen,
- A resident of California,
- 18 years of age or older on Election Day,
- Not currently imprisoned or on parole for the conviction of a felony, and
- Not currently found to be mentally incompetent by a court of law.

California's Statewide Direct Primary Election: June 5, 2018
Last Day to Register to Vote: May 21, 2018

Political Science Scholarships – see <http://www.sjsu.edu/polisci/scholarships/> for info. From the website: “The Political Science Department is fortunate to be able to award more than 10 scholarships to our students each year–this is an extraordinary level of support that surpasses what any other department on campus can offer. The scholarships were created by generous benefactors–often former faculty, students, and friends of the department–who desired to ease the financial burden on our students as they seek to earn their degrees in Political Science. The department encourages all of our students to apply for one or more of these awards.”

POLS/HIST 15B / American Government, Spring 2017, Course Schedule

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Chapter
1	Thursday, August 24, 2017	Introduction/Political Thinking	1
2	Tuesday, August 29, 2017	Political Thinking	1
2	Thursday, August 31, 2017	Political Thinking/Constitutional Democracy	1/2
3	Tuesday, September 5, 2017	Constitutional Democracy Last day to drop without a ‘W’	2
3	Thursday, September 7, 2017	Constitutional Democracy Outline Assignment Due	2
4	Tuesday, September 12, 2017	Constitutional Democracy	2
4	Thursday, September 14, 2017	Federalism	3
5	Tuesday, September 19, 2017	Federalism	3
5	Thursday, September 21, 2017	Federalism	3
6	Tuesday, September 26, 2017	First Exam	

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Chapter
6	Thursday, September 28, 2017	Civil Liberties	4
7	Tuesday, October 3, 2017	Civil Liberties	4
7	Thursday, October 5, 2017	Civil Liberties/Equal Rights	4/5
8	Tuesday, October 10, 2017	Equal Rights	5
8	Thursday, October 12, 2017	Equal Rights Discussion Board 1 Due	5
9	Tuesday, October 17, 2017	Second Exam	
9	Thursday, October 19, 2017	Congress/California Legislature	11/Calif. 4
10	Tuesday, October 24, 2017	Congress/California Legislature	11/Calif. 4
10	Thursday, October 26, 2017	Congress/The Presidency/Calif. Executive	12/Calif. 5
11	Tuesday, October 31, 2017	The Presidency/Calif. Executive	12/Calif. 5
11	Thursday, November 2, 2017	The Presidency/Calif. Executive	12/Calif. 5
12	Tuesday, November 7, 2017	The Bureaucracy	13
12	Thursday, November 9, 2017	The Judiciary/Calif. Judiciary	14/Calif. 6
13	Tuesday, November 14, 2017	The Judiciary/Calif. Judiciary	14/Calif. 6
13	Thursday, November 16, 2017	Third Exam	
14	Tuesday, November 21, 2017	Voting & Participation/Calif. Voters	7/Calif. 1
14	Thursday, November 23, 2017	THANKSGIVING	
15	Tuesday, November 28, 2017	Political Parties/Calif. Choosing the Candidates	8/Calif. 2
15	Thursday, November 30, 2017	Political Parties/ Calif. Choosing the Candidates Discussion Board 2 Due	8/Calif. 2
16	Tuesday, December 5, 2017	Interest Groups/Calif. Ballot Measures	9/Calif. 3
16	Thursday, December 7, 2017	Interest Groups/Calif. Ballot Measures	9/Calif. 3
Final Exam	Wednesday, December 13, 2017	FINAL EXAM 9:45AM – 12:00PM	