

Introduction to American Government: POLI 102

Mesa College, Fall Remote 2020 Tuesdays and Thursdays CRN 42165 (9:35), 42230 (11:10), and 42170 (12:45)

You can always count on Americans to do the right thing - after they've tried everything else.
– Winston Churchill

Course Description

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.

Textbook

American Government: 2e - openstax (abbreviated AG in the syllabus) **required**

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-2e>

At this link, you will find a free open-access ONLINE version of our course textbook, as well as a link to a PDF of the book and an app. You can also choose to purchase a print copy from the link at Openstax. Make sure you choose the 2nd edition (called “2e”).

Print ISBN 1947172654
Digital ISBN 1947172662



Additional readings

* Regular reading of a quality national newspaper.



high-

* Additional short academic and news articles will be assigned with the quizzes, Critical Analysis assignments, and Discussion Board assignments. Papers will be based on a close reading of a selection of Supreme Court decisions, political science articles, or book chapters provided as a part of the prompt. Discussion boards will be based primarily on news or current event readings that illustrate the class concepts.

EXTRA CREDIT Extra credit assignments will be provided during the semester and up to 20pts can be earned with these assignments. Extra credit earned over this amount will not count.

LATE WORK POLICY. Work is due by midnight at the end of the day listed on the syllabus or canvas site. 1) Reading quizzes/activities. As a general rule, 10% of the possible points will be automatically removed from the student’s score on these assignments if they are submitted late. (I’m reasonable. If you are just a little late, let me know and I will remove the deduction. But if you do this every week, I will refuse.) Also, all late work must be completed before the

Your professor is Michelle Rodriguez.
CONTACT HER VIA INBOX TOOL IN CANVAS Or ZOOM office hours
MW 11-1 and R 3-4 or by appt.
You’ll find the zoom address in our canvas site.

Assignments and Evaluation

Online Reading Quizzes and Activities		
- about 6pts per topic	approx.	100pts
Discussions and collaborations		250pts
Exams (3@100pts each)		300pts
Short Papers (2@150pts each)		300 pts
Participation		40pts
Introduction post		10pts

	approx	1000pts

You can always find your current grade in the class by clicking on “grades” on the homepage. If you want to know what your grade will be “if” you get a particular grade on an assignment not yet submitted/graded, you can uncheck the “calculate based only on graded assignments” box on the right of the grades page.

exam for that section. Quizzes will be locked after the exam for that section because they are meant to prepare you for the exams. (Again, I'm reasonable. If this policy means you will fail the class, I will probably let you complete it, just let me know.)

2) Exams. Exams MAY NOT BE COMPLETED LATE. They must be completed by midnight at the end of the day they are due. They will automatically be locked at this time. Students who miss an exam or would like to improve the score they received on one of their exams can take the Optional Comprehensive Final Exam during the last week to replace ONE exam grade for a maximum score of 85pts.

3) Papers must be submitted by midnight at the end of the day they are due for full credit. If students must turn a paper in late, 10 pts will be deducted from the score for each day with a maximum deduction of 40pts. If a student misses turning in a paper, they can submit an Optional Makeup paper for a maximum score of 130pts.

**THINK - like a citizen (we're all in this together)
- like a political scientist (cause and effect)**

Technical help

This course has a significant online component, so encountering technical difficulties could jeopardize your performance in the course. Please ensure, during the first few days of the course, that you can access the course material by completing the diagnostic quiz and introductory discussion post in the Open Discussion forum.

If you have problems, there are many resources available to you which are listed on the home page. These resources are:
<https://www.sdccd.edu/about/departments-and-offices/instructional-services-division/online-learning-pathways-1/index.aspx>

<https://sites.google.com/view/mesastudentscanvas>

<https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10701>

https://community.canvaslms.com/community/answers/guides/video-guide#jive_content_id_Students

And you can call the 24/7 Helpdesk at **1-844-612-7421**

And please let me know immediately if there are any glitches in the course website!

Netiquette Guidelines

Respectful behavior is expected of you in our online learning environment. Behavior that interferes with the learning environment will not be tolerated and may result in a grade penalty.

