

San José State University
Department of Political Science
PolS 170V-02 (24166): American Politics in a Global Perspective
Spring 2020

Instructor: Martín Ordóñez
Office: Clark Hall 406G
Email: martin.ordonez@sjsu.edu (preferred)
Phone number: 408-924-8334
Office Hours: Tu Th, 15:00-16:00 (and by appointment)
Class days & time: Tu Th, 13:30-14:45
Classroom: DMH149A
GE/SJSU Studies Category: US2, US3, D3

Course Format

This course will be taught combining the traditional lecture-based format with active discussion and debate. Students are expected to have completed the assigned reading in advance of the week's classes.

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.

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 the two exams): 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 the two exams): 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 the two exams): 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): identify the historical context or ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture.

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

Required Readings

- Bardes, Barbara A. *American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials*. 2017th-2018 brief edition ed., Cengage Learning, 2017.
- Smith, Raymond A. *The American Anomaly: U.S. Politics and Government in Comparative Perspective*. Fourth Edition, Routledge, 2019.
- **Optional:** Gerston, Larry N., and Terry Christensen. *California Politics & Government: A Practical Approach*. Thirteenth edition, Cengage Learning, 2016.

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

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.

Course Assignments

Reaction to Readings (15%): Throughout the course, students will be required to submit 6 250-words reactions to the readings of the class. Each of these reactions must address the readings assigned for one of the classes and must be submitted at the beginning of that class. Students are expected to develop a brief argument, including at least two of the readings assigned to the corresponding class. This assignment will be graded using a 10-points scale considering the substance of the argument, the clarity of the writing, and the number and proper inclusion of readings. This assignment is expected to help students preparing for the short-essay questions included in the midterm and final exams.

Midterm Exam (25%): The midterm exam will test students on the material covered in the first half of the course. The exam can consist of multiple-choice, identification and/or short essay questions.

Final Exam (30%): The final exam will test students on the material covered during the whole course, although greater emphasis will be placed on the material covered during the second half. The exam can consist of multiple-choice, identification questions and/or short essay questions. **The Final Exam will take place on Tuesday, May 19th, from 12:15 to 14:30 in this same classroom.** You need a scantron you will find in Canvas, a #2 pencil, two 11 x 8.5 inches sheet, and a pen for the final exam.

Paper (30%): Students are required to write a 1500-words (about 6 pages double-spaced) paper 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.

Late Work and Make-Up Policies:

- Quizzes cannot be made up or turned in late. As noted above, each student's top 8 scoring responses will be counted.
- Students with a compelling reason requiring their absence from class on the date of the midterm or final exam must discuss this with me in advance and have the absence pre-approved - in which case we will agree on an alternate test date. Reasons that would merit a pre-approved absence are: a serious medical condition, religious holiday, pre-approved university-sanctioned event or activity, military orders, or family emergency. The only excuse for missing an exam without pre-approval is a documented medical emergency. With only these exceptions, a missed exam 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 emergency.

Assignments will be graded as follows:

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%

Final Examination or Evaluation

As described in the section above, the in-class final exam will cover the material learned during the whole course, although greater emphasis will be placed on the material covered during the second half. The exam will consist of multiple-choice, identification and/or short essay questions **The Final Exam will take place on Tuesday, May 19th, from 12:15 to 14:30 and will be held in DMH 149A.** You need a scantron you will find in Canvas, a #2 pencil, two 11 x 8.5 inches sheet, and a pen for the final exam.

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. However, it is possible to find several instances where the government's decisions (adopted or attempted) are in tension with these limits. These instances may include, for example, executive overreach, judicial activism (or restraint), one branch's failure to oversee another or to perform their mandated duties, or national government meddling into states spheres of authority, among others.

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 regarding **one dimension of limits to the national government**. Specifically, your paper should 1) describe the dimension you are addressing, 2) describe the solutions implemented in each country, and 3) critically analyze the advantages and disadvantages of these solutions and the conditions that may explain their success or failure.

This assignment has three parts:

1. *Topic Selection (due February 27)*: Submit a brief explanation of the topic of your paper and how you are planning to address it. I will reply to provide you with comments and suggestions. Throughout the course, we will discuss some possible case. Feel free to use them in your paper. However, the use of original cases will be rewarded in the paper's grade.
2. *Outline and List of Sources (due April 7)*: Submit a brief outline of the argument of your paper and a list of the bibliographic sources you plan to use for the paper. These sources must be not less than 10, at least one of them must be a reading of the course, and at least 5 must be academic sources (e.g. peer-reviewed articles, law review articles, etc.). You should use proper bibliographic form, but I do not care whether you use MLA, APA, or another style. I will reply providing comments and suggestions.
3. *The Paper (due May 7)*: Submit a final version of the paper. This paper should be 1500 words long (about 6 pages double-spaced) and include a minimum of 8 high-quality sources.

