

**San José State University**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**PolS 170V-04 (50968): American Politics in a Global Perspective**  
**Fall 2020**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor: Martín Ordóñez  
Office Location: Clark Hall 406G  
Email: martin.ordonez@sjsu.edu (preferred)  
Phone number: 408-924-8334  
Office Hours: Tu, 11:00-12:00 (and by appointment)  
Class days & time: TuTh 3:00PM - 4:15PM  
Classroom: On-Line  
GE/SJSU Studies Category: US2, US3, D3

**Course Description (from the university catalog)**

A survey of U.S. and California political institutions and culture in comparison with political institutions and cultures outside the U.S. GE Area: V, as well as American Institutions. Requirement: US2 and US3  
Prerequisites: Completion of Core GE, satisfaction of writing skills test and upper division standing.  
Note: All SJSU Studies courses require completion of the WST and upper division standing.

**Course Format**

This course will be taught in a remote teaching format, combining synchronous and asynchronous components. The asynchronous component includes required readings, lecture material, quizzes, and participation in online discussions. The synchronous component includes weekly group sessions and office hours. Canvas, Zoom and email will provide the main sources of interaction between students and the instructor.

**Department of Political Science Learning Outcomes**

The Political Science Department has the following objectives for its students:

- *Breadth*: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
- *Application and Disciplinary Methods*: Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
- *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.
- *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.

## **GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)**

This class fulfills the American Institutions (US2 and US3) General Education requirements, along with the SJSU Studies V General Education Requirement. In order to achieve the objectives of these requirements, upon successful completion of this course, students will:

LO1 (Assessed by quizzes 1 to 13, and Discussions 1 to 5): study how political decisions are made, their consequences for individuals and society, and how individual groups may affect the decision-making process. As students study the meaning and content of the democratic process as it has evolved in the United States and California, at a minimum, they should recognize:

- 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 power 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; and
- 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.

LO2 (Assessed by quizzes 1 to 13): in terms of California government, show an understanding of tools of political action and collective decision-making at the local, state, national or global level.

LO3 (Assessed by Discussions 1 to 5): articulate the values and assumptions that inform their civic engagement.

LO4 (Assessed by paper assignment): compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, and/or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S.

LO5 (Assessed by paper assignment, and Discussions 1 to 5): identify the historical context or ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture.

LO6 (Assessed by paper assignment): explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external pressures.

## **Required Readings**

### **Textbooks**

- Schmidt, W. Steffen. 2018. *American Government and Politics Today: 2018-2019 Brief Edition*. 10th edition. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Smith, Raymond A. *The American Anomaly: U.S. Politics and Government in Comparative Perspective*. Fourth Edition, Routledge, 2019.
- **Optional:** Lawrence DG, Cummins J. *California: The politics of diversity*. 10th edition. Cengage Learning; 2020.

## Other Readings

Further readings are listed in the Schedule of the Course and available on CANVAS. Other readings will be assigned throughout the course and will be available on CANVAS.

## 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 three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

*Quizzes (33%):* Each week ends with a quiz on the main topics addressed that week (except for the weeks whose main topic extends for two weeks. In those cases, there is only one quiz at the end of the second week). These will be open-book quizzes and you can start them at any point, but you will have to answer a number of questions during a limited time. Therefore, it will be crucial for your success in them to read and study before the exam.

These quizzes will evaluate your understanding of the material addressed in the lectures and the handbook.

*Threaded Discussion (33%):* At the end of each unit, you will be asked to participate in an online discussion, responding to a prompt that will be provided (five discussions in total). Your postings should be well written and clearly address the issues being discussed. Each writing assignment must: 1) be 250-300 words long; 2) addresses directly the question posed by the instructor and provide a clear answer; 3) provide factual examples and/or referred theoretical arguments that support your argument; these examples and arguments may be drawn from either the assigned readings (excluding the handbooks), the assigned audiovisual material, or footnoted sources researched independently by the student; 4) provide appropriate source citations (plagiarized threads will be penalized). In addition, you must respond to the threads of at least one other student within the following week.

These discussions will evaluate your understanding of the material addressed in the lectures and in all the readings other than the handbooks.

*Paper (34%):* Students are required to write a paper no longer than 1200-words (about 5 pages double-spaced) addressing a central topic of the course. For the paper, students are expected to use the material of the course to analyze a specific topic.

The paper will evaluate the depth of your comprehension of specific topics of the class, your ability to extract relevant lessons from the analysis of concrete cases, and develop a well written and convincing argument.

## Final Examination or Evaluation

Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment. In this class, the final paper will fulfill this requirement.

## Guidelines for the Paper

The Constitution of the United States created a strong but *limited* national government, in order to protect the citizens from possible abuses of the government. These limits are expressed, in the division of its powers, the adoption of a federal system, the proclamation of civil liberties and rights, and the rotation and selection of authorities through popular election.

