POSC 100: Introduction to American Politics
CSULB, Spring 2016

Instructor: Darin DeWitt
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Office: SPA 227
Office Hours: Monday 8:00 am – 9:00 and 11:00 am – 12 noon, Wednesday 11:00 am – 12 noon, and by appointment
Class Meeting: CBA 140, Monday and Wednesday from 9:30–10:45 am

Teaching Assistants:
Jeffrey Haro
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Office Hours: TBD
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Course Description
This course is an introduction to the American political system and to the scientific study of politics. The class focuses on the logic of our government’s institutions and the consequences – both intended and unintended – of these institutions for the political behavior of individuals and groups in society. The primary goal of the course is to introduce you to a set of analytical tools that will sharpen your critical thinking skills and empower you to make sense of the political world.
Course Objectives: What Will You Learn?

1. You will learn how to interpret current events, think about how they will play out, and relate them to events of the past.

2. You will learn how to evaluate theories, read analytically, and argue cogently.

3. You will learn how to weigh evidence in order to make more accurate claims and inferences.

4. By learning about the problems that plague our world, as well as their causes and consequences, you will increase your ability to make a difference.

Required Texts

The following book bundle is available for purchase at the CSULB Bookstore. Please make sure that you purchase the correct edition. The required text is also available for a 3-hour loan at the University Library; proceed to the Reserves section on the 1st floor of the library for assistance. All remaining readings are posted as PDFs on BeachBoard.


BeachBoard

BeachBoard is a campus-wide system that uses the web to manage course materials. Students who are officially enrolled in the course will have access to all the course documents (i.e. syllabus, on-line quizzes, class notes, additional readings, etc.) through BeachBoard ([https://bbcsulb.desire2learn.com/](https://bbcsulb.desire2learn.com/)). In order to use BeachBoard you need a CSULB e-mail account. This can be obtained free of charge through Academic Computing Services (online at [http://www.csulb.edu/namemaster](http://www.csulb.edu/namemaster)) or at the Horn Center (985-4959). For assistance using BeachBoard, please familiarize yourself with BeachBoard’s online tutorial (available at [http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/academic_technology/itss/beachboard/d2l/tutorials/students/index.html](http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/academic_technology/itss/beachboard/d2l/tutorials/students/index.html)). If you need additional assistance, please contact Academic Computing Services at the Horn Center (985-4959).
Assignments and Grading

**Reading Quizzes (15%)**: There will be six on-line reading quizzes posted to BeachBoard, each worth 2.5% of your final grade. Each quiz will consist of multiple choice questions that test your comprehension of the Lowi textbook. You will be allowed to take each quiz a total of three times. You will receive the highest of your three scores. The due dates for the quizzes are listed in the Course Outline below. No late work will be accepted.

**In-Class Political Meetings (6%)**: There will be three in-class political meetings (see course outline for dates and topics). For each event, you will receive 50 points for attending and participating in the political meeting and another 50 points for completing a 200-word reflection about the event. Reflections will be due 96 hours after the in-class political meeting ends.

**First Midterm (10%)**: The midterm may consist of a number of multiple choice, identification terms, fill-in-the-blank, and short-answer questions. Students must bring a blank Scantron form #882-E to the exam. You must pick up your exam in class in order to receive your grade.

**Second Midterm (18%)**: The midterm may consist of a number of multiple choice, identification terms, fill-in-the-blank, and short-answer questions. Students must bring a blank Scantron form #882-E to the exam. You must pick up your exam in class in order to receive your grade.

**Third Midterm (23%)**: The midterm may consist of a number of multiple choice, identification terms, fill-in-the-blank, and short-answer questions. Students must bring a blank Scantron form #882-E to the exam. You must pick up your exam in class in order to receive your grade.

**Final Examination (28%)**: The final is cumulative, covering material from the entire semester. It may consist of a number of multiple choice, identification terms, fill-in-the-blank, short-answer questions, and an essay. Students must bring a blank Scantron form #882-E to the exam.

Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- **A = 90 - 100%**: Indicates mastery of the relevant course standards.
- **B = 80 - 89%**: Indicates above average proficiency of the relevant course standards.
- **C = 70 - 79%**: Indicates satisfactory proficiency of the relevant course standards.
- **D = 60 - 69%**: Indicates partial proficiency of the relevant course standards.
- **F = 0 - 59%**: Indicates little or no proficiency of the relevant course standards.
Grading Policies

- **Midterm Grade Disputes**: I want to ensure that each student gets the credit that he or she deserves. If you have a good reason to believe that your midterm exam was graded incorrectly, you may submit a grade dispute. Each grade dispute must adhere to the following process. First, wait at least 24 hours but not more than one week after the exam is returned in class. Second, your request must include your original exam along with a typed memo explaining (a) which specific questions were graded incorrectly, (b) why you believe that your original answer was correct, and (c) what grade you believe you deserved for each question that you believe was graded incorrectly. Arguments about appropriate levels of partial credit will not be considered. Third, return your exam and the typed memo to my mailbox in SPA 227. If I determine that an appeal has merit, I will not simply regrade the disputed questions, I will regrade the entire exam. Your grade on the exam may go up, stay the same, or go down. Please note that if you make any attempt to dispute or negotiate about grades in person, rather than in writing, you forfeit your ability to request that the grade be reconsidered.

- **Make-up exams**: There will be no makeup exams for the course. If you miss an exam because of a well documented medical emergency, a religious holiday, or officially sanctioned, university business, you will be allowed to write a 10-15 page research paper to substitute for your exam grade. To be eligible for the research paper, you must communicate with me in advance of the midterm and provide official documentation of your medical emergency or university business. It is pretty easy to procure a doctor’s note. As a result, I must stress that the circumstances must be serious! If you have a cold or some similar ailment, I expect you to show up, take the midterm, and make the best of it.

- **Religious holy day**: If an examination or assignment is due on a day where you are observing a religious holy day, please notify me immediately to schedule an alternative course of action.

- **Withdrawals**: University policy on withdrawals applies. Please refer to the current CSULB Catalogue of Undergraduate and Graduate Studies for more detailed guidelines.

- **Academic Integrity**: If I have reason to suspect that you have copied the work of another student on a homework assignment or examination, I will immediately report my suspicions to the Dean of Students. In addition, academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. Academic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or extension on a test or assignment. For more information,

• **Americans with Disabilities Act:** Students with special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act who need reasonable modifications, special assistance, or accommodations in this course should promptly direct their request to the Disabled Student Services Office. Any student who currently has a documented disability (physical, learning or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Disabled Student Services Office (Brotman Hall 270) as early in the semester as possible.

**Course Outline and Reading Assignments**

1. Introduction to Political Science (1/20, 1/25)

2. Why Government? (1/27, 2/1)
   
   Lowi, Chapter 1 (1/27) [Submit Quiz #1 by 9:00AM on 1/27]

3. The Constitution (2/3, 2/8, 2/10)
   
   Lowi, Chapter 2 (2/3) [Submit Quiz #2 by 9:00AM on 2/3]

4. Test #1 (2/15)

5. Experiments in California: Direct Democracy (2/17, 2/22)
   
   Anagnoson et al., Chapters 1–2 (2/17)

6. Civil Rights (2/24)
   
   Lowi, Chapter 4 (2/24) [Submit Quiz #3 by 9:00AM on 2/24]


7. Congress (2/29, 3/2, 3/7)
   
   Lowi, Chapter 5 (2/29)


   **In-Class Political Meeting:** Passing a Transportation Bill in Congress (3/7) [Reflection due at 11:00 AM on 3/11]

8. Test #2 (3/9)
9. Experiments in California: Term Limits (3/14)
   Anagnoson et al., Chapter 5 (3/14)

10. The Presidency (3/16)
    Lowi, Chapter 6 (3/16) [Submit Quiz #4 by 9:00AM on 3/16]
    Contemporary Questions in Political Science: David E. Lewis. 2010.

    Anagnoson et al., Chapters 6 and 8 (3/21)

12. The Courts (3/23)
    Lowi, Chapter 8 (3/23) [Submit Quiz #5 by 8AM on 3/23]
    Anagnoson et al., Chapter 7 (3/23)

13. Public Opinion and the Media (4/4, 4/6)
    Lowi, Chapter 9 (4/4)

14. Test #3 (4/11)

15. Political Parties and Interest Groups (4/13, 4/18, 4/20)
    Lowi, Chapter 11 (4/13)
    In-Class Political Meeting: Simulating a Mass Election (4/18) [Reflection due at 11:00 AM on 4/22]

16. Campaigns and Elections (4/25, 4/27, 5/2)
    Lowi, Chapter 10 (4/20) [Submit Quiz #6 by 9:00AM on 4/25]
    In-Class Political Meeting: Debating the Costs and Benefits of Voting (4/27) [Reflection due at 11:00 AM on 5/1]
17. Conclusion (5/4)

18. Final Exam, or Test #4

For time and date of the final exam, please check the CSULB Fall Term Final Schedule at http://web.csulb.edu/depts/enrollment/registration/final_exam/spring_chart.html