**San José State University**

# Department of Political Science Pols 190, Senior Seminar, Section 03—Politics in the American States

## Course and Contact Information

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| Instructor: | Dr. Larry Gerston |
| Office Location: | Working Remotely |
| Telephone: | Not available in Spring 2021; use email |
| Email: | lgerston@sjsu.edu |
| Office Hours: | Tuesdays, Thursdays 9:00-10:15 via Zoom\* |
| Class Days/Time: | [Tuesdays, Thursdays, 10:30-11:45](815-8806-7923) |
| Classroom: | online |
| Prerequisites: | Political Science 100W |

## \*Because of the challenges students have with office hours in the COVID-19 era and the writing demands of this course, I am setting aside one class meeting per month for special in-class office hours by appointment.

## Course Description

**From the SJSU Catalog:**

Capstone course that serves as culminating experience for the political science major. Seminar class with significant participation required. Specific course topics vary each semester. Prerequisite: POLS 100W or instructor consent.

**About the Course:**

American states are critical to the federal system. Operating between the national and local levels of government, states carry out numerous valuable functions and policies. States are also laboratories for policies that often are adopted by the national government. For example, Massachusetts had a statewide healthcare program before Congress passed the Affordable Care Act. Another example: for years, California has set the national trend in automobile emissions standards.

Part of this class will focus on various aspects of state governance, including state executives, legislatures, and judiciaries; state political parties; state election systems; direct democracy; public opinion; and political culture. An equally important aspect of the class will center on federalism as it pertains to state/federal relations; state/state and regional relations; and state/local relations. Special attention will focus on California politics and government. Superimposed on all of these themes will be the examination and discussion of major public policy areas.

As a seminar, this course requires significant individual participation, substantial reading, and a major research paper. **Regular attendance is a must inasmuch you can’t participate if you are absent.** A considerable portion of the course grade will be based on class discussions of the reading assignments. In addition, every student will lead a class on a portion of the assigned reading and expected to stimulate discussion through asking open-ended questions on the material presented. Because the course is limited to 15 students, everyone will be involved in the class from beginning to end.

**Note:** I expect to see you via zoom as if you were in a classroom, not a picture or other stand-in. If don’t see you, I will you are not in class, and therefore not participating.

## Course Format:

This course will be conducted on line via Zoom. Lectures and student-led discussions will be held during most class meetings. In addition to regularly scheduled office hours throughout the semester, additional office hours will be set aside during class time at pre-selected junctures.

**Communication Method**

I will communicate with individually and collectively via email. Conversely, any communication you have with me should also take place via email. By enrolling in this course, you consent to all course requirements listed in this syllabus and announced in class. You also accept responsibility for receiving any messages sent via the MySJSU email system. Make sure that MySJSU has your current email address. Contact me by the third day of class if you cannot send or receive email.

**Program Information**

**Political Science Program Learning Outcomes (PSPLO)**

Upon completion of the Political Science major program, students should be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

**PSPLO1: Breadth**

Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the political science discipline.

**PSPLO2: 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.

**PSPLO3: 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.

**PSPLO4: 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.

## Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

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

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Mapping POLS190 Course Learning Outcomes to Political Science PLOs*** | ***Program Learning Outcomes*** | ***Assessment Methods*** |
| CLO1: Demonstrate an understanding of U.S. politics.  Specifically, the various political roles of American states | PLO 1, 2, 3 | Class Discussion, Student Presentation of assigned materials, Seminar Paper, Seminar Paper Presentation |
| CLO2: Evaluate the significance of the American states using political science research. | PLO 1, 2, 3, 4 | Class Participation, Seminar Paper, Seminar Paper Presentation |
| CLO3: Evaluate the political impact of American states. | PLO 1, 3, 4 | Seminar Paper, Seminar Paper  Presentation, Participation |
| CLO4: Apply political science research methods and theories to analyze politics in the American states. | PLO 1, 2, 3, 4 | Seminar Paper, Paper Presentation, Discussion Leader |

## Required Texts/Readings

## Textbooks and Participation

Required textbooks:

Gerston, *American Federalism*, ISBN-13 978-07656-1671-5

Gray, Hanson, and Kousser, *Politics in the American States*, 11th edition, ISBN-978-1-5063-6362-2

Gerston, *Not So Golden After All*, ISBN-978-1-4398-8012-8

Textbooks are available at Spartan Bookstore and Amazon, where they may be purchased or rented.

