**The American Political System (Political Science 102)**

*(Course Numbers 25640 and 25644)*

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Description automatically generated*

**On Campus Syllabus**

**Spring 2020**

**Angela L. Romero, Professor of Political Science**

**San Diego Miramar College**

**10440 Black Mountain Road**

**San Diego, California 92126**

**Instructor Information:**

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Telephone: 619.388.7413

Campus Faculty Office: Humanities 110V

**Class Meetings:** Location: Humanities-205

Mondays and Wednesdays 11:10 – 12:35 p.m.

Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00 p.m. – 2:25 p.m.

**Faculty Office Hours -Actual *and* Virtual**: I am available to meet with students for individual questions/concerns, additional help with class materials, or for general academic advising during the following times or by appointment:

[1] Mondays 2:30-4:30 p.m. - Faculty Office and Zoom with Join URL: <https://cccconfer.zoom.us/j/910033261>

[2] Tuesdays 12:00-3:00 p.m. - Faculty Office and Zoom with Join URL: <https://cccconfer.zoom.us/j/118293716>

[3] Wednesdays 10:00 – 11 a.m. - Faculty Office and Zoom with Join URL <https://cccconfer.zoom.us/j/410464670>

\*NOTE: If you are unable to visit my *actual* faculty office, you may visit my *virtual* office during any of the above listed times via Zoom

\* *Please* c*heck my Twitter feed regularly for office hour changes/cancellations and updates.*

**Course Overview, Description, and Student Learning Outcomes**

***Professor’s Course Overview and Description:***

***“The death of democracy …will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.”***

***… Most everything you experience is fundamentally shaped by political decisions made by powerful actors.***

Welcome to this class! I am so glad you are here. The goal of this course is to introduce students to the insights the discipline of political science provides for understanding American government and politics. Whether or not you choose to acknowledge it, politics affects the quality of your life (which is why this class is a general education requirement).

Unfortunately, politics carries a negative connotation, mostly because it involves confrontation, conflict, and self-interest. While most Americans hate politics, my goal is to convince you that politics can be observed and studied “objectively” based on facts and evidence. I aim to create a classroom environment in which there is lively debate and respectful disagreement over political values and beliefs.

My aim is not to shape your opinions concerning politics, but to make sure you develop an interest in politics. Opting to remain ignorant, apathetic, and uninvolved allows others to make decisions for you. As R.M. Hutchins aptly puts it, “the death of democracy …will be a slow extinction from apathy, indifference, and undernourishment.” Most everything you experience is fundamentally shaped by political decisions made by powerful actors. This course will give you an understanding and awareness of how that process operates and how we can improve it to make it more democratic.

Because this a college-level course in introductory American politics, prospective students must have college level reading and language skills to succeed (see the Miramar College catalogue advisory below\*). Credit for this class is transferable to four-year institutions, and as such, the class is comprehensive and rigorous, and not curtailed (i.e. “made easier”) in any way because it is delivered at a community college. That said, this course is for you even if you enter without any prior knowledge of American politics. For those of you who already have developed political awareness, it will deepen your knowledge and challenge your assumptions and perhaps even your deeply ingrained beliefs. You will learn not only about the world of politics in the abstract, but also about the roots of your own political morality.

My philosophy is that I cannot “ teach” you anything, but I can lead, direct and facilitate. You are responsible for the knowledge you accumulate. In that spirit, completing all of the assigned READING is most critical. Throughout the term I will be drawing on my 25 years of study within the political science discipline. As you develop your own understanding and opinions, you will meet a standard prerequisite in your college educations that will empower you to be informed, tolerant, critical and active democratic citizens.

***Miramar College Catalogue Course Description*** (3 hours lecture, 3 units letter grade or Pass/no Pass option): This comprehensive survey course, designed for students intending to transfer to a four-year college or university, provides an in depth study of the American political system. Both national and California experiences are studied from the perspective of constitutional frameworks, institutions, issues, and policies. NOTE: If used to satisfy part of the American Institutions requirement, Political Science 102 may not be used to satisfy the SDCC District’s three-unit social science requirement. Political Science 102 is required for completion of the major in political science. \*Political Science 102 Advisory: English 48 and English 49, each with a grade of “C” or better, or equivalent, or Assessment Skill Levels R5 and W5.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

**1.** To study both American and California politics from an objective social scientific standpoint, which means you will develop critical thinking skills, rely on systematic reasoning, and learn about the political science research process.

**2.**

**[a]** To understand the political history and origins of contemporary American (and California) politics and liberal republican democracy, including the framing of the American constitutional system and the centrality of federalism.

