



Figure 1 H.C. Howard, "For President, Abram Lincoln. For Vice President, Hannibal Hamlin." c1860. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA

Introduction to American Government, Course Description

This course is a survey of the American political framework and processes.

This course covers the Constitutional structure and functions of the legislative, executive and judicial branches at national, state and local levels. Using a Madisonian framework, this course will examine the challenges of democratic theory in practice. With an emphasis on pluralism, students will place themselves within current political debates.

Viewed in the context of political parties, interest groups, and citizenship, students will engage with questions about power and justice. Emphasis will be placed on protests movements, such as the civil rights

and women's rights movements.

In this course learners are required to engage the political process and develop critical thinking skills. To satisfy this requirement learners will engage in current policy debates, analysis of historic and current events, and conduct research in a focused area of American politics. Learners should expect to be actively engaged in the learning process, not passively learning about institutions and jargon.

The course partially satisfies the IGTEC area D, social sciences requirement. It is transferrable to all CSU and UC institutions: see assist.org for the most up-to-date information about transferability.

This course also satisfies the CSU *US History, Constitution & American Ideals* graduation requirement. View the [course outline on record](#) for more details.

What's in this syllabus

Course Description	1
Course Requirements	2
Student Learning Outcomes	2
Assessment Categorization	3
Policies & Resources	3
Help & Resources	3
Weekly Schedule	4

Course Details

Website: www.santarosajc.instructure.com

Required texts: Glen Krutz and Sylvie Wakiewicz. *American Government*. (Free online in OpenStax).

Suggested texts:

Baglione, Lisa A. *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science: A Practical Guide to Inquiry, Structure, and Methods*. ISBE: 978-1483376156. (\$14-30).

Gerald Graff & Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*. ISBN: 978-0393935844. (\$10).

Student Learning Outcomes & Corresponding Assignments This course is designed to achieve the following course level outcomes identified to the right with corresponding assignments.	Analyze American political institutions and processes.	Engage in political discourse about contemporary political problems and issues applying critical thinking skills and analysis to support a point of view.	Assess how government impacts their daily lives.
	Weekly quizzes Exam essays Research paper Research presentation	Weekly discussion forums Collaborative projects	Collaborative projects Exam essays

Course Requirements

This course requires regular attendance, participation, and extensive note taking. Learners should be prepared to read and study roughly 30-50 pages in the text and additional readings each week. Two essay examinations, which include additional multiple-choice components, will be utilized to partially assess learner achievement of course outcomes and objectives. Learners will be required to produce 2,000-3,000 words of out-of-class writing including: analytical essays, research papers, and discussion posts.

Class participation (20%) Participation is measured through weekly discussion forum engagement. While this is an asynchronous course learners are expected to maintain consistent engagement in the discussion forums, including posting an original response early in the week and response posts to others throughout the week.

Reading quizzes (10%) Each unit in this course has a designated reading assignment that requires careful attention to detail and focus. Learners are expected to read with care and take notes. Reading quizzes correspond to each assigned reading unit, and are due at the end of each week. Single lowest score will be dropped.

Midterm Exam (20%) & Final Exam (20%) Both the midterm exam and the final exam are comprised of two parts: a multiple-choice section and an essay section. The multiple-choice questions are worth one point each and the essays are worth ten points each. The essay prompts are provided a week prior to the exam. *There are no make-up exams.*

Collaborative projects (10%) Learners are responsible for completing four collaborative projects throughout the semester. Each collaborative project corresponds to an essay prompt on the exams. Finding a partner and submitting the project is the responsibility of the learner.

Research paper (20%) The research paper is a scaffolded assignment, comprised of picking a narrow topic and research question, synthesizing the existing literature, and providing a new contribution. Learners who wish to improve their total course grade up to five-percent may submit a ten-minute presentation of their completed research in voicethread.

The detailed instructions, rubrics, and examples for each assignment are on canvas.



Figure 2 Rebecca Roth Dec. 1998. Representative Maxine Waters, head-and-shoulders portrait, during a Judiciary Committee hearing related to the impeachment of President Bill Clinton. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington.

