

San José State University
Political Science Department
POLS 15, Essentials of US & CA Government, Section 99, Spring 2021

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	Jeremy Abrams
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Email:	jeremy.abrams@sjsu.edu Twitter: @uspolisci
Office Hours:	Online via Zoom, time MW 2:00 – 3:00pm and by appointment, link in Canvas
Class Days/Time:	Online - asynchronous
Classroom:	online
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	US2, US3, D3

Course Format

This class will be conducted online asynchronously. Because of the online nature of this class, I will always be just an email or text message away to address any questions or concerns you may have. I will be available through a number of different channels. The best method will be via email at jeremy.abrams@sjsu.edu as I check that throughout the day. I will always do my best to respond promptly. During the week I will usually respond within 24 hours, though often much quicker than that. **When you send me an email, please put your class section information (eg. 'US Gov Sec. #4 12:00pm') in the Subject: field.** I teach several classes with many students and I need to know to which class you are referring. You may also leave me a voice mail at the number listed above, though I check it less frequently than email.

Course Description

From the SJSU 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.

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.

Assessment of these outcomes will be measured as follows:

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|---------|------------------------------|
| GELO 1: | Quizzes, Final Exam |
| GELO 2: | Paper, Quizzes, Final Exam |
| GELO 3: | Paper, Quizzes, Final Exam |
| GELO 4: | Quizzes, Final Exam |
| GELO 5: | Paper, Discussion Board |
| GELO 6: | Discussion Board, Final Exam |

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.

About the Class: This is an asynchronous online class. You will need to be familiar with your computer, web navigation, and email since most of the communication between you, me and your fellow students will happen online. The primary mode of interaction will be through SJSU's Canvas Website, which you may find at <https://sjsu.instructure.com> . Your username will be your student id. On Canvas you will find a copy of this syllabus, additional reading materials and the various methods of assessment. If you are not already familiar with Canvas, you should log on and familiarize yourself with it. You can find helpful information about Canvas at <http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/index.html> and at http://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources/index.html .

An online course places a great deal of responsibility on you, the student. It will require discipline and motivation on your part. You are responsible for keeping up with the readings, meeting deadlines, taking the exams and contacting me as needed. Since you will not be attending class, you must plan to spend some time each day or week on this course. Again, I will always be an email or message away if you need assistance but the responsibility to initiate the contact is yours.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbooks

[We The People: An Introduction to American Government](#) 13th Edition by Thomas E. Patterson: McGraw-Hill Education, 2019. ISBN-13: 978-1259912405

Please note: You should **NOT** purchase the 'Connect' online password that the SJSU bookstore packages with this text. We will not be using Connect for this class. All online material will be available via Canvas.

[California Politics: A Primer](#), 5th edition, by Renee B. Van Vechten: CQ Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-1506380353

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

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.

Course Requirements: Your grade will be determined by (1) 10 (of 12) quizzes, each worth 22 points, (2) a final exam worth 130 points; (3) one on-line discussion board assignments, worth 40 points each, (4) an outline worth 20 points and (5) one paper, worth 40 points each.

The quizzes 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.

Course materials such as assignments and instructions, syllabus, handouts, notes, etc. can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. You will need to be familiar with a computer, web navigation, e-mail and the Canvas system since your assignments and a number of readings are online. Your assignments will be submitted to me through Canvas. **Do not e-mail me your assignments as an attachment.** Due to the potential for computer viruses, I will not open nor accept any assignments sent via e-mail. They will be deleted. Please save your files in Word or PDF format and upload it to Canvas. You are responsible for knowing how to submit assignments through Canvas. You are responsible for regularly checking your email and with the messaging system through MySJSU on [Spartan App Portal](#) to learn of any updates.

NOTE that University policy F15-12 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf> states that "Students are expected to attend all meetings for the courses in which they are enrolled as they are responsible for material discussed therein, and active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit to all class members. In some cases, attendance is fundamental to course objectives; for example, students may be required to interact with others in the class. Attendance is the responsibility of the student." You may find form information at the [University's Syllabus Information](#) web page at <https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>

In a course that examines American politics and government discussions are very important. 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.

