

Political Science 15 – Essentials of U.S. & CA Government

Fall 2020, Section 99 (online) – Dr. James Brent

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8:00 to 9:00 a.m., via Zoom

Course Format and Technical Requirements: This is a completely asynchronous online course delivered exclusively through the Canvas learning management system, with lecture videos hosted on Youtube. Students must have regular access to email and the internet in order to communicate with the instructor, submit assignments, and engage in other class activities.

Course Description From the SJSU Course Catalog: Treatment of essentials of U.S. and California government. Satisfies the American Institutions requirements in U.S. Constitution (US2) and California Government (US3), and the Core GE requirement in Social Sciences: Social Issues (D3). GE Area: D3, and American Institution Requirement: US2 and US3

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 and describe the foundations of the political system and the evolving institutions of government, the links between the people and government, and the operations of California government. [Assessed by the examinations, web-based activities, and the research paper]
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. [Assessed by the exams and web-based activities]
3. GELO 3 (D3): Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. [Assessed by the Outline/Bibliography and the Research Paper]
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. [Assessed by the exams, web-based activities, and possibly the research paper, depending on topic]
5. GELO 5 (D3): Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. [Assessed by the Research Paper and several web-based activities]

6. GELO 6 (D3) Apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national, and/or international levels. [Assessed by the Outline/Bibliography and the Research Paper]

Textbooks

The main “textbook” in this course is an online (electronic) multimedia textbook entitled *Globalyceum*. The cost is about \$40, and information on order it can be found by clicking on the “Modules” tab on the course’s Canvas page, in the introductory module.

Course Requirements and Assignments

This course is divided into 9 topics, or “modules.” Most modules last two weeks, although a couple of modules last only a week (see course schedule below). 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 Globalyceum that you will be responsible for on the exams.
2. Lectures – Each module has one or more 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 on Mondays at noon.**

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

There are a maximum of 200 possible points, which are distributed accordingly:

Web-Based Research Assignments	70 points
Midterm Exam	40 points
Final Exam	40 points
Outline & List of Sources	10 points
Research Paper	40 points

Extra Credit: Extra credit may or may not be available.

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

A = 93 to 100%	A minus = 90 to 92%	B plus = 88 to 89%	B = 83 to 87%
B minus = 80 to 82%	C plus = 78 to 79%	C = 73 to 77%	C minus = 70 to 72%
D plus = 68 to 69%	D = 63 to 67%	D minus = 60 to 62%	F = 59% or less

The Assignments Explained

Web-Based Assignments -- For each of the 9 modules of this course, you will be given a 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, although some involve taking and submitting pictures. More information about the specific activities can be found from the course homepage by clicking on the icon that says "assignments".

You should complete 7 of the 9 assignments. Assignments are worth 10 points each, 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 two (2) assignments without suffering any damage to their grade in the course. If a student submits more than 7 assignments, I will count only their 7 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 online for a 48-hour period. You must begin the exam within that 24-hour period. You will have 90 minutes to complete each exam. Access to course lectures and Globalyceum will be disabled once the exam period begins. Although these are open-note exams, researching your answers on the internet will be considered academic dishonesty.

Research Paper

Trump & the Republican Congress have already challenged many of the fundamental assumptions and practices of American government. For your research paper, you will be asked to select one specific proposal Trump has made or action he has taken and argue for or against its adoption.

This assignment has three parts:

1. Topic Selection & Approval (0 points)
2. Outline & List of Sources (10 points)
3. Paper (40 points)

Step 1 - Topic Selection & Approval (due Monday, September 14)

Please click on the “assignments” link to find a place where you can tell me what specific proposal or action you want to write about. I will send you a reply email letting you know whether your topic is approved or not. There are NO points associated with this.

Step 2 – Outline & List of Sources (due Monday, October 26)

Using the “assignment” tab in Canvas, please submit a one-page outline of your paper, along with a list of 15 sources that you might use in the paper. These sources should be credible, unbiased sources, and at least five (5) should be peer-reviewed articles, law review articles, or other academic sources. You should use proper bibliographic form, but I do not care whether you use MLA, APA, or another style. [Please note: By listing sources here, you are NOT committing yourself to using those exact sources in your final paper.]

