

San José State University
Political Science
POLS 15 Section 5 Spring 2023

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Kristina Mitchell
Office Location: Clark Hall 404B
Email: Kristina.mitchell@sjsu.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays at 9am-10am
In-office or Online

Classroom Days/Time/Room: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30am-11:45am DMH 160

Course Description (Required)

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

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) (Required)

Course and GE Learning Objectives (CLOs and GELOs):

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 government, the links between the people and government, and the operations of California government. (assessed by Exam 1)

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 active learning project)

GELO 3 (D3): Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. (assessed by weekly assignments)

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 Exam 2)

GELO 5 (D3): Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. (Assessed by Exam 3)

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 Active Learning Project)

Textbook

Recommended:
California Politics: A Primer by Van Vechten

Gateways to Democracies by Geer & Schiller

Course Requirements and Assignments (Required)

Weekly Assignments

You will complete assignments in Canvas each week based on the content in class. They will be due on Thursdays at 11:59pm.

Exams

There will be two midterm exams and a final exam. All exams are open notes and open book. You will take these exams online. The lowest exam grade will be dropped from your final grade.

Constitutional Convention Project

The class will be broken into small groups. Each group will create a new US Constitution. You'll be graded individually and as a group.

Your constitution must address the basic questions of government: who will lead, who will make decisions/policy, and how will those people be chosen? What powers does government have? What rights and/or responsibilities do the people have? Your constitution must have a minimum of 4 Articles and a Bill of Rights (but there are no specific rights that must be protected).

We will spend class time crafting the Constitution. I'll guide you to make sure you know what needs to be covered, but you'll be writing it yourself.

The last week of class, each group will present their Constitution. Then, we will vote as a class for the top two constitutions. Sadly, I get to decide the winner based on who has been the most comprehensive and compelling. The winning team gets 5 bonus points on the group grade.

Group grade criteria: 1) The content of the Constitution itself (is it comprehensive? Does it address major needs? Does it reflect what we learned about government in class?) 2) The presentation (was it well planned and compelling?) 3) Was your Constitution the best one? (only 5 points)

Individual grade criteria: 1) You will write a 300 word essay on your reflections on the process and your contributions to the project. 2) Your group-mates will score you on your contributions. 3) Your attendance and participation on the class days we spend on this project.

Grade Distribution

The grading breakdown for the course assignments is as follows:

- Weekly Assignments: 30%
- Exams: 30% (15% each)
- Constitutional Convention – Group Grade: 20%
- Constitutional Convention – Individual Grade: 20%

You can use this grade distribution to calculate what is possible for you based on your grades on assignments. Please note the weighting of each assignment and keep it in mind as you complete your work.

Final Grade Determination

97 & above: A plus
92-96: A
90-91: A minus
87-89: B plus
82-86: B
80-81: B minus
77-79: C plus
72-76: C
70-71: C minus
67-69: D plus
62-66: D
60-61: D minus
59.99 & below: F

I do not have a policy of rounding grades. Rounding and curving decisions are made by the professor after all final grades are calculated. Even an 89.999 can be considered a B plus. Grades are not assigned based on individual need.

- Do not contact me with a question or request for your final grade to be rounded, curved, or increased.
- Do not contact me asking for extra credit that has not been specifically offered to the whole class via email announcement.

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.

Classroom Protocol

Course Rules

1. Always maintain professional and respectful language, in class, in emails and in your coursework.
2. Any disruptive or disrespectful behavior will result in a loss of credit for the assignment and possibly a referral to the Office of Student Conduct. Racism, sexism, homophobia, or any other forms of bigotry are not acceptable in this class.
3. You are responsible for all information and announcements made in the course. Prepare to log onto Canvas every day to check for updates, changes, or new information. Read the course home page thoroughly and check announcements daily. Course rules, schedule, and day-to-day are subject to change, please pay close attention to course announcements.
4. Late work will not be accepted for any reason. To be clear, late work will not be accepted for any reason whatsoever.
5. Students may not print, save, photograph, or make any record of graded content in this course.

Professionalism

Here is a quick-start on professionalism in your communication with your professors:

- Don't ask a question that you could have answered yourself. Read all information and instructions in Canvas before you send an email.
 - Use an appropriate Subject Line that identifies yourself and your concern (don't just say, "HELP")
 - Address the recipient by his or her professional title, such as Professor, Dr., Mr., or Ms. (NOT Mrs. or Miss unless instructed otherwise)
 - Your first sentence should introduce yourself and include your course and section number. • Be specific about what your request is. Demonstrate that you have read and understood course information and instructions.
 - Use proper grammar and spelling. Punctuate and capitalize. Proofread.
 - Allow 24 hours for a response to your email during the week. Do not expect email responses on weekends. Do not send multiple emails on the same topic within a 24 hour period without waiting for a response.
- If you send an email that does not follow these guidelines, don't be surprised if you get a response that states, "Please revisit the Professionalism section of your course home page and email again."

University Policies (Required)

Per University Policy S16-9 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/> Please be sure to go over these policies..

Course Schedule

January 26th

Class introduction

Week 1 – Jan 31st & Feb 2

What is Government? What is Political Science?

Activity: Billy Joel

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 1

Week 2 – Feb 7th & Feb 9

Democracy & Federalism

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 2-3

Week 3 – Feb 14th & Feb 16

Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 4-5

Week 4 – Feb 21st & Feb 23

Elections

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 10-11

California Politics: A Primer: Ch 9

Week 5 – Feb 28th & Mar 2

Political Parties

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 8-9

Week 6 – Mar 7th & Mar 9

Public Opinion

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 6-7

California Politics: A Primer: Ch 10

Week 7 – Mar 14 & 16

Exam 1 due Mar 14th (online)

Documentary (watch independently/no class meeting)

Week 8 – Mar 21st & Mar 23th

Legislative Branch

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 12

California Politics: A Primer: Ch 4

Week 9 – Mar 28th & Mar 30

No Class – Spring Break

Week 10 – Apr 4th & Apr 6

Executive Branch

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 13-14

California Politics: A Primer: Ch 5

Week 11 – Apr 11th & Apr 13

Judicial Branch

Recommended Reading: Geer/Schiller Ch 15

California Politics: A Primer: Ch 6

Week 12 – Apr 18th & Apr 20

Race, Gender, & Identity
April 20th: **Exam 2 (online)**

Week 13 – Apr 25 & 27

April 25th: Class activity

April 27th: Constitutional Convention Introduction, Declaration of Independence

Week 15 – May 2nd & 4th

Constitutional Convention Work Days

Come to class both days

Week 16 – May 9th & 11th

Constitutional Convention

Meet in class to present Constitutions and then debate/vote

Final Exam

Complete your final exam ONLINE by *May 23rd AT 11:59pm*