

POL S 1: Introduction to U.S. Government

Instructor: Rev. Michael J. Ludder

Office hours: for the spring semester, my office hours are: 1 hour before class or by email, or by phone as needed, and by appointment.

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POLS 1: Course Outline of Record: [Course Outline of Record](#)

Students are expected to keep abreast of daily political events through television, radio, online, magazines and newspapers reports. This class will stress current issues and topics.

This class will look at American political institutions, processes, and behavior, both historical and at present. A special emphasis will be made to show how the "theory" of political science is "applied" (experienced) in the real world of politics. Come to class prepared, ready to have your beliefs and values challenged, and to participate in discussions and exercises. Several guest speakers from the field of politics may also be invited to share their experiences and expertise with the class over the semester.

COURSE CONTENT

Student Learning Outcomes:

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

1. Analyze American political institutions and processes.
2. Assess how government impacts their daily lives.
3. Engage in discourse about contemporary political problems and issues, applying critical thinking skills and analysis to support a point of view.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Formulate and examine their own political values and beliefs.
2. Research contemporary political issues drawing on 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 state and federal levels have evolved over time and discuss current controversies in 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

Required Online Text: Online Reader American Contradictions

Go to: https://srjc.grlcontent.com/online_publications

The current required online reader can be purchased at this site.

This course is NOT on Canvas.

Each week students will be responsible for reading the assigned online reader sections and articles.

Recommended for students unfamiliar with the American Government

(This is not required. Use only an older edition)

Struggle for Democracy

Greenberg & Page

To highlight articles in the online text, you may find it useful to download one of these free applications:

<http://superuser.com/questions/467981/how-to-highlight-and-collect-highlighted-text-from-webpages-in-chrome>

Recommended: To register for a free subscription to the New York Times go to:

<https://sonomalibrary.org/library-collection/NYT-remote>

If you live outside Sonoma County, go to your county library site and look for a similar link.

Attendance Policy: The student is responsible for all materials covered in class, exams, and changes in lecture topics, due dates, exam times and locations. There are no exceptions to this policy. A student may be dropped at the instructor's discretion if he/she is absent more than 10% to the total class hours. A student who fails to attend, at least, one of first two class periods in the semester may also be dropped to allow other students to enroll in the course. See:

Attendance Policy (Procedure 8.5.1P):

<http://www.boarddocs.com/ca/santarosa/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=A83PZ466E31A>

Standards of Conduct: Students shall conduct themselves in a manner, which reflects their awareness of common standards of decency, the rights of others, and District policies. See:

Student Conduct: <https://student-conduct.santarosa.edu/discipline-due-process>

Disruptive use of cell phones, tablets, and laptops not related to class work will be seen as a violation the Code of Student Conduct:

<https://student-conduct.santarosa.edu/discipline-due-process>

Student Evaluation/Grading: There will be three required major exams that will include: multiple-choice/fill-in questions (50%). You will receive points for every correctly marked answer and minus points for every marked incorrect answer. In addition, you will have to write, at minimum, six policy-related essays (50%) of over 3000 words. Submit **your** essay and cite your sources. The number of tests and essays are dependent on whether or not there is be unforeseen interruptions in the semester. (See: Academic Integrity Policy below) Points earned over the semester will be placed on a 100-point scale for your final grade. There is no curve. See:

Grading (Procedure 3.10P):

<http://www.boarddocs.com/ca/santarosa/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=A9CN465E0FB4>

Your grade for the course will be based upon a standard format of: A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%, C = 70-79%, D = 60-69%, F = 60% or less (no curve).

Late exams and assignments will be accepted only at the discretion of the instructor.

See:

Grading (Policy 3.10):

<http://www.boarddocs.com/ca/santarosa/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=A9CMYV5D94CD>

Optional Activities: The student can increase his/her grade by 15 points (30 points maximum) with one of these optional activities: four hours of community service in an approved public or non-profit agency, a cop ride along of 4 hours, and/or a three-page (typed, double-spaced) report on an instructor-approved political science book. Again, the student must obtain **prior approval** from the instructor before using any of these options.

