

# **Introduction to American Government**

**Political Science 102 | Summer 2017**

**CRN#: 30060**

**Mon-Thur 10:00am–12:10pm | Room 411**

**June 19, 2017 | July 27, 2017**

## **Instructor information:**

**Ric Epps, Professor**

**Office: Room 1712**

**Office Hours: M-W, 3:00-4:00pm**

**Phone: 760-355-6284**

**Email: [richard.epps@imperial.edu](mailto:richard.epps@imperial.edu)**

**Please phone or email to arrange appointments**

## **Course Description**

This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions and political processes. We will examine how our political system was designed, how it has changed over time and how public opinion, the media and the "information age" have affected our government institutions and public policy. We will discuss the role and scope of government as the Founders conceived it, and as it is viewed today. Finally, we will examine current policy issues, weigh the costs and benefits of actions and engage in thoughtful discussion of contemporary policies and actions with a view toward how those issues and actions impact the current political scene. To achieve these objectives, I have chosen a textbook that focuses attention on the role of citizens as key actors in the democratic experiment that we call the United States of America.

## **Course Objectives**

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Explain how government impacts your daily life;
- Recognize and evaluate the basic debates and issues in American government and American political history;
- Explain and critically assess the formal and informal political institutions and their respective roles in American politics;
- Identify and describe the key functions of the three branches of government; and
- Assess the causes and consequences of different forms of political participation, and outline the ways in which individuals and groups can affect political outcomes in the United States.

## Course Instructional Methods

This course will consist of a combination of lectures, class discussions, assigned readings, videos, individual projects, out-of-class assignments, and exams. ***The mutual sharing of ideas and respect for diversity of opinions will be encouraged and safeguarded.***

Students are expected to arrive promptly at each class session having completed the assigned readings. Students are advised to take notes from lectures as lecture material is stressed on graded assignments. Student study groups are also encouraged.

**Out of Class Assignments:** The Department of Education policy states that one (1) credit hour is the amount of student work that reasonably approximates not less than one hour of class time and two (2) hours of out-of-class time per week over the span of a semester. WASC has adopted a similar requirement.

## Course Required Text and Materials

Christine Barbour & Gerald C. Wright, **Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics** (Sage CQ Press, 7th edition Brief, 2016).

Renee Van Vechten, **California Politics** (Sage CQ Press, 4th edition, 2017).

## Recommended Resources for Additional Exploration

**The Keeping the Republic student companion website:**

[Barbour Student Study Site \(Links to an external site.\)](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

This site is a particularly good resource for review of course materials.

## Graded Assignments and Course Requirements

The final grade will be the total score of all graded course assignments. The graded assignments will consist of multi-chapter unit exams, discussions, quizzes, group and individual participation, project, class participation, and a final exam (Students will be responsible for providing their own assessment materials including Scantrons and No. 2 pencils). **Extra Credit:** Opportunities for extra credit will be announced during the course.

Quizzes = 100 points

Writing Assignments (5) – (10 points each = 50 points)

Chapter Questions/Discussion (5) – (10 points each = 50 points)

Midterm = 100 points

Final Exam = 100 points

---

**Total = 400 Points**

**ASSIGNMENTS:** Students will be required to submit 5 assignments during the semester. The assignment needs to be about one page in length and must be submitted in .pdf format. Further details of the rules and content format for the assignment will be discussed in class.

**CHAPTER QUESTIONS:** For each chapter, I will post 4 questions that are geared to help students think about the topics discussed in the chapter and to help facilitate discussion in class. Each student is required to answer ALL 4 questions for each of the 4 chapters they will be assigned over the course of the semester. Each question should be answered in about one paragraph or 150 words (1/2 page), and should be typed, double-spaced. Students are also responsible to help guide discussion on their particular chapter; therefore, points will be deducted if the student is not in attendance for their assigned chapter discussion. Further details about the rules of this assignment will be given in class.

**QUIZZES:** Students will be given quizzes throughout the course relating to chapter content.

**EXAMS:** There will be two midterm exams and a final exam. Each will be a combination of identification, short answer and essay questions. The exams are designed to test your familiarity with the lecture material, reading assignments, and your independent ability to apply what you have learned.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to arrive to class on time, with all electronic devices turned off and put away. Since participation in classroom work and discussion is an important part of this course, students will have **10 points deducted** from their class points for each unexcused absence. Students having three unexcused absences may be dropped from the class. Students who are tardy three times will be considered as having been absent once. Absences attributed to the representation of the college at officially approved conferences and contests and attendance upon field trips will not be counted as absences.

**LEAVING CLASS:** Students are expected to remain in the classroom throughout the entire class session. Students leaving the class early, without obtaining approval from the instructor prior to the start of class, will have **5 points deducted** from their total class points each occurrence.

**CELL PHONES and ELECTRONIC DEVICES:** Cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and put away during class, with the exception of laptops or tablets for note taking purposes **only**. Students violating this policy during a class period will have **5 points deducted** from their class points. Students caught doing non-course related work during class will get one warning; a 2nd offense will result in **one full letter grade deduction** from your final grade.

**MAKEUP AND LATE WORK:** The scheduled dates of all exams and written assignments are clearly indicated in this syllabus. No make-up exams or late papers will be accepted without my prior approval.