Note: Make sure you acquire the 11th edition of the Gray book as it is significantly different from the 10th.

## Readings are listed with the course schedule in the syllabus. You should complete the reading assignments *in advance of class meetings*. Your participation grade is based in part upon your preparedness for and contribution to the class discussion.

**Additional Recommended Readings**

I also urge you to read a national newspaper several times a week (the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal* are excellent sources for in depth political and policy news. This is something you should do anyway, but since we will be discussing a variety of policy topics during the semester, keeping up with the news of the day will most certainly add to the quality of our discussions in class. There are a variety of other great news-related websites out there as well. In short, keep yourself informed.

**Staying on Top of the News:** There may be times during the semester when unexpected topics emerge, and as such, demand our attention. Example: In 2020, COVID-19 (also known as the coronavirus) became the most important political issue of the year. If such an issue arises during the semester, you may be expected to read assigned information and be prepared to discuss it in class as it relates to the concepts presented during the course.

### Other technology requirements / equipment / material / resources

Computer resources for student use are available in:

Associated Students Print & Technology Center at http://as.sjsu.edu/asptc/index.jsp on the

Student Union (East Wing 2nd floor Suite 2600)

The Spartan Floor at the King Library at http://library.sjsu.edu/about/spartan-floor

Student Computing Services at http://library.sjsu.edu/student-computing-services/studentcomputing-services-center

Computers at the Martin Luther King Library for public at large at <https://www.sjpl.org/wireless>

## Course Requirements and Assignments

***Course Workload Expectations: Succeeding in a Four-Unit Course***

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.

Because this is a four-unit course, you can expect to spend a minimum of nine hours per week, in addition to time spent in class, on scheduled tutorials, assignments, or other activities. This additional unit will allow for more in-depth investigation and engagement with course topics. Careful time management will help you keep up with readings and assignments and enable you to be successful in all of your courses. More details about student workload can be found in [University Policy S17-1](https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S17-1.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S17-1.pdf>)

**Delineation of Workload for Four-Unit Course**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Course Component*** | ***Student Work*** | ***Instructor Engagement*** |
| Regular 3 units (9 hours/week) | Readings, seminar paper proposal, seminar paper, seminar paper presentation, in-class participation, seminar discussion leader | Class zoom contact hours. Prepare online zoom and class activities. Online zoom lectures and discussion. Provide written feedback on seminar paper proposal, seminar paper, and seminar paper presentation. Zoom, meetings with students about seminar papers. Read drafts of papers by request in office hours. |
| Activity 1 unit  (3 hours/week) | Out-of-class activities related to research and interviews pertaining to the seminar research paper. | Provide online feedback to student participation, student seminar leading activity, and research paper development. |

### Course Components and Expectations

Success in this course depends upon your careful reading, digestion, and analysis of the course materials and meaningful participation in twice-weekly class meetings. Throughout most of the course, each student will lead discussion on one of the reading assignments. Toward the end of the course, students will make presentations on their research paper topics. These elements are discussed fully below.

This course focuses on governmental issues and relationships at the national, state, and local levels. As such, there may be times during the semester when unanticipated events require discussion and analysis. Should such an occasion arise, we may have to adjust discussion and presentation timetables.

**Components**

**In the (Virtual) Classroom**

***In-class Participation***

You are expected to participate in class discussion. On occasions when discussion stalls, you may be randomly called upon to answer questions about the day’s readings. If you are not there to answer the questions or you are unable to answer the questions in a way that indicates you did the reading, you will lose points on your participation grade. Earning these points is straightforward: come to class prepared and offer meaningful contribution to the discussion if you are asked. Merely agreeing with others without offering comments will not earn points. Simply put, your thoughtful voice is valued in this seminar. In moments of silence, you may be called on.

Regarding discussion leaders: You will not earn in-class participation points on the day where you are a discussion leader. Instead, you will earn points for your role as discussion leader.

**Note:** An outline of your presentation and questions must be submitted to me at least two days prior to the day of your presentation.

***Leading a Seminar***

Each one of you will be expected to lead discussion of a day’s reading assignment. As the leader, you will you will guide (with my help) the seminar discussion. You will present the day’s readings and come to class prepared to ask and answer questions. Your presentation will last 15-20 minutes. During that time, you will:

* Share why you chose your particular topic
* Summarize the key points of the assignment
* Raise any contemporary issues that relate to the assignment

After your presentation, you will ask students **a minimum of 5 open-ended questions** about the material for discussion.