How have other countries set restraints to their governments? Are these solutions preferable to the ones implemented in the United States? For your paper, answer these questions by comparing the United States with **one or two** other countries addressing **one dimension of government**. Specifically, your paper should 1) describe the dimension of government you are addressing (e.g., relationships between branches or levels of government, processes of selection of authorities, rights of the citizens and how they are protected, etc.), 2) describe the limits implemented in each country, and 3) critically analyze the advantages and disadvantages of these limits and the conditions that may explain their success or failure.

*You must submit your paper through Canvas, by Friday, December 11, at 11:59 pm. Only PDFs and Word docs of the paper will be accepted.*

### **Grading Information**

Determination of Grades:

A plus	97 to 100%
A	92 to 96%
A minus	90 to 91%
B plus	87 to 90%
B	82 to 86%
B minus	80 to 81%
C plus	77 to 80%
C	72 to 76%
C minus	70 to 71%
D plus	67 to 70%
D	62 to 66%
D minus	60 to 61%

Late Work and Make-Up Policies:

- Quizzes cannot be made up or turned in after the course has ended. Exceptions could be made for students with a compelling reason—i.e. involving a serious medical condition, religious holiday, pre-approved university-sanctioned event or activity, military orders, or family emergency. The only excuse for missing quizzes due dates without pre-approval is a documented medical emergency. With only these exceptions, missed quizzes cannot be made up and will result in zero points.
- Participation in threaded discussions cannot be made up or turned in late. Exceptions could be made for students with a compelling reason—i.e. involving a serious medical condition, religious holiday, pre-approved university-sanctioned event or activity, military orders, or family emergency. The only excuse for missing discussions' due dates without pre-approval is a documented medical emergency. With only these exceptions, missed participation in threaded discussions cannot be made up and will result in zero points.
- All late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade for each day following the due date. If you face a serious illness that renders you unable to complete the paper on time, you must notify me in person or by email before the assignment is due. Exceptions to this are only allowed in cases of documented medical emergencies.

### **Classroom Protocol: Recommendations and Requirements for Remote Learning**

1. ***How to approach this course*** - Remote learning offers greater flexibility. Especially given that a significant portion of the course will be handled asynchronously, you will have a greater capacity to decide when to go through the material and complete the different assignments.

However, this greater flexibility will require motivation, self-help, and time management, much more than what you would need at the best of times. Remember, although it might seem that remote learning courses take less time than campus-based ones, typically the opposite is true—you will need to dedicate enough time to watch/read lectures, complete reading assignments, and participate in discussions on a regular basis to understand the material and be successful.

Finally, make sure to take advantage of the possibilities and tools that remote learning offers. For example, you can go through lecture material at your own pace, reviewing or dedicating more time to contents that may require a second look. There are also multiple routes to communicate with your classmates and the instructor, which can be used to provide comments and solve questions.

2. ***Interactions with Classmates*** - While the potential is there for feeling isolated in an online environment, you may find that you can develop enriching relationships with classmates through discussion, and peer review, or setting up study groups online.
3. ***Interaction with the Instructor*** - Communication with the instructor will happen in several ways. I will post important announcements and reminders via the announcement tool in Canvas. I will also provide feedback on assignments and participate in the discussions if I see that anything requires clarification. If you would like to communicate directly with me, please use my SJSU email address or the messaging system within Canvas. If necessary or preferable, we may schedule a meeting on Zoom or the chat tool in Canvas.
4. ***Online interaction etiquette*** - While using video conference or online chat, ensure your name and image is appropriate (e.g., use your name, not your initials). Also, in video conferences, mute your microphone when you arrive and after you speak, and try not to move too much or move/shake your computer. Be mindful of glares or unsightly things behind you. Wear headphones (if you can) to avoid echoes. When posting on the discussion boards and chat rooms it is important to understand how to interact with one another online, netiquette. You can read more about the rules of netiquette at <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/index.html>.

### **University Policies**

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>), which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate Education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

**Pols 170V American Politics in a Global Perspective, Fall 2020**  
**Course Schedule**

This schedule is subject to change with reasonable notice provided through Canvas and/or classroom announcement.

