

**San José State University**  
**Department of Political Science**  
**Pols 15-14: Fundamentals of US and CA Government**  
**Fall 2021**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor: Martín Ordóñez  
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Phone number: 408-924-8334  
Office Hours: Tu, 11:00-12:00 (and by appointment)  
Class days & time: Mo 16:00 - 17:15  
Classroom: On-Line  
GE/SJSU Studies Category: US2, US3, D3

**Course Description (from the university 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).

**Course Format: Online**

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. Therefore, students are required to have access to a computer and a good internet connection.

**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:

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

**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 quizzes and discussions.**

**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 quizzes and discussions.**

**GELO 3 (D3):** Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. **Assessed by quizzes and paper assignment.**

**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 quizzes and discussions.**

**GELO 5 (D3):** Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. **Assessed by paper assignment.**

**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 paper assignment.**

## Required Readings

### Textbooks

- Schmidt, W. Steffen; Mack Shelley, and Barbara Bardes. 2018. *American Government and Politics Today: 2018-2019 Brief Edition*. 10th edition. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- 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.

### Other technology requirements

Since this is an online class with a synchronous component, students are required to have access to a computer and a good internet connection. Access to microphone and webcam is not required but highly recommended.

### 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 topics addressed in two weeks. In those cases, there is only one quiz at the end of the second day). 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 quiz.

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. The goal of this assignment is to assess your understanding of the readings (other than the textbook “American Government and Politics Today?”) assigned for the corresponding unit. 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, making clear reference to the readings (other than the textbook) assigned to the corresponding unit; 3) provide factual examples and/or referred theoretical arguments that support your argument; these examples and arguments can be drawn from either the assigned readings, the assigned audiovisual material, or footnoted sources

researched independently by the student; 4) provide appropriate source citations (plagiarized threads will be penalized). In addition, within the following week, you must either respond to the threads of at least two other students (for the first discussion) or grade the post of at least two other students, using the rubric provided and leaving a comment explaining your grade (for all other discussions).

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

*Paper (34%):* Students are required to write a paper no longer than 1200-1500 words (about 4-5 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 (see the prompt in the section “Guidelines for the Paper” below).

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**

As reviewed through the course, 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 (or restraints) are expressed, for example, 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.

Based on what we have discussed through the semester, how effective have these limits or restraints been? Do they really protect citizens from the abuse of government authorities? Why or why not? Have they had any unforeseen negative consequence? For your paper, answer this question addressing **one dimension of the dimensions of government** reviewed in the class. Specifically, your paper should 1) describe the dimension of government you are addressing (e.g., relationships between two branches of government or the federal and the state levels of government; the processes of selection of authorities; specific rights of the citizens and how they are protected; etc.), 2) critically analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the restraints in this dimension, and 3) conclude extracting the main lessons from your analysis.

The paper should be 1200-1500 words long (about 4-5 pages, double space). Successful papers are usually narrow in scope, go deep in the analysis of both countries, are structured around a central argument, and include at least five academic sources.

You must submit your paper through Canvas, by Wednesday, December 8, 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 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 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 there is potential 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>), 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>), 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 15-14: Fundamentals of US and CA Government, Fall 2021 Course Schedule

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

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<b>Unit 1: Basis of Government</b>	
<b>Week 1</b> August 23	<b>Introduction to the Course</b> Syllabus
<b>Week 2</b> August 30	<b>State and Democracy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- American Government and Politics Today (AGPT) Ch.1</li> <li>- California: The Politics of Diversity (CA) Ch 1.</li> </ul> <i>Assignment: No Quiz This Week</i>
<b>Week 3</b> September 6	<b>The Constitution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- AGPT pp. 21-41</li> <li>- CA pp. 41-48 and Ch. 4</li> </ul> <i>Assignment: No Quiz This Week</i>
<b>Week 4</b> September 13	<b>Division of Powers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>

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## Unit 2: Horizontal and Vertical Divisions of Power

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### Horizontal Division of Power

- Week 5**  
September 20
- Legislative Branch**
- AGPT Ch. 9
  - CA Ch. 7
  - George Packer, "The Empty Chamber: Just how broken is the Senate?" The New Yorker, August 9, 2010.
- Assignment: Quiz*
- Week 6**  
September 27
- Executive Branch**
- AGPT Ch.10
  - CA Ch. 8
  - Elizabeth Drew, "Power Grab," The New Yorker, Volume 53, Number 11. June 22, 2006
- Assignment: Quiz*
- Week 7**  
October 4
- Judicial Branch**
- AGPT Ch.12
  - CA Ch. 9
  - Richard Wolf, "Chief Justice John Roberts' Supreme Court At 10, Defying Labels," USA Today, 29 September 2015
  - Ian Millhiser, "Why did liberals win so many cases before a Conservative Supreme Court?, Vox, July 12, 2020.
- Assignment: Quiz*

### Vertical Division of Power

- Week 8**  
October 11
- Federalism**
- AGPT Ch.3
  - CA pp. 48-60
  - Allie Bidwell, "The politics of Common Core" U.S. News, March 6, 2014
  - Stephanie Banchemo, "School-Standards Pushback", Wall Street Journal, August 27, 2014.
- Assignment: No Quiz This Week*
- Week 9**  
October 18
- Paper Workshop**
- Prepare to discuss the topic of your final paper in class
  - No readings assigned
- Assignment: Quiz*  
*Assignment: Discussion*

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## Unit 4: The Government and the People

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- Week 10**  
October 25
- Public Opinion**
- AGPT Ch. 6
  - CA pp. 83-89
  - Eugene Kiely and Lori Robertson, "How to Spot Fake News". Factcheck.org, November 18, 2016.
  - **(Optional)** Mason, Lilliana, John Kane and Julie Wronski. 2019. "Trump Support Is Not Normal Partisanship." June 21, 2019. Vox
- Assignment: Quiz*

- Week 11**  
November 1
- Elections**
- AGPT Ch.8
  - CA pp. 89-112
  - The NPR Politics Podcast: "*How Campaigns Work: Fundraising*"; September 24, 2020 (<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/916620329>)
  - The NPR Politics Podcast: "*How Campaigns Work: Advertising*"; October 11, 2020 (<https://www.npr.org/transcripts/922397427>)
  - **(Optional)** Kuo, Didi, and Jan Teorell. "Illicit tactics as substitutes: Election fraud, ballot reform, and contested Congressional elections in the United States, 1860-1930." *Comparative Political Studies* 50.5 (2017): 665-696.
- Assignment: Quiz*

- Week 12**  
November 8
- Political Parties**
- AGPT pp. 157-171. Review pp. 13-17
  - CA pp. 112-119
  - Kuo, Didi. 2019. "Challenges to parties in the United States and beyond." Jun 20, 2019. Vox.
- Assignment: Quiz*

- Week 13**  
November 15
- Interest Groups**
- AGPT pp. 146-156: Interest Groups
  - CA pp 119-128
  - Emily Ellsworth, "How to Effectively Lobby Your Congressperson", Jezebel, November 15, 2016.
  - **(Optional)** Schattschneider, Elmer E. "The scope and bias of the pressure system." In Samuel Kernell and Steven Smith, eds. *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 2016, p. 391-397.
  - **(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 14**  
November 22
- 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*

- Week 15**  
November 29
- Civil Rights**
- AGPT Ch. 5
  - CA Ch 13
  - **(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*  
*Assignment: Discussion*

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**Final Paper: Due Wednesday, December 8 at 11:59 pm.**

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