Please read the District guidelines at <https://www.sdccd.edu/docs/ISPT/online/NetiquetteGuidelines.pdf>

A more complete coverage of the topic can be found at <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html>

Students with Disabilities. Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with disabilities in the course. Please contact DSPS [in I4-405, (619) 388-2780 or (619) 388-2974/tty] and contact me if you need assistance. Their webpage is www.sdmesa.edu/dsps/ Also, please let me know if you come across material that is not captioned, or you have other problems accessing the course material.

Drops. The deadline is **8/28** to receive, process, and pay for Add Codes, AND to drop classes with a refund and no "W" recorded on your transcript. The instructor may drop students who fail to login to the course during the first four days to make room for other students. But it is the student's responsibility to drop if they wish to receive a refund.

Registering Pass/No pass. If you selected or intend to select this option, the deadline is **9/18** to file a Petition or reverse this decision. Think carefully before you choose this option because it limits the transferability of the course.

Withdrawals. It is the student's responsibility to withdraw from the course to receive a "W" instead of a letter grade. Students who remain enrolled in a class beyond the withdrawal deadline published in the class schedule, will receive a letter grade in the class. The instructor may, at her discretion, withdraw a student after the add/drop deadline due to excessive inattention to coursework completion. The final date to withdraw with a "W" grade is **10/23**.

Policy regarding student plagiarism. The assignments in this course are designed to be open book and open note. But you should use course materials and the video lectures, rather than cutting and pasting from the internet to answer quiz and exam questions. Your scores will suffer AND you will make this course harder if you try to get by without using our class materials. Past students will attest to this.

You will submit your Critical Essay Assignments via a plagiarism tool to enable me to check that the papers are your own work. This will be explained on the assignment prompts.

Policy regarding posting my course materials and your work from this class online. My course materials are my creative property and are copyrighted under the DMCA. I regularly visit sites that invite students to post course materials in exchange for materials other students have posted. (I can search the internet just like a student!) When I find such postings, I invoke my right to have the materials removed, hold students accountable where appropriate, and place the material in the plagiarism database. So, resist the temptation to use these websites in unethical ways.

COVID-19 and our class. First, let me say that I realize we are living through difficulties that will be remembered far into the future. And, while the online format of our class means that its structure can remain largely unchanged, I understand that many of you may be facing challenges that are anything but normal. So, let me know if you are impacted in a way that makes your performance suffer and I will do what I can to help. And I will try to make this class interesting by incorporating material based on the current situation.

Schedule

Weekly – check canvas for announcements, recorded video lectures, additional reading material, and quizzes/activities on the topic for the week.

Tuesdays – you will only be expected to log in on specific days. You must check canvas and read email from me for notifications about this. These classes will mostly be reserved for small group and individual meetings with the professor.

Thursdays - you will be expected to log in every week. Classes on these days will consist of brief lectures, breakout room discussions, polls, and other activities for the entire class.

Your participation on designated Tuesdays and every Thursday will be reflected in the “participation” element of the grading. I will not be recording these sessions, so make sure you are available to attend them.

Welcome

Diagnostic quiz – 2 pts extra credit will be awarded when complete.

Introduction forum – Introductory post – 10 pts

SECTION 1 Framework and Values of the System

8/20 TOPIC 1 - Studying American Government – concepts and approaches

Read: AG Chapter 1 (Section 1.1)

8/27 TOPIC 2 - Constitution: US and CA

Read: AG Chapters 2, 11, and 12 (selections posted on Canvas)

Read: Federalist #51 (appendix in AG)

Read: Handout – Elements of the Constitutional System

Browse: Online or AG - Constitution of the United States

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/index.html>

Browse: Online- CA Constitution

<https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codesTOCSel.ected.xhtml?tocCode=CONS&tocTitle=+California+Constitution+-+CONS>

9/3 TOPIC 3 - Federalism

Read: AG Chapter 3 + 14 (selections posted on Canvas)

Course Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

- 1) Think critically in reading, writing, and/or speaking about U.S. national and California political systems, thereby identifying problems, theses, arguments, evidence and conclusions.
- 2) Write or speak about U.S. national and California political systems, thereby addressing problems, formulating theses, making arguments, analyzing and weighing evidence, and deriving conclusions.
- 3) Demonstrate an ability to understand one's role in society, take responsibility for one's own actions, and make ethical decisions in complex situations.
- 4) Articulate similarities and contrasts among cultures, times, and environments, demonstrating an understanding of cultural pluralism.