Note that only part 3 will be directly graded. Parts 1 and 2 are optional, where you will receive feedback on the progress of your paper. However, your participation in parts 1 and 2 will be rewarded in the paper's grade. *You must submit all these documents through Canvas, by 11:59 pm of the corresponding day. Only PDFs and Word docs of the paper will be accepted.*

Use of technology in class

Your focus and active engagement during class is critical to the success of the course. This class has a No Digital Media policy. Please keep your laptops, cells, tablets, etc. in your bag at all times, please silence your phones before coming to class, and please do not text in class. Exceptions can be made for people who use laptops *exclusively* to take notes.

University Policies

SJSU has policies on many important topics that apply to all courses. These topics include grading, attendance, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, and more. Information about these policies is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>. If you have questions about any of this material, please ask.

Pols 15 Essentials of U.S. and California Government, Fall 2019 Course Schedule

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

Unit 1: Basis of Government	
23 Jan	Introduction to the Course <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Syllabus
28 Jan	State/Government and Democracy <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA* Ch 1- AGPT** Ch.1
30 Jan	Constitutions and Division of Powers I <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Chs. 2 & 4
4-6 Feb.	Constitutions and Division of Powers II <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AGPT Ch.2- Federalist 10 & 51 (see AGPT or online)

Unit 2: Horizontal Division of Power	
11-13 Feb	Legislative Branches <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch 6- AGPT Ch 9- George Packer, "The Empty Chamber: Just how broken is the Senate?" The New Yorker, August 9, 2010.
18-20 Feb	Executive Branches <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch 5- AGPT Ch.10- Elizabeth Drew, "Power Grab," The New Yorker, Volume 53, Number 11. June 22, 2006- David A. Fahrenthold, "How the VA Developed Its Culture of Coverups", The Washington Post, May 30, 2014
25-27 Feb	Judicial Branches <i>Paper Topic Selection (due February 27)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch 7- AGPT Ch.12- Erwin Chemerinsky, "The Supreme Court Gun Fight", Los Angeles Times, June 27,2008- Richard Wolf, "Chief Justice John Roberts' Supreme Court At 10, Defying Labels," USA Today, 29 September 2015

Unit 3: Vertical Division of Power

3 Mar	Federalism I <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch 3
5-10 Mar	Federalism II <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AGPT Ch.3- Allie Bidwell, "The politics of Common Core" U.S. News, March 6, 2014- Stephanie Banchemo, "School-Standards Pushback", Wall Street Journal, August 27, 2014.
12 Mar	Midterm Exam

Unit 4: The Government and the People

17-19 Mar	Public Opinion and the Media <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch 11- AGPT Ch.6- Eugene Kiely and Lori Robertson, "How to Spot Fake News". Factcheck.org, November 18, 2016.
24-26 Mar	Voting, Campaign & Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch 9- AGPT Ch.8- Carrie Levine and Chris Zubak-Skees, "1 In 5 Democratic Donors Are Giving To More Than One Presidential Candidate", FiveThirtyEight, August 2, 2019.
31 Mar-2 Apr	Spring Break—No Class
7 Apr	Political Parties I <i>Paper Outline and List of Sources (due April 7)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch. 10- Krouwel, André. 2006 "Party Models" in Richard S. Katz, and William J. Crotty, eds. <i>Handbook of Party Politics</i>. SAGE.
9-14 Apr	Political Parties II <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AGPT pp. 157-171. Review pp. 13-17- Drutman Lee, "Why America's 2-party system is on a collision course with our constitutional democracy" Vox March 26 2018- Optional: Andrew Gelman. 2010. "Polarized Parties" (Chapter 8) in Red State, Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
16-Apr	No Class
21-23 Apr	Interest Groups: Democ'y's Informal Organizations <ul style="list-style-type: none">- AA Ch. 11- AGPT pp. 146-156- 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 <i>Controversies in Voting Behavior</i>. Washington DC: CQ Press

28-30 Apr **Civil Liberties & Civil Rights I**
- AA Ch 12
- "Spy on me, I'd rather be safe" Intelligence Debates, November 20, 2013.
<https://www.intelligencesquaredus.org/debates/spy-me-id-rather-be-safe>

30 Apr-5 May **Civil Liberties & Civil Rights II**
- AGPT Chs. 4 & 5
- **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

7 May **Final Exam Review** (*Paper due May 7*)

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 19th, from 12:15 to 14:30 at DMH 149A

*AA: *The American Anomaly*

** AGPT: *American Government and Politics Today*