

## **POLS 15: Essentials of U.S. and California Government, Spring 2022**

GE Categories: American Institutions (US 2, US 3, D3)

Instructor: Dr. Sara Benson

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\*Zoom link for the first weeks of class: <https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/87393796370>

In Person Class Time: Monday, Wednesday 9:00 – 10:15

In Person Class Location: DMH 160

Office Hours: Mondays, 12:00 – 1:00

Office Hours Zoom Link: <https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/91088094738>

### **Course Format**

*This is an in person course (\*unless we are instructed by the university to pivot to an online synchronous course on Zoom, which we have now been instructed to do for the first three weeks of the semester).*

*Because all of your work in this course will be submitted using Canvas, you will need to have regular access to a computer and a stable internet connection. You may be able to rent equipment on campus. Please reach out if you need resources.*

### **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 (D3).

*From the SJSU GE Guidelines (S14-5):* This course examines alternative interpretations of historical events and political processes that have shaped the social, economic and political system in the United States. This course will provide a multicultural framework for thinking about the choices and options available to individuals and groups in their social,

economic and political relations. The focus of the course is the growth of a multicultural society and the interactions, including cooperation and conflict, as these many and varied peoples have dealt with social, economic and political issues.

*From this section of POLS 15:*

Students in this class will learn to analyze the foundations of American government, including the Constitution and Bill of Rights. Students will develop an understanding of the separation of powers, and the responsibilities of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. Students will be able to write about and distinguish between key concepts and controversies in understandings of federalism, republicanism, liberalism, and democracy. We will focus on political institutions, political processes, political change, and public policy as we learn to analyze federal, state, and local issues in the American political system and to examine the obligations, responsibilities, and contradictions of American citizenship.

## **Learning Outcomes**

*GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)* Upon successful completion of this 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. As students analyze the meaning and content of the democratic process as it has evolved in the United States and California, at a minimum, they should be able to describe: 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 powers of the President, Congress, and the Judiciary; the links between the people and government, including participation and voting, political parties, interest/lobbying groups, and public opinion and socialization. Students should also analyze the rights and obligations of citizens, the tension between various freedoms of expression, including issues related to censorship and freedom of speech, due process and the maintenance of order, the efforts to end racial, gender and other forms of discriminatory practices 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. *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. *GELO 3 (D3)*: Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. *GELO 4 (D3)*: Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. *GELO 5 (D3)*: Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. *GELO 6 (D3)*: Apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national and international levels.

## *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.

### **Required Texts/Readings**

All of your course readings are provided on Canvas in the Modules section.

### **Course Requirements, Assignments, Grading Policy**

Quizzes (GELOs 1 and 2) 20% of course grade

Written Responses and Discussion Posts (GELOs 3, 4, 5) 20% of course grade

Midterm Exam (GELOs 1 and 2) 30% of course grade

multiple choice, 45 questions

Final Exam (GELOs 2 and 6) 30% of course grade

take-home exam, two essays, four pages total

Please note that this course has a writing requirement of 1500 words.

### **Grading Policy**

**No extra credit is available.**

### **Grading Scale**

93 to 100

A

90 to 92	A minus
87 to 89	B plus
83 to 86	B
80 to 82	B minus
77 to 79	C plus
73 to 76	C
70 to 72	C minus
63 to 69	D
60 to 62	D minus
less than 60	F

## **University Policies**

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>. You do not have my permission to post or distribute my lectures in any way.

*Please review the information about university policies on plagiarism contained above, which may result in a failing grade. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical Development.*

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.

## **Classroom Protocol**

*Your engagements in class discussions and your responses to posts in the discussion board should always be respectful and professional. Any and all lecture videos included in the course can be viewed but not downloaded and they remain protected by the instructor's copyright. Students are prohibited by university policy (S12-7) from recording, distributing, or posting any part of these videos. Students who violate this policy can be referred to Student Conduct.*

## **Political Science Departmental Writing Policy and SJSU Writing Center**

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear and polished prose. Spelling and grammar count. Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at [http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info\\_comp/citing.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm).

For assistance with writing, please see me or visit the SJSU Writing Center located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. 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, visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>.

## **POLS 15: Spring 2022**

*The schedule is subject to change with fair notice.*

Semester Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Week 0	Course Opening
Week 1	Foundations
Week 2	The Article of Confederation
Week 3	The US Constitution and Bill of Rights
Week 4	Federalism
Week 5	The Separation of Powers and the Presidency
Week 6	Presidential Powers and Elections
Week 7	Congress
Week 8	The Courts and Civil Rights
Week 9	<i>Spring Break</i>
Week 10	California Politics
Week 11	Midterm Exam

Semester Week	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
Week 12	The Meaning of Freedom
Week 13	The Meaning of Democracy
Week 14	The Meaning of Citizenship
Week 15	The Meaning of Justice
Week 16	Course Conclusion

**\*Final Exam due on Canvas by Friday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am.**