Students will be limited to only two of these outside “optional activities.” See your instructor for further details or questions.

Plagiarism, Cheating, and other acts that violate Academic Integrity:

If plagiarism, cheating, and other acts that violate academic integrity policies occur; the student will, at minimum, receive an “F” on the particular assignment. Violations will be reported per District policies and procedures. See:

Academic Integrity (Procedure 3.11P):

<http://www.boarddocs.com/ca/santarosa/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=A63TMC78051C>

There are several resources on each campus that might be helpful to you. They include: The Writing Lab, the Tutorial Center, and **in your “My Cubby” is a link for online help @ Smart Thinking Online.** In your online text, look at the “Resources” link for more information on whatever topic you want to explore.

SRJC Tutoring: <https://college-skills.santarosa.edu/tutorial-centers-online-tutoring>

College Services: Because the campus has limited face-to-face services, here is the site to connect to College Services:

<https://onlinestudentservices.santarosa.edu/>

Disability Resources: On the Santa Rosa Campus students with disabilities who believe they may need an accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact **Disability Resources** (527-4278), 3rd floor Bartolini, as soon as possible, to better ensure such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Disability Resources Handbook:

http://online.santarosa.edu/homepage/dept15/forms/DRD_Faculty_Guide.pdf

The **Student Health & Wellness Center** is on the third floor of Bertolini. (527-4445) and is also the site for **Student Psychological Services**. The website is: <http://shs.santarosa.edu>, and to email: studenthealthservices@santarosa.edu

On the Petaluma Campus the DRD office is in 101 Jacob Hall (778-249) and the Student Health Services is in the Call Building (778-3919).

Sexual Assault/Harassment: Students and staff are to work and learn together in an atmosphere free of violence, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. For further information and to contact the Title IX coordinator see:

<https://titleix.santarosa.edu/resources-and-support>

And

<https://titleix.santarosa.edu/sites/titleix.santarosa.../SRJC%202.15%20and%202.15P.pdf>

Please ask your instructor for help in connecting with any services you might need.

Safety and Evacuation Guidelines: “Are You Ready?” may be helpful:

<http://www2.santarosa.edu/f/?nDYYyYKQ>

OR see:

Emergency Preparedness Handbook:

<https://ehs.santarosa.edu/sites/ehs.santarosa.edu/files/EmergencyHandbook-2008-09.pdf>

The **online text and recordings** of the class are the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be used or distributed without his/her written permission.

Topics and Scope

I. Foundations of U.S. Government

A. The Study of Politics

1. Approaches and tools of Political Science
2. Core concepts, such as liberty and theories of democracy

B. The Founding Era

1. The legacy of British Rule
2. Philosophical influences, such as Locke and Montesquieu
3. The Declaration of Independence
4. The Articles of Confederation
5. The Constitutional Convention

C. The U.S. Constitution

1. The Preamble (the goals of government)
2. The Articles (government institutions, federalism, amending)
3. The Federalist Papers (selling the document)
4. The Bill of Rights

D. Federalism

1. Constitutional provisions (definitions and rationale)
2. Historical evolution from the Founders to the present
3. Advantages and disadvantages of a federal system

E. California Government and Politics

1. The State of California (constitution, institutions, direct democracy)
2. Local Government and Politics

II. Linkage Institutions

A. Public Opinion

1. Political Socialization
2. Ideology
3. Polling (techniques and uses)

B. The Media

1. Evolution of media from the founding era to the present
2. Biases in media coverage in the U.S.
3. Evaluating sources of information

C. Political Participation

1. Voting behavior, trends and reforms
2. Alternative methods of participation

D. Political Parties

1. The functions of parties
2. The evolution of the party system
3. Why a two-party system?

E. Campaigns and Elections

1. The nominating process (primaries and caucuses)
2. The general election (Electoral College)
3. Campaign finance
4. Electoral strategies