**[b]** To appreciate the ongoing struggle to realize the founding claim that all people are created equal.

**3.** To develop knowledge of the interplay between preferences, interests, and institutions for shaping political outcomes (on both the national and state levels). The roles of public opinion and participation, interest groups and political parties will be introduced (components of political behavior). The public policymaking roles of the institutions of Congress, the executive, the bureaucracy, and the judicial system will all be explored. Specific focus will be placed on California state government and politics.

**4.** To develop a broad knowledge of ongoing current political affairs and to develop the skills for sophisticated information consumption through the use of high caliber journalistic resources.

**5.** To obtain a strong foundation in civic education that empowers you to participate in decision making processes at the local, regional, national or international levels.

All of the specific Student Learning Objectives for Political Science 102 will be measured through the use of quizzes, written work and class discussions (see next section for details).

**Required Course Materials**

**#1. Course Textbook: American Government: Power and Purpose** (Brief 15th Edition). Authors: Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, Ansolabehere. W.W. Norton & Company, January 2019. \*Please note that using older editions is not advised, as the new edition contains updated election results/information.

ISBN:  978-0-393-67493-4

Purchasing Options for Course Textbook

* Students may purchase the textbook at the Miramar College bookstore.
* Here are additional options for acquiring the textbooks (there are many more):
* Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/American-Government-Brief-Introduction-Fifteenth-dp-0393674932/dp/0393674932/ref=mt_paperback?_encoding=UTF8&me=&qid=>
* Norton Publishers website: <https://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294997756>
* Please note: The first 3 chapters of the electronic text are free on the publisher’s website above.

**#2. Current Events Readings:** Current events readings comprise roughly one-third of the required course reading.  The specific reading assignments will be announced every Monday by 5 p.m. via my Twitter feed which is linked to our course website in Canvas.     To obtain links to the required articles (as well as to receive regular communication from me) you are encouraged to sign up for a Twitter account and follow @profpoliticssd.  However, if you prefer to not engage social media, you can go to <http://twitter.com> and search @profpoliticsSD; this will enable you to view all the assigned readings (and other “tweets”) without having your own twitter account.  If you elect to create a Twitter account for this class and find you dislike it, you can delete your account once the semester is over. Readings for class are marked "REQUIRED” (all additional “tweets” are recommended and strictly optional).   All of my selected articles are available at no charge (newspaper or magazine subscriptions are not required for this course; however, certain online news sources do require you to register).  Readings from periodicals that are behind a paywall will be placed on our course website in Canvas.

**#3. Regular and reliable access to the Internet**: Although this is not an online course, it is a web-enhanced on- campus course that utilizes the web’s powerful information resources. For budgetary and environmental reasons, many class assignments, quizzes, exams, and other materials are online via Canvas. Students do not need a personal computer or home Internet access to complete this course successfully. Miramar College provides free web access and email through the Independent Learning Center (ILC/L-Building on the Miramar College campus). Since technology skills differ among students, the ILC offers instructional support to students. Additionally, Miramar has free Wi-Fi. The password is: miramarspring2020.

**Caution:** Canvas is relatively new to the SDCCD. Based on my experience using this platform, I *strongly recommend* that you use a computer (and not a handheld device) to access Canvas.

**#4. Additional Materials required for each class meeting:** All students must bring paper and writing implements to all class meetings to complete in-class written work and assignments. Laptop computers, tablets, or any mobile device are acceptable only for accessing electronic readings and/or for note-taking purposes during lectures and audio-visual presentations.

***Highly* Recommended Course Materials**

Daily news/current affairs literacy is essential to citizenship and the quality of your experience in this course. In addition to the assigned current events readings, the following are highly recommended:

1. Homepages of *The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, The Los Angeles Time, or The San Diego Union-Tribune* (skim read)*.*

*2.*  Listen to National Public Radio (online) or San Diego’s KPBS (89.5 FM)(also online http://www.kpbs.org/radio/live/)

3. Watch the PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) News Hour on KPBS Television (see your San Diego local listings)

4. Listen (online or via podcast) to Los Angeles Public Radio (KQED) “Left, Right and Center.” Broadcasts every Friday. URL: <http://www.kcrw.com/news/programs/lr>

5. There are many more sources that I will be tweeting throughout the semester. Follow me on Twitter and review my “recommended” resources.

