Course Summary

In this class, we will examine the values, processes, and institutions of American and California government and politics to provide a framework within which we can understand how policies are made and why our political environment is the way it is.

While this course is large and early in the morning, I expect you to participate and be an active part of the class. I expect all of you to not only read the course material and participate in class but also pay attention to current events. The best way to do this is to look at a variety of news sources, not just talking heads on the left or right. Being politically astute means being able to gather information from multiple sources and draw your own conclusions, not regurgitating what a political pundit says. It is important to be open to the arguments of all sides.

Course Objectives

This is an introductory course, intended primarily for students who have no prior background in political science. It is designed to serve both as a first political science course for prospective majors and as a survey and general education course for non-majors. Accordingly, the course has three principal objectives:

For all students, to provide you with a working knowledge of American government and politics and to, at the very least, help you be a politically astute member of society.

For all prospective majors, to introduce you to the discipline of political science and to prepare you for more advanced coursework.

For all beginning students, to help you develop reading, writing, and thinking skills necessary for success in more advanced course work in any area.

In this course we will Assess critically the Constitutions of the United States and of California, the operation of representative democratic government under those Constitutions and changes that have occurred over time. Explain the processes and interaction between and among local, state, and national government, with particular reference to California. Understand critically the structures, functions, and processes of the three branches of government and resulting public policies. Assess critically behavior and institutional practices in United States and California politics.
Course Requirements

There are three components to your grade in this course and they are broken down as follows:

65% Exams:
There will be a Midterm and a Final Exam. The Midterm is worth 30% of your grade and the Final is worth 35%. Exams will be multiple choice and will cover material in the text as well as lectures. You will need a Scantron 882E to take each test.

20% Writing Assignment:
This is a 3 to 5 page, typed, double spaced paper showing comprehension of a selected topic covered in the text and class. Papers should be written in a manner that demonstrates your ability to write as a college level student with proper style, grammar and evidence of proof reading. Papers must be your own work and cannot include any direct quotations.

You may choose from one of the following topics (Please include your topic in the title of your paper):
- Describe how the three branches of government operate under a system of checks and balances.
- Describe civil liberties afforded to every citizen under the constitution.
- Discuss one branch of government and the differences in the federal and state systems.
- Describe how does the Electoral College operate within the U.S. election system.

15% Participation:
Attendance will be taken 5 times at random throughout the semester, so come to class.

Extra Credit Option:
You can earn up to 5% points in extra credit by attending a public local government meeting (City Council, Planning Commission, County Board of Supervisors, etc.) or two on campus political events and writing a 1 page summary of the meeting/event. If you chose to attend a meeting, most are broadcast online these days, so you need to provide proof that you actually attended the meeting - get creative, take a picture of yourself with your Mayor (they will love it), get the clerk to sign the agenda, etc.

Grades will be assigned based on the following scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>92% and Higher</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>59.99% and below</td>
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Books


Course Calendar

**Week 1: August 28 and 30:** Understanding Politics and Constitutional Issues  
Reading: *We the People* Chapters 1 and 2

**Week 2: September 4 and 6:** California Constitution  
Reading: *California Government* Chapter 1

**Week 3: September 11 and 13:** Federalism  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 3

**Week 4: September 18* and 20:** Civil Rights and Civil Liberties  
Reading: *We the People* Chapters 4 and 5

**Week 5: September 25 and 27:** Public Opinion and the Media  
Reading: *We the People* Chapters 6 and 7

**Week 6: October 2 and 4:** Political Parties  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 9 and *California Government* Chapter 5

**Week 7: October 9 and 11:** Elections and Midterm Review  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 10 and *California Government* Chapter 4  
*Class may be cancelled on October 11, if it is, please use this time to review for the midterm.*

**Week 8: October 16:** Midterm Exam You will need a Scantron 882E  
**October 18:** Elections Continued  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 10 and *California Government* Chapter 4

**Week 9: October 23 and 25:** Interest Groups  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 11 and *California Government* Chapter 6

**Week 10: October 30 and November 1:** Legislative Politics  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 12 and *California Government* Chapter 8  
*Possible Guest Speaker*

**Week 11: November 6 and 8:** Legislative Politics Continued  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 12 and *California Government* Chapter 8

**Week 12: November 13 and 15:** Executive Politics  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 13 and 14 and *California Government* Chapter 7

**November 20 and 22:** Fall Recess

**Week 13: November 27 and 29:** Executive Politics Continued  
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 13 and 14 and *California Government* Chapter 7
Week 14: December 4 and 6 Judicial Politics
Reading: *We the People* Chapter 15 and *California Government* Chapter 9

Week 15: December 11 and 13: Local Government and Final Review
Reading: *California Government* Chapter 11
*Writing Assignment Due in class December 13.*

Week 16: Tuesday, December 18, 2012 7:00 – 8:50 AM: Final Exam You will need a Scantron 882E

Resources

Emergency Policy: [Click here for details](#)
Disabled Student Services: [Click here for details](#)
University Policy on Academic Dishonesty: [Click here for details](#)

This class is designed to help you learn and succeed, if you find yourself struggling, please reach out to me as soon as possible for assistance. I want this to be a positive learning experience for every student but can only help if you let me know there is a problem.