

# **INTRODUCTION TO UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT: Spring, 2018**

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**Classroom: Emeritus Building room 1699**

## **GOALS FOR THE COURSE**

The class will focus on political systems and more specifically American government. A major part of the class will be discussion of ongoing political issues. The course will begin with discussion of the role of government in our lives and the beliefs of political philosophers about the purpose of government. We will examine the various political theories regarding political systems and examine the foundations of democracy and representative government. The constitution will be read and examined in detail. We will examine the federal structures of American government and then begin discussion of state and local government. We will analyze the social and political context of American political life including civil rights, voting rights and civil liberties. We will examine political parties and interest groups and their role in policy making. The course will then deal with the three branches of government: the executive, legislative and judicial.

## **COURSE READINGS**

**There are two required reading materials for this course. Please bring both to class each week.**

**1) TEXT is “American Politics Today” Essentials Fifth Edition (5E), by Bianco and Canon. Norton Press 2017**

**2) INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL SCIENCE READER**

**Textbook and Reader can be purchased on campus at the campus bookstore. Text can also be rented at the bookstore. Text can also be purchased through [www.norton.com](http://www.norton.com). Reader can only be purchased at the SRJC bookstore. PLEASE BRING BOTH TO CLASS EVERY WEEK.**

Students will also be required to read keep up with the news and current events regarding American Government. Current events will be discussed in class and may be a topic for test questions. Instructor will send out articles that may also appear on tests.

**GRADING** Your grade will be made up of the following:

### **1. Exams**

There will be three exams during the semester. The information will only be tested once; the tests are not cumulative. Students will be required to take test the day of the exam, unless they make prior arrangements with the instructor. Exceptions will only be made if students have a medical or other emergency; you will need to provide documentation. Students will receive a zero for the test if they do not take the exam. Tests will include information from the textbook, lectures, handbook, class discussions and current events discussed in class. Tests will consist of multiple choice and essay questions. (tests worth 70 points each)

### **2. Class Discussion Panel**

a. Each student will participate in a **class discussion panel** in front of the class. Topics for each discussion panel will be chosen in class from various possible issues. Each student will speak for about five minutes on the discussion panel. Following the panel presentations, there will be questions from the class and discussion among panel members. Discussion panels will take 30-45 minutes at the end of several class sessions (30 points). Students will be graded on their presentation style and content of their presentations. Students will work together on the presentation, but each student will be graded separately.

### **Political Analysis Paper OR Election Campaign Paper**

This paper will be ON THE SAME TOPIC as your discussion panel. You will write your own paper for this assignment. (70 points). Papers will be due the week of 5/4. Format: A cover page, table of contents, citations of source material and a bibliography are needed. The paper should be double spaced. **See the handbook for more details on this assignment.** You will have two choices for this paper:

- 1) Write a paper analyzing a public policy issue (to be chosen in class). You will analyze a current policy of the US government. You will analyze the campaign promises made by incoming President Trump, actions he has taken, explain how the issue is being addressed this semester. You will also present a timeline of his actions on this issue since he became president. You will analyze the results of the action and make a recommendation on how to solve this issue in your conclusion. Paper should be 8-9 pages long. **–OR–**
- 2) Write a paper on an election campaign. For this assignment you will work on an election campaign of your choice. You will volunteer a total of about four hours on this campaign as a volunteer and write a paper on the following: who you worked for, their policy positions compared with their opponent, what you did on the campaign, description of the campaign strategy (funding, major activities and how money was spent), major milestones of the campaign and timetable of the campaign and why the candidate won or lost. Paper should be 6-7 pages long.

**3. Class Participation** This portion of your grade will be made up of a combination of class attendance (10 points possible) and your participation in class discussions (10 points possible).

Test 1	70 points
Test 2	70 points
Test 3	70 points
Class Discussion Panel	30 points
Paper	70 points
Class Participation	<u>20 points</u>
Total	330 points

**SCHEDULE** Read chapters **BEFORE** coming to class. Bring text and handbook to class each week.

Week	Topic	Assignment
1/22	Introduction	-----
1/29	Understanding American Politics	Text, Chapter 1
2/5	Constitution <u>Choose Topics For Papers &amp; Discussion Panels</u>	Text, Ch. 2
2/12	Federalism	Text, Ch 3
2/19	<b>No Class on 2/19</b>	
2/20	State Government	Handbook
2/26	<b>TEST #1</b>	-----
3/5	Local Government	Handbook
3/12	Civil Liberties <b><u>Discussion Panel</u></b>	Text, Ch. 4
3/19	<b>No Class-Spring Break</b>	
3/26	Civil Rights <b><u>Discussion Panel</u></b>	Text, Ch 5
4/2	Political Parties <b><u>Discussion Panel</u></b>	Text, Ch 7

4/9	Elections <b><u>Discussion Panel</u></b>	Text, Ch 8
4/16	<b>TEST # 2</b>	-----
4/23	Interest Groups	Text, Ch. 9
4/30	Congress <b><u>Discussion Panel</u></b>	Text, Ch. 10
5/7	Presidency <b><u>Hand in Papers</u></b> <b><u>Discussion Panel</u></b>	Text, Ch 11 plus p 340-356
5/14	Judiciary and <b><u>Discussion Panel</u></b>	Text, Ch 13
5/21	<b>TEST #3</b>	

#### **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

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

1. Analyze American political institutions and processes and how government impacts their daily lives.
2. Engage in political discourse about contemporary political problems and issues applying critical thinking skills and analysis to support a point of view.
3. Examine the core values of the American political creed and assess how well the current system reflects those principles.

#### **STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

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

1. Formulate and examine their own values and beliefs.
2. Research contemporary political issues drawing upon diverse sources.
3. Assess and distinguish between factual and interpretive sources of information.
4. Trace how and why American political structures and institutions at the federal and state levels have evolved over time and discuss current controversies in the light of these developments.
5. Evaluate different forms of political communication and the methods employed to shape public opinion.
6. Assess the influence of political institutions on the American population and the methods by which citizens can participate in the political process and shape policy outcomes.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** The following is SRJC's policy statement on academic dishonesty:

"Santa Rosa Junior College holds that its primary function is the development of intellectual curiosity, integrity and accomplishment in an atmosphere that upholds the principles of academic freedom. Academic dishonesty is regarded as any act of deception, benign or malicious in nature, in the completion of any academic exercise. Examples of academic dishonesty include cheating, plagiarism, impersonation, misrepresentation of idea or fact for the purpose of defrauding, use of unauthorized aids or devices, falsifying attendance records, violation of testing protocol, inappropriate course assignment collaboration, and any other acts that are prohibited by the instructor of record." Any plagiarizing on assignments, papers or exams violates the SRJC academic integrity policy and you will be reported to the Vice President of Student Services for disciplinary action. Cheating or plagiarizing will render an automatic "0" for the assignment, paper or exam.

The following link will take you to the SRJC requirements for content of this course:

[https://portal.santarosa.edu/SRweb/SR\\_CourseOutlines.aspx?CVID=26132&Semester=20167](https://portal.santarosa.edu/SRweb/SR_CourseOutlines.aspx?CVID=26132&Semester=20167)