### **Classroom Etiquette**

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner befitting a college instructor.

- Electronic Devices: Cell phones and electronic devices must be turned off and put away during class, unless otherwise directed by the instructor.
- Food and Drink is prohibited in all classrooms. Water bottles with lids/caps are the only exception.

- Disruptive Students: Students who disrupt or interfere with a class may be sent out of the room and told to meet with the Campus Disciplinary Officer before returning to continue with coursework.
- Children in the classroom: Due to college rules and state laws, no one who is not enrolled in the class may attend, including children.

### **Academic Honesty Policy**

IVC expects honesty and integrity from all students. Anyone caught cheating will receive a zero (0) on the exam or assignment, and the instructor may report the incident to the Campus Disciplinary Officer, who may place related documentation in a file. Repeated acts of cheating may result in an F in the course and/or disciplinary action. Cheating is defined as fraud, deceit, or dishonesty in an academic assignment, or using or attempting to use materials, or assisting others in using materials that are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question.

#### **Acts of cheating include, but are not limited to the following:**

- Plagiarism is defined as taking and presenting, as one's own the writings or ideas of others, without citing the source. You should understand the concept of plagiarism and keep it in mind when taking exams and preparing written materials. If you do not understand how to 'cite a source' correctly, you must ask for help.
- Copying or attempting to copy from others during an examination or on an assignment.
- Communicating test information with another person during an examination.
- Allowing others to do an assignment or portion of an assignment.
- Using a commercial term paper service.

### **Support for Students with Disabilities- DSPS (Disabled Student Programs and Services)**

Any student with a documented disability who may need educational accommodations should notify the instructor or the Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSP&S) office as soon as possible. The DSPS office is located in Building 2100, telephone 760-355-6313, if you feel you need to be evaluated for educational accommodations.

### **Student Counseling and Health Services**

Students have counseling and health services available, provided by the pre -paid Student Health Fee. We now also have a fulltime mental health counselor. For information click here. The IVC Student Health Center is located in the Health Science building in Room 2109, telephone 760-355-6310.

### **Student Rights and Responsibilities**

Students have the right to experience a positive learning environment and due process. For further information regarding student rights and responsibilities, please click here to refer to the IVC General Catalog available online.

## **Information Literacy**

Imperial Valley College is dedicated to helping students skillfully discover, evaluate, and use information from all sources. Students can access tutorials by clicking [here](#).

## **Tentative Class Schedule / Assignments**

The following schedule is subject to change, as the instructor deems necessary in order to more fully integrate the objectives of the course, and to accommodate the scheduling of lecturers, guest speakers, and class trips to campus support systems, student presentations and videos.

### **Session(s) & Date(s):**

#### **Week #1**

ASSIGNMENTS: Introduction to Course

TOPICS: Buy textbook(s): Keeping the Republic 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Barbour  
California Politics 4<sup>th</sup> ed. Van Vechten

ASSIGNMENTS: Barbour: Keeping the Republic

TOPICS: Read Chapters 1 and 2  
-Power and Citizenship in American Politics  
-The Politics of the American Founding

ASSIGNMENTS: Barbour: Keeping the Republic

TOPICS: Read Chapters 3 and 4  
-Federalism  
-Fundamental American Liberties

#### **Week #2**

ASSIGNMENTS: Barbour: Keeping the Republic

TOPICS: Read Chapter 5 and 6  
-The Struggle for Equal Rights  
-Congress

ASSIGNMENTS: Barbour: Keeping the Republic

TOPICS: Read Chapter 7 and 8  
-The Presidency  
-The Bureaucracy

#### **Week #3**

ASSIGNMENTS: Barbour: Keeping the Republic

TOPICS: Read Chapter 9 and 10  
-The American Legal System and the Courts  
-Public Opinion

ASSIGNMENTS: Barbour: Keeping the Republic

TOPICS: Read Chapter 11 and 12

- Parties and Interest Groups
- Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

ASSIGNMENTS: **Midterm 1 Review and Midterm 1 Exam**

TOPICS: chp's 1-6

Week #4

ASSIGNMENTS: Barbour: Keeping the Republic

TOPICS: Read Chapter 13 and 14

- Media, Power, and Political Communication
- Domestic and Foreign Policy

ASSIGNMENTS: Van Vechten:

TOPICS: Read Chapter(s) 1-3

- Introduction
- Critical Junctures
- Direct Democracy

**Week #5**

ASSIGNMENTS: Van Vechten:

TOPICS: Read Chapter(s) 4-6

- The State Legislature
- The Executive Branch
- The Court System

ASSIGNMENTS: Van Vechten:

TOPICS: Read Chapter(s) 7-9

- Other Governments
- The California Budget Process
- Political Parties, Elections, and Campaigns

**Week #6**

ASSIGNMENTS: Van Vechten:

TOPICS: Read Chapter(s) 10-11

- Political Engagement
- Concluding Thoughts: Political Paradoxes
- Direct Democracy

ASSIGNMENTS: **Final Review and Final Exam**

TOPICS: Read Chapter(s) 10-11

- Introduction
- Critical Junctures
- Direct Democracy