Please look through the syllabus and choose which assignment most interests you no later than before the class meets in 2/4. Email your requests to me at [lgerston@sjsu.edu](mailto:lgerston@sjsu.edu).

Suggestion: You may want to email two or three requests in order of preference. That way, if you don’t receive your first preference, you may receive your second or third.

* If you don’t have a topic in mind by 2/4, I will assign one to you randomly selected from the leftover topics.
* Discussion dates will be assigned on a “first received” basis. If more than one student requests the same date, he or she will be assigned another date randomly selected by me.

Ifyou have questions about the assignment or your specific reading, please contact me duringoffice hours or the special office hours set aside during class times. Your concerns must be raised at least two days before your presentation.

**The Research Paper**

***Plagiarism Tutorial***

You are required to take and must pass all modules of a plagiarism tutorial modules with a score of at least 75%. If you complete the quiz on time and earn at least 75%, you will receive 5 points for the plagiarism quiz. Please note the following:

* The plagiarism tutorial is a requirement for the seminar paper proposal. I will not accept this paper until you submit your tutorial quiz results (with at least 75% score) to me.
* You must **email** your plagiarism tutorial quiz results to me at [lgerston@sjsu.edu](mailto:lgerston@sjsu.edu) **Please note:** The library will not send your results to me. You must forward to me the results the library sends to you. **Do not send a screenshot of your quiz results**. Forwarding to me the email ensures we both have a copy that includes your information.
* I must receive confirmation of your completion of the plagiarism tutorial modules no later than February 18, 10:30 AM.
* **The time and date I receive your email with the forwarded results is the time and date of submission**, regardless of the date you actually completed the quiz. Late completions of the tutorial will be penalized one point per day, beginning February 18th at 10:30 AM.
* The tutorial can be found at: <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/plagiarism>

***About the Research Paper***

The paper must be original and not already submitted to any other class for academic credit; it should also contain appropriate foot/endnotes. The paper should be analytical and thorough. Any opinions by the student may be written at the end. Paper topics and the schedule for deliverables are listed below. The paper should be 15-20 pages in length, excluding title page, references and bibliography. Please use Times New Roman font, numbered pages, and 1-inch margins. You will receive feedback on every step of the research paper work, designed to help you succeed! Accordingly, your paper will be developed in stages:

* Stage 1: a 1-page (Times Roman, double spaced) proposal on the subject and
  + Why you have selected it
  + What you hope to learn:
* Stage 2: a tentative outline with at least 5 sources at that time
* Stage 3: submission of the complete paper and bibliography

With respect to subject matter, papers should include, but not be limited to the following:

* History of the topic
* Current issues
* The roles of affected governments, interested parties and leaders
* Relationship to the course
* Future expectations
* Your personal feeling (if you have one)

Key Research Paper dates:

* 2/18: Proposal is due before class
* 3/18: Research Paper Outline due before class
* 5/19: Research Paper due by 12 noon

***About the Research Paper Proposal***

* Only one student will be permitted to write on each topic with the designated assignment determined on a first come, first served basis. Students may choose a research paper topic from a list provided by the professor, ***subject to the professor’s written approval***. Topics must be selected no later than 2/18 ***before class***. If topics are not selected by 2/18, the professor will determine the topic for the student. Given the paper assignment protocol, it’s incumbent for students to act as soon as practicable.

***Possible Research Paper Topics Discussion***

Your proposal must be on a topic relevant to the course and approved by the course professor. Some possibilities include, but are not limited to:

* A specific policy issue in California
* California/federal relations on a policy or issue
* State to state comparisons on a policy or issue
* Regional organizations/compacts

***Seminar Research Paper Requirements***

* You must cite at least 15 academic peer-reviewed sources (e.g., academic books, journal articles, book chapters) in your literature review (Honors Papers must cite 25). You may cite additional materials (newspaper articles, op-ed pieces, magazine articles) in addition to the required per-reviewed sources. Seminar papers that do not include the required number of sources will be penalized 3 points per missing source as this is a capstone research paper and requires extensive research on your part.
* Your paper must be formatted in APA format for the in-text citations and references.
* Your paper must be a minimum of 15-20 (honors courses papers are typically 25-30 pages), excluding the title page. I will elaborate upon the seminar paper later in the semester and provide a detailed prompt. I am available for assistance; please come to zoom office hours if you need help.