---

**Unit 1: Basis of Government**

---

<b>Week 1</b> August 20	<b>Introduction to the Course</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Syllabus</li></ul>
<b>Week 2</b> August 25	<b>State and Democracy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The American Anomaly (AA) Ch 1</li><li>- American Government and Politics Today (AGPT) Ch.1</li><li>- <b>(Optional)</b> Kuo, Didi. "Comparing America: reflections on democracy across subfields." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 17.3 (2019): 788-800.</li></ul> <i>Assignment: Quiz</i>
<b>Week 3</b> September 1	<b>Constitutions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch. 2</li><li>- AGPT Ch. 2</li></ul> <i>Assignment: Quiz</i>
<b>Week 4</b> September 8	<b>Division of Powers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch. 4</li><li>- AGPT pp. 30-43</li><li>- Federalist 10 &amp; 51 (see AGPT or online)</li></ul> <i>Assignment: Quiz</i> <i>Assignment: Discussion</i>

---

**Unit 2: Horizontal Division of Power**

---

<b>Week 5</b> September 15	<b>Legislative Branches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch 6</li><li>- AGPT Ch 9: Congress</li><li>- George Packer, "The Empty Chamber: Just how broken is the Senate?" <i>The New Yorker</i>, August 9, 2010.</li></ul> <i>Assignment: Quiz</i>
<b>Week 6</b> September 22	<b>Executive Branches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch 5</li><li>- AGPT Ch.10: The President</li><li>- Elizabeth Drew, "Power Grab," <i>The New Yorker</i>, Volume 53, Number 11. June 22, 2006</li></ul> <i>Assignment: Quiz</i>
<b>Week 7</b> September 29	<b>Judicial Branches</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch 7</li><li>- AGPT Ch.12: The Courts</li><li>- Ian Millhiser, "Why did liberals win so many cases before a Conservative Supreme Court?", <i>Vox</i>, July 12, 2020.</li></ul> <i>Assignment: Quiz</i> <i>Assignment: Discussion</i>

---

### Unit 3: Vertical Division of Power

---

<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Federalism I</b>
October 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch 3</li><li>- AGPT pp. 44-53</li><li>- Allie Bidwell, "The politics of Common Core" U.S. News, March 6, 2014</li><li>- Stephanie Banchemo, "School-Standards Pushback", Wall Street Journal, August 27, 2014.</li></ul> <p><i>Assignment: Quiz</i></p>

<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Federalism II</b>
October 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AGPT pp. 53-65</li><li>- Allie Bidwell, "The politics of Common Core" U.S. News, March 6, 2014</li><li>- Stephanie Banchemo, "School-Standards Pushback", Wall Street Journal, August 27, 2014.</li></ul> <p><i>Assignment: Quiz</i> <i>Assignment: Discussion</i></p>

---

### Unit 4: The Government and the People

---

<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Public Opinion I</b>
October 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch. 11</li><li>- Baum, Matthew A., and Philip BK Potter. "Media, public opinion, and foreign policy in the age of social media." <i>The Journal of Politics</i> 81.2 (2019): 747-756.</li></ul>

<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Public Opinion II</b>
October 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AGPT Ch. 6</li><li>- Eugene Kiely and Lori Robertson, "How to Spot Fake News". Factcheck.org, November 18, 2016.</li></ul> <p><i>Assignment: Quiz</i></p>

<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Voting, Campaign &amp; Elections I</b>
November 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch. 9</li><li>- Kuo, Didi, and Jan Teorell. "Illicit tactics as substitutes: Election fraud, ballot reform, and contested Congressional elections in the United States, 1860-1930." <i>Comparative Political Studies</i> 50.5 (2017): 665-696.</li></ul>

<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Voting, Campaign &amp; Elections II</b>
November 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AGPT Ch.8</li><li>- Mason, Lilliana, John Kane and Julie Wronski. 2019. "Trump Support Is Not Normal Partisanship." June 21, 2019. Vox</li></ul> <p><i>Assignment: Quiz</i></p>

<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Political Parties</b>
November 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- AA Ch. 10</li><li>- AGPT pp. 157-171. Review pp. 13-17</li><li>- Kuo, Didi. 2019. "Challenges to parties in the United States and beyond." Jun 20, 2019. Vox.</li></ul> <p><i>Assignment: Quiz</i></p>

- Week 15**  
November 24
- Interest Groups**
- AGPT pp. 146-156: Interest Groups
  - AA Ch. 8
  - Emily Ellsworth, "How to Effectively Lobby Your Congressperson", Jezebel, November 15, 2016.
  - **Optional:** Robert Putnam. 2001. "Tuning in, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America" (Chapter 3) in Controversies in Voting Behavior. Washington DC: CQ Press
- Assignment: Quiz*
- 
- Week 16**  
December 1
- Civil Rights**
- AGPT Ch. 5
  - AA Ch 12
  - **Optional:** Jacquelyn Dowd Hall. 2005. "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past." The Journal of American History 91(4), pages 1233-1263
- Assignment: Quiz*
- Week 17**  
December 3  
(Thursday)
- Civil Liberties**
- AGPT Ch. 4
  - "Spy on me, I'd rather be safe" Intelligence Debates, November 20, 2013.  
<https://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debates/spy-me-id-rather-be-safe>
- Assignment: Quiz*  
*Assignment: Discussion*

---

**Final Paper: Due Friday, December 11 at 11:59 pm.**

---