6. There are additional resources listed on the Homepage of our class website under “Recommended News Sources.”

**Course Requirements and Final Grade Calculation**

Your overall performance/final course grade is based on the following requirements:

**25 percent =** Class participation

**25 percent =** Midterm Examination

**25 percent =** Final Examination

**25 percent =** Current Events Journal

**Detailed Information on Course Requirements and Policies**

**1. 25 percent = Class participation, Small Group Work, Pop Quizzes**

The primary goal is for our time in class to be well spent, and every student is just as responsible as the instructor for the achieving this goal. Therefore, your participation and preparation comprise one quarter of your grade. I do my best to make our class meetings both educational and fun. I use audio-visual resources extensively, and in addition to lectures and small-group work you will have an opportunity to watch several critically acclaimed documentary films that will further your understanding of American politics.

Participation grades will be based upon your level of engagement in the class. To maximize your participation grade I recommend the following:

[1]. Commit to attending class.

[2]. Complete all the reading assignments in advance of class and offer questions or comments. If you are using an e-textbook, make sure you take notes on the text.

[3]. Actively listen during lectures, and remember that note-taking skills are critical components of the learning process. \**You may use notes that* ***you*** *create (but not actual articles or the textbook) on quizzes and the major exams (Mid Term and Final). Hence, an early and regular dedication to good notetaking will increase your chances for success in this class.*

[4]. Be prepared to work in small groups and to make short presentations based on class material.

[5]. Expect short quizzes on the assigned readings at the discretion of the professor.

[6]. ***Have fun and enjoy the learning process.***

**Missing Class:** I expect that during the next 16 weeks there will be a class session(s) you miss due to illness, personal, family or work obligations. Therefore, each student has 3 “free passes” to use in the event of illness, conflicting obligations, etc. Absences will not significantly affect your grade unless they become habitual.

Please find at least one “buddy” in the class and exchange contact information in the event that you miss class.

My buddy’s name is\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Email/Text \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

I have a strict NO make-up policy. This means that students cannot recuperate (“make up”) any points missed during class, even if those points were made available while you were utilizing one of your “free passes.”

**Drop Policy:**  I reserve the right to drop students who miss the first class meeting. No student may be reinstated if he/she is dropped from the class. As per SDCCD policy, *it is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw*. “Students who remain enrolled in a class beyond the published withdrawal deadline, may receive an evaluative letter grade in this class.” That means, YOU are responsible for officially withdrawing from this course by the drop deadline, or you will receive a letter grade (i.e. Do NOT take it for granted that I will drop you from this course for failure to meet any of the above policies). Sending me an email stating that you wish to drop is NOT sufficient, you must officially drop through the Miramar College Registrar.

**Classroom Code of Conduct:**

[1.] Be attentive and actively participate in all instructional activities and discussions.

[2.] Attend class prepared – with notebook paper and pens/pencils; course textbooks; other assigned materials.

[3.] Complete the assigned readings and assignments on time so that you can ask meaningful questions, make insightful comments, and answer the professor’s questions.

[4.] Be respectful of all persons; be courteous to people with different perspectives and values.

[5.] Arrive on time and leave when class is dismissed.

[6.] Do not disrupt class sessions with inappropriate behavior (talking, using cell phones, computers, or *sleeping,* etc.)

[7.] Do not use any electronic device unless requested to do so by the professor to complete class related research or for emergency communications.

[8.] Do not cheat on assignments or examinations.

[9.] Do not plagiarize. Note: My mission is to provide a high quality introductory education in political science, and *not to police* academic dishonesty. That being said, the academic integrity of the students in this course and Policy 3100 (*San Diego Community College District Student Code of Conduct*) require that all student work including, but not limited to, assignments, essays, papers, and exams be free of plagiarism. Students must fully cite any text, graphics, or others’ ideas they include in that work. Should I discover plagiarism, or any type of academic dishonesty in class, the student will be given a 0 on that assignment and disciplinary measures may be taken. For full details on SDCCD policies and guidelines go to <http://online2.sdccd.edu/new_studentorientation_dev/students/resources/College_Policies.pdf>

[10.] Please do not use class time, or the passing period before or after class, to address individual student issues. Use good judgement to distinguish between personal questions and questions that apply to the entire class. Make use of faculty office hours for the former.

[11.] In addition to the classroom expectations detailed above, in accordance with *Policy 3100* *Student Rights, Responsibilities and Administrative Due Process, Section 3.0, Code of Conduct*, all students shall have the right to a campus learning environment free from interference or disruption. As such, all students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct at all times to ensure an orderly educational environment, conducive to teaching and learning. This expectation includes student conduct online (both on our course website and on Twitter and email). Students must be familiar with the "Netiquette Guidelines" available at <http://www.sdccdonline.net/students/resources/NetiquetteGuidelines.pdf>

[12.] I may deduct participation points from any student who violates any of the above, or any other basic norm of college classroom respect and courtesy. This includes, but is not limited to the student code of conduct detailed by District policy 3100 (above), chatting, sleeping/snoozing in, or using technology for non-class related purposes (cell phones, computers, etc.).