Final Examination

The final exam is scheduled for **Thursday, May 20, 5:15-7:30pm** and will be taken online through Canvas. Final exams may not be taken early. Please plan your travels accordingly. 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-quarter of your course grade.

Grading Information and Policy

There is a possible total of 450 points. Your final grade will be determined by your total accumulation of points as follows:

Total Points	Percentage	Grade
437-450	97-100	A plus
419-436	93-96.9	A
405-418	90-92.9	A minus
392-404	87-89.9	B plus
374-391	83-86.9	B
360-373	80-82.9	B minus
347-359	77-79.9	C plus
329-346	73-76.9	C
315-328	70-72.9	C minus
302-314	67-69.9	D plus
284-301	63-66.9	D
270-283	60-62.9	D minus

Below 270 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, I will not give make ups for any of the quizzes except in the most extreme of cases (e.g. verifiable medical emergencies, etc.).. It is your responsibility to make sure you are available to take the quizzes. 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.

Course 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 through Canvas 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.

Quizzes and Exams: There will be a quiz following each chapter. You will take each quiz on the Canvas website. There will be a total of 12 quizzes, **of which I will drop the lowest two scores.** As we proceed through the course, each quiz will be open and available for two days as listed in the schedule below. In order to make sure that you are making progress and not putting materials off, you can only take the quizzes once, and only during the window that it is open. If you fail to take a chapter quiz for any reason it will become a zero in your grades. I urge you to take the quizzes and final from a computer that is wired into the internet. **Losing a wi-fi connection during a quiz or the final is no more an excuse than running out of ink or forgetting a scantron during a paper-based exam.** You are responsible for having a reliable internet connection while taking the quizzes. **Because I will drop the lowest two quiz scores, there will be makeup quizzes only under extraordinary and verifiable circumstances.** The final exam may not be dropped and will be open during the scheduled final exam period listed in the schedule. It will be a comprehensive exam. On Canvas you can find the quizzes by clicking the 'Modules' link on the left side of the page.

Discussion Boards, Outline and Papers: I will post information on this on the Canvas Website and send e-mails during class giving the details of these assignments.

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.

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](https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

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.

“The deadline to register to vote is 15 days prior to Election Day, often called E-15. You must submit the voter registration application by midnight on the registration deadline day. A timestamp will be attached to your online voter registration application. If you register to vote using a paper application, it must be postmarked or hand-delivered to your county elections office by E-15. After the registration deadline, in most elections any individual may conditionally register to vote and cast a provisional ballot by visiting their county elections official.”

You may find more information and register to vote at <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>

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.”

Library information:

liaison for Political Science: Paul Kauppila
University Librarian (Political Science Liaison)
(408) 808-2042
Paul.Kauppila@sjsu.edu

Political Science subject guide: <http://libguides.sjsu.edu/politicalscience>

POLS 15: Essentials of US & CA Govt., Spring 2021, Course Schedule

*In the chapter column, the first number refers to the chapter in the Patterson book. The second number, if any, refers to the California Politics book chapter.

Course Schedule

Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Quiz Dates	Chapter*
1	Introduction		
2	Political Thinking Outline Due	February 3-4 February 8	1
3	Constitutional Democracy	February 11-12	2
4	Federalism	February 19-20	3
5	Civil Liberties	February 26-27	4
6	Discussion Board	February 27 – March 6	
7	Equal Rights	March 8-9	5
8	Congress/California Legislature	March 17-18	11/Calif. 4
9	The Presidency/Calif. Executive	March 25-26	12/Calif. 5
10	SPRING BREAK	March 27 – April 2	
11	The Bureaucracy	April 9-10	13
12	The Judiciary/Calif. Judiciary	April 16-17	14/Calif. 6
13	Paper Due	April 20	
14	Voting & Participation/Calif. Voters	April 26-27	7/Calif. 3
15	Political Parties/Calif. Choosing the Candidates	May 5-6	8/Calif. 9
16	Interest Groups/Calif. Ballot Measures	May 13-14	9/Calif. 10
	FINAL EXAM	Thursday, May 20, 5:15-7:30pm	