***Library Liaison*** The library liaison for Political Science is available to answer questions and provide one-on-one help using the library for research. His name and contact info is: Paul Kauppila, Librarian (Political Science Liaison). He can be reached by telephone (408) 808-2042 or by email [Paul.Kauppila@sjsu.edu.](mailto:Paul.Kauppila@sjsu.edu)

***Seminar Paper Presentation***

You will give a 15-minute presentation of your seminar paper to your colleagues in class during one of the last class meetings. Dates will be randomly assigned, though university-excused events will be considered when the schedule is made. You may trade dates with a colleague. There are no make-ups of the presentation except under the make-up policy. You may use PowerPoint to assist with your presentation. Your grade will be calculated based on the following:

* Presentation organization, content and appearance 20 points
* Responses to my questions on your presentation date 5 points
* Responses to your colleagues’ questions on your presentation date 5 points

**Total 30 points**

**Extra credit**

There will be no extra credit opportunities. If you have extra time, it should be to your work in the course.

**Make-up/Late Policy**

There are no make-up presentations, in-class activities, or extra credit without appropriate documentation (e.g., serious medical illness or serious medical emergency, religious holiday, pre-approved university-sanctioned event or activity, military orders, family emergency) that you were unable to complete the assignment on time or participate in class. Please note the dates of the required events and assignments and let me know if you have a university-sanctioned event (with documentation) by the end of the second week of class.

**Illness**

If you are seriously ill, you must notify me as soon as possible by email that you will be unable to complete an assignment on time. Except in cases of documented medical emergency or illness, you MUST notify me **before** the scheduled assignment. Out of fairness to your colleagues’ work, “forgetting”, and generally not feeling well will not be accepted excuses for missing assignments or attending a class activity. Be certain you schedule all of our assignments right away. If you have a work or social obligation, consider taking another section of this course, as these types of events do not fall under the make-up policy. **Do not schedule job interviews or other events on assignment days.** Late proposals and reflections papers will be graded; however, these will be penalized one letter grade for every 24-hour period they are late. Late senior seminar papers will not be accepted as this is the final exam for this course.

**Grading Information**

Your grade will be based upon the following:

* how well the assignment addresses the topic
* the quality of research, analysis and conclusions
* the quality (and appropriate quantity) of the sources cited as well as the proper use of APA formatting.
* the quality of the writing

Failure to consistently and correctly adhere to APA citation format will result in at least a letter grade penalty. Failure to cite sources will result in a failing grade (please see the university’s policy on plagiarism). Feel free to see me in zoom office hours or make an appointment with me, if you have a class during my office hours, to go over questions about your paper to review a rough draft. I encourage you to get started early on your seminar paper.

**Zoom Protocol**

You are highly expected to turn on your camera during class discussion/lecture so we are able to be more engaged. Please email me or visit me in office hours if you will need to have your camera turned off as a reasonable accommodation. All students will be required to list their first name (or preferred nickname) and last name on their zoom screen for security reasons and so that I may learn your names and you get to learn the names of one another.

**Important:**

You may not record images, lectures, discussion, online discussions, or any other material from this class without the explicit permission of every person in this class. I will not be recording the class. If you miss class, it is up to you to obtain notes from a colleague.  Notetaking services can be obtained for students with disabilities. Please contact the AEC for additional information.

**Attendance**

“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. Participation may be used as a criterion for grading when the parameters and their evaluation are clearly defined in the course syllabus and the percentage of the overall grade is stated.” http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf

**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.

**Additional Information**

**Political Science Department Writing Policy**

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English.  Spelling and grammar count! Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks. Ideas from others must also be referenced.  Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct, which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at http://libguides.sjsu.edu/writeandcite.The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all  disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center visit  http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/

**Academic integrity**

Your commitment, as a student, to learning is evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University. The University Academic Integrity Policy F15-7 requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. **Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the**

**office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.** Visit the Student Conduct and Ethical Development website for more information.

**Possible Research Paper Topics**

**Note:** Students may opt for one of the topics below or another topic, all of which are subject to approval by the course professor. Only one student per topic.