Step 3 – The Paper (due November 30 or December 14)

Your final draft should be a minimum of 8 pages long and should use a minimum of 8 high-quality sources. It should address the following elements:

- 1) You should provide a brief historical overview of the issue that you’re discussing.
- 2) You should present evidence regarding public opinion on your topic, discussing any relevant differences between different racial, gender, age, religious or other relevant demographic groups
- 3) You should discuss any action that has been taken in Congress in response to the proposal
- 4) You should discuss any major constitutional provisions and major relevant Supreme Court precedents that apply to your issue
- 5) You should make sure to make a persuasive argument for or against the proposal

Please note several important aspects of this assignment:

- 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 taken from credible sources. 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 or an online encyclopedia as a source cannot receive an “A.”*
- This is a paper about government. Although your paper should certainly address the issue of whether the proposal is a good idea (would it work?), it should also address issues such as its constitutionality, its effect on federalism, its effect on separation of powers (if any), etc.

- 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.
- Certain Topics Are Off Limits – There are several topics that you may not write about. These include (but are not limited to) any proposals or actions related to LBGTQ rights, marijuana, abortion & birth control, the death penalty, or gun control.. Furthermore, the topic should be about domestic affairs rather than foreign affairs. It should also be controversial -- proposals with broad, bipartisan support are not appropriate.

My Late Policy

The Outline/List of Sources – You should make every effort to submit this assignment on time. However, since this represents your best opportunity to get feedback from me before writing your final draft, I will accept these assignments late and without penalty until one week before the due date of the final draft. I will not accept them after that.

The Final Draft of the Paper -- There are two alternative due dates for the final draft. If you submit the paper by noon on Monday, November 30, 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 noon on Monday, December 14 and it will be considered “on time,” but it will not receive any written feedback from me. Papers submitted after noon on December 14 will be considered late (they will be accepted, but you will likely receive an “incomplete” in the course until I can grade them, and they will be assessed a 10% penalty).

The Web-Based Research Activities – These are very difficult and stressful times, and I realize that you may not be able to complete all of these assignments on time. At the same time, I have to enforce deadlines and due dates in order to keep my own workload manageable. As a result, I have adopted the following policies regarding 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, you are permitted to skip two (2) assignments without penalty. If you submit more than seven (7) of these assignments, your two lowest grades will be dropped.

- In addition, 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.edu. However, I must receive the submission within 60 minutes of the original due date and time (in other words, no later than 1:00 p.m. on the due date). Under no circumstances will I accept assignments submitted after the grace period expires. According to university policy, I cannot make exceptions.

Exams -- Makeup exams will be permitted with documentation of an acceptable excuse (i.e. illness or an unplanned situation).

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
- 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.

In addition, I will occasionally post “announcements” in Canvas. It is very important that you make sure to read all of these announcements.

University Policies

Workload and Credit Hour Requirements

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.

Other 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 website, which can be found [by clicking here](#).

POLS 15 Course Schedule / Fall 2020

Due dates may on rare occasion change with fair notice, but I will never make an assignment due any earlier than is listed here.

Module #1 – The American Constitution (August 19 - August 31)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 1

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, August 31 at noon

Module #2 – Federalism (August 31 - September 7)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 2

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, September 7 at noon

Module #3 – Civil Liberties & Civil Rights (September 7 - September 21)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 3

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, September 21 at noon

Module #4 – Political Parties & Interest Groups (September 21 - October 5)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 4

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, March 23 at noon

Module #5 – American Elections (October 5 - October 19)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 5

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, October 19 at noon

MIDTERM ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, OCTOBER 15 AND 16

Module #6 – Congress (October 19 - November 2)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 6

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, November 2 at noon

Module #7 – The Presidency & the Executive Branch (November 2 - November 16)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 7

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, November 16 at noon

Module #8 – The Judiciary (November 16 - November 30)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 8

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, November 30 at noon

Module #9 – California Politics and Government (November 30 - December 7)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 9

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: Monday, December 7 at noon

FINAL EXAM ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10 AND 11