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Email is the preferred method of contact.

Office Hours are Monday from 5-6 pm online via Zoom and by appointment. In-person meetings can be arranged if necessary.

Assessment Categorization & Grading Scale

Class participation	20%	16 unit discussions worth ten points each.
Reading quizzes	10%	16 reading quizzes worth five points each.
Midterm Exam	20%	20 multiple choice questions worth one point each and two essay questions worth ten points each.
Final Exam	20%	20 multiple choice questions worth one point each and two essay questions worth ten points each.
Collaborative projects	10%	4 collaborative projects worth ten points each.
Research paper	20%	Topic discussion forum worth 5 points. Topic, research question, methods, and thesis submission worth 5 points. Working bibliography worth 5 points. Paper proposal worth 20 points. Proposal peer review worth 5 points. Completed research paper worth 50 points.

Help & Resources

If you are feeling overwhelmed...

1. Use student resources page

There is a student resources page found on canvas with extensive tips and tool to improve student learning.

2. Use net tutor

NetTutor is an online tutoring system that allows you to meet with a tutor online, one-on-one tutoring is available and 24/7 help, free of charge. It can be accessed directly through canvas.

3. Use the writing center

The English Department Writing Centers on the SRJC and Petaluma campuses provide free writing and tutorial services and computer use to all registered SRJC students.

4. Make an appointment with instructor

Learners are encouraged to make an appointment to meet over Zoom with instructor at least once.

Course Policies

Code of Conduct

All students are required to adhere to the college code of conduct at all times. *Student Code of Conduct*

Disability

Any student who feels they may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately, as soon as possible, to discuss your specific needs so that we can work collaboratively to insure reasonable accommodation. Students who require alternative formats for course materials or adaptive equipment because of a disability can request them through the Disability Resource Department located in Jacobs Hall room 101. (707) 778-2491
drd-testing-pet@santarosa.edu

Communication

Instructor will always be available during office hours by phone, email, skype, chat, and zoom. Email communication is preferred, and instructor will respond within 24 hours M-F. *No assignments accepted through email.*

Withdrawal Policy

Instructor will drop anyone who does not participate in the first week of classes. After that, it is the student's responsibility to drop the course if they wish to withdraw. Do not expect that the instructor will initiate the withdrawal procedures for you after the first week of classes, that is the student's responsibility. At the end of the quarter, students who stopped attending class without withdrawing will receive an "F" grade. Please see the important dates below. **LATE DROP:** After the deadline to drop with a "W," a student can only request a late drop if they have stopped attending class prior to the deadline to drop with a "W", and they have a documented medical issue (being a caretaker for another person with a medical issue qualifies), and/or they have been incarcerated. Students cannot receive a late drop past the deadline to drop with a "W" for any other reason - and must receive a grade or an Incomplete after that date.

Final grades will be assigned using the following evaluative grades and symbols:

A	Excellent	90%+
B	Good	80%+
C	Satisfactory	70%+
D	Passing, less than satisfactory	60%+
F	Failing	<60%

Schedule:

*Schedule is tentative and subject to change.