9/8 TUESDAY required TOPIC 4 - Domestic Policy Part 1
Read: AG Chapter 16 (selections posted on Canvas)

9/10 NO Zoom Class – Professor moderating panel at APSA virtual

Paper 1 due 9/15

9/17 Constitution Day 11:10-12:30 pm EXTRA CREDIT (no zoom class)
Campus-wide discussion of Qualified Immunity and Police Accountability with Prof. Steven Semeraro (Thomas Jefferson School of Law) and Thomas Robertson (civil rights lawyer in San Diego).
Details and zoom info to follow.

9/24 TOPIC 5 - Civil Liberties
Read: AG Chapter 4 (selections posted on Canvas)

9/29 TUESDAY Optional lecture/discussion – BLM: Civil liberties and civil rights

10/1 TOPIC 6 - Civil Rights
Read: AG Chapter 5 (selections posted on Canvas)

Exam #1 10/6 TUESDAY During class time (COVERS TOPICS 1-6)

Section 2- Politics in a Democracy

10/8 TOPIC 7 -Public Opinion and Domestic Policy Part 2
Read: AG Chapters 6 + 16 (selections posted on Canvas)

10/13 TUESDAY – required – Group 1
Lecture and discussion: Media and Politics
Readings TBA
Group 1 collaboration due before class – 75pts

10/15 TOPIC 8 -Elections and Voting
Read: AG Chapter 7 (selections posted on Canvas)

10/20 TUESDAY – required – Group 2
Lecture and discussion: Media and Politics
Readings TBA
Group 2 collaboration due before class – 75pts

10/22 TOPIC 9 -Political Parties
Read: AG Chapter 9 (selections posted on Canvas)

10/27 TUESDAY – required – Group 3
Lecture and discussion: Media and Politics
Readings TBA
Group 3 collaboration due before class – 75pts

10/29 TOPIC 10- Interest Groups
Read: AG Chapter 10 (selections posted on Canvas)

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

- 1) Apply the basic concepts, principles, and terms common to meaningful political inquiry to the study of American government
- 2) Describe the political philosophies of the framers of the Constitution and the nature and the operation of United States political institutions (national, state, local) and processes under that Constitution as amended and interpreted
- 3) Explain the basis for American federalism
- 4) Locate the Constitution of the State of California within the framework of evolution of Federal-State relations and appraise the nature and processes of State and local government under the Constitution
- 5) Weigh the obligations and responsibilities of American citizenship, including the duty of participating at the national, State, and local levels
- 6) Describe the role of major ethnic and social groups in significant events in the history of the United States including the nature of and efforts to achieve civil rights
- 7) Apply different analytical models to describe the various structures, functions, and policymaking activities of the American political system at the federal, state, and local levels
- 8) Compare and contrast American political ideals and constitutional principles, both stated and actual
- 9) Identify and analyze major issues faced by the American political system at all levels, including contemporary relationships of State and local government with the federal government; the resolution of conflicts and the establishment of cooperative processes under the constitutions of both the State and the nation; and the political processes involved.

11/3 Election Day- optional – zoom review for exam

Exam #2 due 11/5 (COVERS TOPICS 7-10)

11/10 TUESDAY – optional – Election Results discussion

SECTION 3 – Formal Institutions of Government

11/12 TOPIC 11 - The Legislative Branch: Congress
Read: AG Chapter 11 + 14 (selections posted on Canvas)

11/19 TOPIC 12- - The Executive Branch: The President and the bureaucracy
Read: AG Chapter 12+15

11/24+26 Thanksgiving – no class

12/1 TUESDAY – optional – Paper #2 workshop

12/3 TOPIC 13 California Legislative and Executive
Read: TBA

12/6 Zoom discussion between interest groups for Paper #2.

12/8 TOPIC 14 The Judicial Branch
Read: AG Chapter 13 (selections posted on Canvas)

Exam #3 due 12/10 (COVERS TOPICS 11-14)
Paper #2 due 12/14
Optional Comprehensive Final Exam due by 12/14
(COVERS TOPICS 1-14)



Stay Curious Reject Cynicism
Embrace Generosity