**2/3. 50 percent = Midterm and Final Examinations**

1. The Midterm Exam will be in class ***Wednesday, March 25***(Week 8)

2. The Final Exam will be in class ***Wednesday, May 27*** (Week 16)

Exams are designed to gauge your commitment to the course readings and materials (textbook readings, current events readings, class lectures and audio-visual materials such as documentary films/video clips/podcasts). Each exam will be comprised of a combination of short-answer, multiple-choice, and matching-type questions. Our class website has study materials for the course textbook.

**\*Note regarding material covered on exams:** You will be responsible for all the material covered in the assigned readings *even if* *they are not covered in class lectures or discussions.*

**Examination Policies-**

**\***Deadlines are firm and there are no extensions.

**\***No examination will be administered or made available to any student prior to the dates announced on the course calendar. Additionally, there are no make- up exams.

**4. 25 percent = Current Events Journal**

In this class students will be required to write a series of 10 current affairs journal entries (as opposed to writing a research paper). The details for this requirement are in a separate document (*Current Events reading and Journal Assignment Directions and Guidelines)* available on the class website in Canvas.

**Final course letter grades are assigned as follows:**

100-90 percent = A= Excellent

80-89 percent = B= Good

79-70 percent = C= Satisfactory

69-60 percent = D= Passing - Less than satisfactory

59 percent points or lower = F = Fail

**Final Grade Calculation:**

This class is designed so that students who stay on schedule with the readings, do ALL the required work, and meet all deadlines, can succeed. Your final course grade will be calculated using the highest percentage-scoring student as the denominator (i.e. “on a curve”). WHY? Invariably, there will be faulty (i.e. “bad”) questions on some of the several quizzes and/or exams you take during the semester. If the highest scoring student (i.e. curve-setter) ends the term with (for example) 98% (rather than the “possible” 100%), my years of experience have taught me that the differential is likely related to shortcomings in the assessment, course design and/or the teaching/delivery of material. Using this method prevents the need to recalculate individual quiz or exam scores. Students will find that this system provides a fair and accurate letter grade assessment of academic performance over the course of the semester.

**Extra Credit /Bonus Points:** There will be occasional opportunities for bonus points in this class.These may be offered to students IN CLASS or on my Twitter Feed. You *are encouraged but not required to* sign up for a Twitter account and follow “@profpoliticssd.”  Please note that no requests for bonus points for individual students will be allowed. Under no circumstances will I allow the use of bonus points (or any form of “extra credit”) to compensate for any student’s failure to complete the required work for any reason.

**Grades on Canvas** - All conscientious students frequently ask: “How am I doing in this class?” and/or “What is my overall grade?” To address this concern, I keep an ongoing record of your course points on the course web site. You are encouraged to keep track of your class point total and alert me if you notice discrepancies. I will do my best to evaluate your work in a timely way. However, since I teach several classes, I do fall behind from time to time.

**Spring 2020 Semester Key Dates and Deadlines**

**Opening day**: Monday, February 3, 2020 \**All students must attend the first day of class or you may be dropped.*

**Presidents’ Day –No Classes:** Monday, February 17, 2020 **Add Deadline/Drop with a Refund/ Deadline to Drop without a "W":** Tuesday, February 18, 2020

**Pass/No Pass Petition Deadline:** Monday, March 9, 2020

**Spring Break:** Monday, March 30, 2020 – Friday, April 4, 2020

**Withdrawal Deadline:** Friday, April 17, 2020

**End of Spring 2020:** Monday, June 1, 2020

**Grades will be available on e-Grades at** [**https://studentweb.sdccd.edu/e-grades/**](https://studentweb.sdccd.edu/e-grades/)

**Miramar College Student Resources**

**Accessibility for Students with Disabilities:** The California Community College System is committed to providing equal access to education for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations should contact me by email. You and I can coordinate with the Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) department to identify your appropriate accommodations. To contact a DSPS counselor call (619) 388 - 7312 or email miradsps@sdccd.net. Note: I have made every effort to ensure that this course is accessible to all students, including students with disabilities. If you encounter a problem accessing any portion of this course, please contact me.

**Tutoring Services at Miramar College**: There are resources on the Miramar College campus to support students in need of additional help. For further details, visit The Academic Success Center at http://www.sdmiramar.edu/campus/asc

**Honors Contracts**

This class is available for an honors contract.  You can receive the "honors" designation on your transcript.  By signing up for an honors contract, you can also apply for Honors Program scholarships when available. There are also special transfer agreements for Honors students, such as UCLA TAP.  Contact the Honors Coordinator for the most current status of these agreements.  Honors students can also earn a Certificate of Completion in Global Competencies.