**California-related**

Term Limits

Affirmative Action

Initiatives

Referenda

The Power of Interest Groups

Universal Mailed Ballots

State Funding of K-12 Public Education

Homelessness

California Population Flight to Other States

Prison Realignment

**Comparative State Issues**

Bicameral vs. Unicameral Legislatures

Part-time vs. Full-time State Legislatures

Powerful vs. Weak Governors

One-Party vs. Two Party States

Voting by Mail

**Interstate Arrangements**

Colorado River Compact

Delaware River Basin Compact

Regional Gas Initiative

Tahoe Regional Bi-State Compact

Tribal-State Compacts in California

**California and the Federal Government**

Auto Emissions Policy

Water Policy

H-B Labor

Sanctuary State

Offshore Oil Drilling

**Determination of Grades**

Your grade will be calculated as follow:

Plagiarism tutorial: 5 points

Paper topic 5

Outline 10

Discussion leader 20

Class participation 30

Paper presentation 30

Paper 100

Total: 200

Your final grade will be calculated by dividing your total points by 200. For example, consider the following: Total points = 160. 160 divided by 200 = 80%. Using the scale below, this individual would be assigned a B-. Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

**Grade Percentage**

A plus 98 to 100%

A 93 to 97%

A minus 90% to 92%

B plus 87% to 89%

B 83% to 86%

B minus 80% to 82%

C plus 77% to 79%

C 73% to 76%

C minus 70% to 72%

D plus 67% to 69%

D 63% to 66%

D minus 60% to 62%

F 59% or less

| **Date** | **Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines**  ***(If appropriate, add extra column(s) to meet your needs.)*** |
| --- | --- |
| **1/28** | Introduction: Scope of the Course, requirements and expectations |
| 2/2 | Lecture: Choosing a Research Paper Topic   * See list below   **Optional In-class office hours to discuss potential paper proposals by appointment;**  **2/4 Make appointment via email in advance**   * **Seminar Reading Topic Presentation due via email** |
| **2/9** | **Readings and Student-led Discussion**  *American Federalism,* Chapters 1-3  Discussion Leader: |
| **2/11** | *American Federalism*, Chapters 4-6  Discussion Leader: |
| **2/16** | *American Federalism*, Chapters 7-9  Discussion Leader: |
| **2/18** | **Optional In-class Office Hours by appointment via email  Research Paper Proposals due via email** |
| **2/23** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 1-2  Discussion Leader: |
| **2/25** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 3-4  Discussion Leader: |
| **3/2** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 5-6  Discussion Leader: |
| **3/4** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 7-8  Discussion Leader: |
| **3/9** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 9-10 Discussion Leader: |
| **3/11** | **Optional In-class office hours by appointment via email** |
| **3/16** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 11-12 Discussion Leader: |
| **3/18** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 13-14   * **Research Paper outline and tentative bibliography due before class**   Discussion Leader: |
| **3/23** | *Politics in the American States*, Chapters 15-16  Discussion Leader: |
| **3/25** | *Not So Golden After All*, Chapters 1-3 Discussion Leader: |
| **3/29-4/2** | **Spring Break** |
| **4/6** | *Not So Golden After All*, Chapters 4-6 Discussion Leader: |
| **4/8** | *Not So Golden After All*, Chapters 7-9  Discussion Leader: |
| **4/13** | *Not So Golden After All*, Chapters 10-11 Discussion Leader: |
| **4/15** | **Optional In-class Office Hours by appointment via email** |
| **4/20** | **Research Paper Presentations**  Speaker:  Speaker:  Speaker: |
| **4/22** | **Presentations**  Speaker:  Speaker:  Speaker: |
| **4/27** | **Presentations**  Speaker:  Speaker: Speaker: |
| **4/29** | **Presentations**  Speaker:  Speaker:  Speaker: |
| **5/4** | **Presentations**  Speaker:  Speaker:  Speaker: |
| **5/6** | **Presentations**  Speaker:  Speaker:  Speaker: |
| **5/11** | **Presentations**  Speaker:  Speaker:  Speaker: |
| **5/13** | **Optional In-class Office Hours by appointment via email** |
| **5/19 12 Noon** | **Final Evaluation (Seminar Paper)** |

There is no in-class final exam in this course. The final evaluation is the senior seminar paper. The seminar paper is due via email submission to me at noon on Wednesday, May 19th, the day and time of the final exam schedule for courses meeting at this time. Late seminar papers will only be accepted in accordance with the make-up policy. If your seminar paper is late and your reason for submitting it late does not fall under the make-up policy, you will receive a zero on the seminar paper. See the make-up/late policy for further information.