Unit 1: The Political <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political Science Core concepts, such as liberty and theory of democracy. 	<p>In this unit learners will begin to engage in political discussion with fellow classmates, including working together to construct a working definition of <i>the political</i>. This discussion will demonstrate the conflicted nature of politics. Learners will then critically analyze several paradigms in the social sciences and acquire numerous lenses through which they will examine politics throughout the semester.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define <i>the political</i>. 2. Recognize the nature of conflict and compromise in the political process. 3. Recognize the presence of politics in your everyday lives and the origin of political conflict in your own values and expectations. 4. Apply three theories of democracy to explain a contemporary issue.
Unit 2: Politics of the American Political Founding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacy of British Rule Philosophical influences, such as Locke, and Montesquieu The Declaration of Independence The Articles of Confederation The Constitutional Convention 	<p>In this unit learners will develop an understanding of the American political founding including the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and Constitutional Convention. Six core American political values will be identified and used to better understand how the dominant political philosophies of the American founding affect contemporary issues.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine the relationship between the individual and the state. 2. Compare the founding fathers with modern radicals. 3. Identify the main characteristics of American political culture. 4. Evaluate how the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and Constitutional Convention demonstrate the core American political values. 5. Describe the gap between the American democratic ideal and practice.
Unit 3: The U.S. Constitution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Preamble The Articles The Federalist Papers The Bill of Rights 	<p>In this unit learners will acquire fundamental skills for understanding the foundation of the American political system and the debates that have remained fluid throughout our history. The basic tendencies of each section of the Constitution will be examined with from the Federalist and Anti-Federalist positions. Using the Federalist papers, learners will form a critical understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the bill of rights.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the structural differences between the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. 2. Diagram the U.S. Constitution. 3. Analyze Madison's system of check and balances and separation of powers. 4. Discuss the tension between the Federalist and Anti-federalist positions using the Bill of Rights.
Unit 4: Federalism & California Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitutional provisions Historical evolution from the Founders to the present Advantages and disadvantages of a federal system The State of California Local Government and Politics 	<p>In this unit learners will trace the historical evolution of federalism in the U.S. from the founding to the present. The federal system will be evaluated using a cost benefit analysis. The Constitution of the State of California and California government will be compared to the federal system in order to better understand the relationship and differences between the three levels of government: national, state, and local.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Differentiate unitary systems, federal systems, and confederations. 2. Compare four types of federal systems and explain the evolution of the current system. 3. Discuss whether the Constitution fosters or limits citizen's participation in government. 4. Compare and contrast the federal system to state and local government using the State of California.
Unit 5: Public Opinion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political socialization Ideology Polling 	<p>With a focus on the political socialization process, learners will examine major tenants of American political ideology. Learners will then acquire skills for conducting public opinion research, in order to critically analyzing public opinion research and its relationship to public policy.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Critically analyze the role of public opinion in public policy formation. 2. Explain the political socialization process and how it has shaped learners individual opinions. 3. Evaluate public opinion polling using the benefits and limitations of it.