Honors contract forms and scholarship applications are available at the Transfer Center, K-306 and at the Honors Program office, located in K203A (inside Counseling).

In this class the honors contract involves a “policy problem paper” requiring additional research, writing and a presentation. If you are interested in an honors contract in this class, please begin by visiting the Honors Program website at <http://sdmiramar.edu/campus/honors>

Then see me during office hours during the first two weeks of the semester\*.

Contract forms are due in the Honors Office on  ***Friday, February 21,2020.*** No late honors contracts will be accepted.

*Who should do an honors contract and why****?*** This is a college-level introductory course in political science and American institutions that awards transferable credit to California State universities, the University of California, and many other 4-year institutions. Since the reading list and workload reflect this, I recommend that students be extremely cautious in making the decision to take on additional work requirements that could potentially have a negative impact on overall course performance. Once an honors contract has been entered, it cannot be retracted. That being said, there are many benefits of an honors program for highly motivated students.

**Academic Complaint Resolution**

An academic complaint may be filed with the department chair or instructional dean when a student feels that a faculty member has violated state law, federal law, or College policies and procedures relative to grading or other academic matters. Academic complaints should be resolved through the appropriate administrative processes:

1) Step one: the student should make an appointment for an informal meeting with their instructor and attempt to reach a resolution of the issue. If a resolution is not reached,

2) Step two: the student may directly contact the department chair. If you do not feel that your concerns have been resolved,

3) Step three: the student may directly contract the Dean of Liberal Arts, Dr. Lou Ascione

For non-academic complaints, please refer to the Miramar College Catalog

**\*\*\*\**IF YOU ARE NOT CAREFULLY READING ANYTHING in the Syllabus, PLEASE READ THIS!\*\*\*\****

I URGE you to *read and reread* our course syllabus, as it contains vital information about how I conduct class. Most questions about this class have answers somewhere in the text of this document. You should be referring to the syllabus regularly throughout the semester. ***Your decision to remain in this course signifies that you understand and agree to the course policies and will NOT request that they be altered in any way.***  However, due to extenuating circumstances (such as school closures, caused by fire or ANY other event) these requirements and deadlines are subject to change at the sole discretion of the professor. Any necessary amendments will be announced in class, date marked on this document, and posted on our class website.

**Spring 2020 Schedule of Readings and Assignments**

*This is a tentative schedule of topics and readings and may change during the course of the semester.*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Week # and Date** | **Readings/Assignments** | **Deadlines/Notes** |
| Week 1  February 3/5 | \*Class Overview  \*Syllabus Review  \*Introductions |  |
| Week 2  February 10/12 | \*Discuss Current Events Journaling requirement  \*Current Events readings begin  \* *What political scientists know… that you don’t* (see Canvas for link to reading) |  |
| Week 3  February 17 (No Class)  February 19 | \*Current Events readings  \*Chapter 1 | February 18 (Add/Drop Deadline) |
| Week 4  February 24/26 | \*Chapter 2 Framing of the U.S. Constitution  \*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 5  March 2/4 | \*Chapter 3  Federalism and the role of the states  \*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 6  March 9/11 | \*Chapter 4  Civil Liberties and Civil Rights  \*Current Events readings | California Primary Election! |
| Week 7  March 16/18 | \*Chapter 4  Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (*continued)*  \*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 8  March 23/25 | \*Midterm review session and Exam  \*Current Events readings | *Midterm Exam Wednesday, March 25* ***in class*** |
| Spring Break  March 30/April 1 | Have a wonderful break…No readings or assignments |  |
| Week 9  April 6/8 | \*Chapter 5  Congress: The First Branch  \*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 10  April 13/15 | \*Chapter 6  The Presidency: Institution and Crises  \*Current Events readings | April 17 -Deadline to Withdraw |
| Week 12  April 27/29 | \*Chapter 9  Public Opinion  \*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 13  May 4/6 | \*Chapter 10 (Elections) &\*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 14  May 11/13 | \*Chapter 11  Political Parties  \*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 15  May 18/20 | \*Chapter 12  Interest Groups  \*Current Events readings |  |
| Week 16  May 25/27 | \*Final Exam Wednesday, May 27 |  |
| Week 17  June 1 | \****Optional*** professor-student conferences/Last Day of class | *Students electing to conference with the professor regarding their final course grade are encouraged to come to the professor’s faculty office during class hours.* |

**Notes and Questions:**