F. Interest Groups

1. Their composition and activities
2. The pros and cons of group politics

III. Government Institutions

- A. The Legislative Branch
 - 1. A bicameral legislature (differences in the House and Senate)
 - 2. Functions of Congress (representation, legislation, oversight)
 - 3. The structure of congressional leadership and committees
 - 4. The legislative process
- B. The Executive Branch
 - 1. The Constitutional Presidency (formal powers)
 - 2. The expansion of presidential power (causes and consequences)
 - 3. The bureaucracy (presidential advisors, government agencies)
- C. The Judicial Branch
 - 1. Structure of the judiciary (federal and state)
 - 2. Judicial Review
 - 3. Judicial appointments
 - 4. The judicial decision making process
- IV. Citizens and the State
 - A. Civil Liberties
 - 1. Incorporating the Bill of Rights within state constitutions and laws
 - 2. Judicial rulings on rights (such as speech, press, religion)
 - B. Civil Rights
 - 1. The Civil Rights Movement
 - 2. Landmark civil rights legislation and judicial rulings
 - 3. Ongoing inequalities and the search for "equal justice under law."
- V. Policy-Making (optional)
 - A. Domestic Policy
 - B. Foreign Policy
 - C. Economic Policy

Assignments:

- 1. Read and study 30-50 pages in the text or additional readings weekly.
- 2. Regular attendance, participation and extensive note taking is expected.
- 3. Two to four essay examinations, which may include additional multiple choice components.
- 4. Out-of-class writing (3000-5000 words). These may be in the form of analytical essays, research or reaction papers or discussion posts.
- 5. Optional quizzes, presentations, and/or debates

Each week students will be responsible for reading the appropriate online reader articles.

Weekly Schedule of Events

Weeks 1-3	Reader: Chapters 1-2	Orientation: Political Values and Political Economy.
		Truth and Lies, Values and Ethics. Survey Exercises.
		American Politics: Definitions and analytical framework.
		Political Economy, public opinion, polling, political socialization.
		Discussion of the role of class, gender, and race in U.S. politics.
		Midterm 1 scheduled week 3.
Weeks 4-5	Reader: Chapter 4	Federalism: Advantages and disadvantages of federalism, legal and constitutional arguments and outcomes.
		Changing roles/responsibilities of federal, state, county, and local governments. Cooperation and conflicts. The role of class and race in policy.
		Is power returning to the States? Follow the money.
		Discussion of key current public policy issues.
Weeks 5-6	Reader: Chapter 5	Congress: Functions, structure, inner dynamics.
		How a bill becomes law (or not): Power of Congressional Committees.
		Behavior of members of Congress: polarization and bipartisanship. The impact of class, gender, and race in Congress.
Weeks 7-8	Reader: Chapter 6	The Presidency: Role and responsibilities evolve over time.
		Limits on the use and abuse of Presidential Power.
Week 9	Reader: Chapter 7	The Executive Branch. The "fourth" branch of government.
		Departments and Agencies: Structure, behavior (rules and regulations, enforcement and appeal processes).
		Role of lobbyists and special interests. Are the public's interests served?
Weeks 10-11	Reader: Chapter 8	Judicial branch: federal court system.
		Structure and processes: Arbitrators or policymakers?
		Crime and punishment statistics and trends. And the role of class, gender, and race.
		Civil rights and civil liberties: recent Supreme Court decisions.
		Midterm 2 scheduled week 11.
Weeks 12-13	Reader: Chapter 9	Role of political parties: Elections, voter turnout, mobilization techniques.
		Voter participation and suppression by class, gender, and race.
		Campaign strategies in primary and in general elections.
		Do the dominant political parties serve the publics' interest?
		Voting rights, recent court decisions, possible reforms.
Weeks 14-15	Reader: Chapter 10	Role of special interest groups: Corporations, non-profits, NGO's.
		Lobbyists and their impact on laws and government policy.
		Who really runs America? The golden rule is \$\$\$!
Week 16		Current Public Policy Issue: TBA in class

Week 17		Review for Final Exam
		Final Exam scheduled during Final Exam week.