Unit 6: The Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evolution of media from the founding era to the present • Biases in media coverage in the U.S. • Evaluating sources of information 	<p>In this unit learners will acquire necessary skills to evaluate the political implications of the mass media effects, specifically its influence upon public opinion and political culture in the U.S. Using contemporary mass media articles, learners will identify major aspects of media bias. Learners will then compare mass media articles to peer-reviewed journal articles in order to evaluate different sources of information.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trace the evolution of the media from the founding era to the present. 2. Identify media bias in recent news articles; specifically filtering, framing, slant, and priming. 3. Evaluate the validity of different sources of information. 4. Critically analyze how the media affects public opinion.
Unit 7: Political Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voting behavior, trends and reforms • Alternative methods of participation 	<p>In this unit learners will identify methods of individual political participation. With a focus on voting, learners will examine major trends in voting behavior and evaluate potential reform options. Alternative methods of participation, including individual and group activities, will be examined.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify methods of political participation. 2. Explain major trends in voting behavior. 3. Diagram a process through which citizens can become an informed voter and make tough political decisions. 4. Evaluate alternative methods of participation.
Unit 8: Political Parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The functions of parties • The evolution of the party system • Why a two-party system? 	<p>In this unit learners will identify the function of political parties and chart the history of political party systems in the United States. The electoral reasons for a one-party, two-party, and multi-party system will be analyzed. Different party systems and the impact of party polarization upon public policy will then be evaluated.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the electoral and governing functions of political parties. 2. Describe the structure and function of the American party system. 3. Compare and analyze the American two-party system with alternative party systems.
Unit 9: Campaigns & Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nominating process • The general election • Campaign finance • Electoral strategies 	<p>In this unit learners will acquire analytic tools necessary to assess the U.S. Presidential election system. Learners will trace the four steps to electing a president and develop electoral strategies. The current electoral college system will be evaluated using six potential reform options. The affects of campaign finance will be explained.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diagram the process through which a president is elected in the U.S. 2. Evaluate the Electoral College and six reform options. 3. Explain the role of campaign finance in the election process and potential avenues for reform.
Unit 10: Interest Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their composition and activities • The pros and cons of group politics 	<p>In this unit learners examine the role of interest groups in the American political system. Learners will distinguish the role of interest groups to that of political parties and acquire analytic tools to evaluate the relative power of interest groups.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Differentiate interest groups from political parties. 2. Identify four types of interest groups. 3. Describe interest group tactics and analyze their activities.
Unit 11: The Legislative Branch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bicameral legislature • Functions of Congress • The structure of Congressional leadership and committees • The legislative process 	<p>In this unit students will develop skills necessary to analyze the powers, duties, and organization of Congress. Learners will engage the legislative process and develop an understanding of the difficulty of passing legislation in a unicameral compared to bicameral system. Theories of representation and the diversity of constituency interests will be analyzed.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diagram the structure of Congress including the leadership and committee systems. 2. Compare unicameral and bicameral systems in terms of the legislative process. 3. Evaluate the legislative process in the United States.
Unit 12: The Executive Branch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Constitutional Presidency • The expansion of presidential power 	<p>In this unit learners will identify the powers of the Presidency in the U.S. Constitution. Learners will trace the development of the presidency from its founding to the contemporary office. With a focus on leadership styles, learners will evaluate several contemporary presidencies. The power and function of the bureaucracy will also be discussed.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The bureaucracy 	<p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare the president's roles as head of state and head of government. 2. Explain the origin of executive powers and what role the founders had imagined. 3. Evaluate five recent presidents' leadership styles and the implications for policy and public approval.
<p>Unit 13: The Judicial Branch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structure of the judiciary Judicial review Judicial appointments The judicial decision making process 	<p>In this unit learners will acquire skills to evaluate the power of the judicial branch and analyze recent Supreme Court decisions. Learners will discuss theories of constitutional interpretation and the development of judicial review. The role of politics in the theoretically apolitical branch will be examined using the appointment process and judicial elections.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the rule of law and the role the legal system plays in democratic society. 2. Evaluate Hamilton's claim that the judiciary was the "least dangerous branch of government" in light of the power it wields. 3. Discuss the role politics and ideologies play in judicial appointments and decisions.
<p>Unit 14: Civil Liberties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporating the Bill of Rights Protected expression Religion and the <i>lemon test</i> Due Process Privacy 	<p>In this unit learners will identify four major civil liberties and examine the legal tests developed by the Supreme Court to determine if they have been infringed upon. Learners will examine in-depth the most recent supreme court decisions on civil liberty issues.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify four major civil liberties and their constitutional origins. 2. Trace the development of freedom of expression and religion from their Constitutional origins to the present. 3. Explain how privacy is distinct from other civil liberties.
<p>Unit 15: Civil Rights</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> History of rights denied on the basis of race and gender Civil Rights Amendments Voting Rights Act 19th Amendment, Title IX, and the Equal Rights Amendment 	<p>In this unit learners will critically analyze the development of civil rights in the United States. With a focus on the Constitution and civil rights amendments, learners will discuss the civil rights and women's rights movements. Contemporary forms of de jure and de facto discrimination will be analyzed at length including forms of voter suppression, the wage gap, and police violence.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify current civil rights groups in the U.S. 2. Apply the 14th Amendment's due process clause to contemporary issues. 3. Construct a political outlook on equal rights that recognizes the value of diversity and the historical struggles of minority groups. 4. Write an IRAC paper using a contemporary civil rights issue.
<p>Unit 16: Foreign & Domestic Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic policy Economic Policy Foreign Policy 	<p>In this unit learners will engage in the legislative process and learn to distinguish between domestic, economic, and foreign policy through interactions with legislators and simulations.</p> <p>By the end of this unit, students will be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Distinguish between domestic and foreign policy, including key actors. 2. Explain the foreign policy process. 3. Construct a policy position paper on a domestic policy issue.