



## Basic Course Information

Semester:	<b>Winter 25</b>	Instructor Name:	<b>Dr. Steven Cauchon</b>
Course Title & #:	<b>POLS 110, American Institutions &amp; History</b>	Email:	<b>Steven.cauchon@imperial.edu</b>
CRN #:		Webpage (optional):	
Classroom:	<b>NA</b>	Office #:	<b>1713</b>
Class Dates:	<b>Winter 25</b>	Office Hours:	<b>N/A</b>
Class Days:	<b>NA</b>	Office Phone #:	<b>760-355-6288</b>
Class Times:	Asynchronous	Emergency Contact:	
Units:	4	Class Format:	

## Course Description

This course is designed for students to study the basic concepts in the political and historical traditions of America and California by analyzing national, state, and local political institutions from colonial times to the present. The course examines the evolution of concepts and ideas that are fundamental to our political culture. It emphasizes the concepts citizens should understand in order to vote intelligently and otherwise effectively participate in the political process. This course is designed specifically to satisfy the CSU History, Constitution, and American Ideals requirement. The course is not open to students with credit in POLS 102.

## Student Learning Outcomes

- Describe different instruments of US foreign policy, give examples of their use, explain the role of different institutions in crafting foreign policy, describe different explanations for why a particular policy was made, and evaluate the relative strengths and weaknesses of that policy.
- Describe the system of checks and balances in American government and evaluate how it affects legislation.
- Identify, compare, and contrast the various positions on the ideological spectrum, and apply the core values and beliefs of each position to contemporary political issues.

## Course Objectives

*Assess the contribution of the American colonial experience to contemporary American political culture*

*Analyze the motivations of the founders of the Constitution*

*Distinguish among and analyze federal, confederate, and unitary forms of government; analyze the use of each in U.S. history*

*Analyze American civil liberties civil rights and relate them to historical and contemporary political issues, with a focus on the California experience*

*Distinguish among the major issues regarding slavery from the colonial period to the adoption of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments*

*Analyze American pluralism from its ethnic, gender, and socio-economic perspectives*

*Analyze the role played in American politics historically and contemporarily by major ethnic minority groups, with an emphasis on historically marginalized groups in California*

*Analyze the evolution of the political party system as it relates to specific historical issues, differentiate between liberal and conservative policy options, and analyze the basic motivations in public policy-making*

*Differentiate among the various components of the American electoral machinery and analyze how various ethnic and socio-economic groups relate to them, specifically within the state of California*

*Analyze the development, importance, and effects of public opinion polling and the media in American politics*

*Analyze the evolution, political power, and functions of interest groups*

*Assess the importance and the influence of the media on the American political process, past and present*

*Analyze the legislative, executive, and judicial branches from the perspective of their historical development and as to how they relate to the diverse citizenry*

*Analyze the development of the function and the power of the bureaucracy and its interaction with politicians and the public*

*Analyze fiscal and monetary policy from the perspective of their political and social consequences*

*Analyze the evolution of the American economy and the economic and social consequences of industrialization*

*Analyze the evolution of social policy from political and social perspectives within the state of California and how this experience compares and contrasts with those other states*

*Analyze American foreign policy in its expansionist and imperialist era through its current superpower status*

*Analyze the historical development of California through its Spanish, Mexican, and American eras*

*Assess the social consequences and the public policy implications of California's evolving economic and demographic patterns*

*Analyze and distinguish California state, county, city, and special district governments.*

### Textbooks & Other Resources or Links

- Glen Kurtz and Sylvie Waskiewiz (2019), *American Government 3e*: ISBN-13: 978-1-951693-38-1. [Access to the text is free here](#) and via Canvas.
- Thomas Reeves (2000), *Twentieth-Century America: A Brief History (1<sup>st</sup> ed.)*. ISBN 0195044843. Access is free via IVC Library digital reserves via Canvas.
- Steven Reti (2021). *Introduction to California Government and Politics*. Access to PDF is free to access via Canvas.

### Course Requirements and Instructional Methods

**DISCUSSION POSTS (20%):** Discussion forums will open the Monday of each new module—initial topic replies are due the following Wednesday at 11pm and peer replies are due the following Saturday at 11pm. I will ensure that our discussions are respectful, interactive, and enjoyable. To ensure that we are presenting claims/positions based on evidence, **your posts are expected to cite our textbook and/or the module's associated video(s)** (see assignment instructions in Canvas). Strict plagiarism standards and software is used to check these posts. Please note that I grade whatever initial post students submit to gain access to the discussion forum (even if it is blank, incomplete, etc.) and that posts are not editable, once submitted. **Discussion posts cannot be made up, so please don't wait until the deadlines, or ask for extensions.** However, recognizing that life happens, **we will have an extra credit opportunity that will allow you to make up these points during Module #16** (so there is no need to email why you were unable to post or request for extensions).

**COURSE EXAMS (75%):** You will be given four course exams for this course. Each exam may consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, & quote/clause identification. **The material you will be tested on will be drawn from the readings, lectures, and any supplemental videos associated with the Learning Unit in which each exam is located** (see Assignment Schedule for further details). That being said, you should expect exams that ask you to do more than simply memorize content. Consequently, you will have an entire week to review, prepare for and take the exam, via Canvas, at your own pace (**See below schedule for due dates**).

**California State & Local Government Capstone Project (5%):** Students will complete a capstone project in which they will research a state/local government agency in order to devise a solution to a state/local problem, applying key concepts and historical perspectives learned throughout the course. Please see Canvas for further details.

### Course Grading Based on Course Objectives

Discussion Posts (Weekly)	(20%)
Course Exams (Weekly)	(75%)
CA State & Local Gov't Capstone (Module #16)	(5%)

### Course Policies

#### COMMUNICATION

- *The best way to contact me is through email. I will generally respond to emails Monday – Friday between 7am – 5:30pm within 24 hours of receiving them. If you do not receive a response, please resend or call my office: 760-355-6288.*
- *Email should be used to schedule online office appointments, for short questions clarifying assignments or specific lecture items. In-depth questions about course readings, an entire lecture, etc. are appropriate for office hours, not e-mail. For general questions, please consult the syllabus first and/or use the Cougar Courses Q/A forum or consult your peers first.*
- *Scores of all assignments & exams will be posted on Cougar Courses. If you wish to discuss your grade, please communicate via Cougar Courses or office hours.*
- *If you need accommodations due to disabilities, unforeseen circumstances, etc. be proactive—I can better assist you before, rather than after assignments are due.*

#### DROP POLICY

- *In distance education, our coursework is used to determine your attendance. Students who fail to submit substantive coursework by due dates or complete assignments on the first day may be dropped from the class. Please refer to the class schedule for specific attendance & effective coursework requirements.*

#### STUDENT CONDUCT & ONLINE NETIQUETTE

- *In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. Therefore, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from one*

another. Please respect each other's opinions and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind.

- *Netiquette is internet manners, online etiquette, and digital etiquette all rolled into one word. Our rules of netiquette: (1) identify yourself, (2) include a subject line, (3) avoid sarcasm, (4) respect others' opinions and privacy, (5) acknowledge and return messages promptly, (6) copy with caution, (7) do not spam or junk mail, (8) be concise, (9) use appropriate language, (10) use appropriate emoticons (emotional icons) to help convey meaning, and (11) use appropriate intensifiers to help convey meaning [do not use ALL CAPS or multiple exclamation marks (!!!!)].*

**LATE WORK POLICY**

- *Extensions are granted under extenuating circumstances. Excuses that may prove acceptable include serious injury & family emergencies, serious accident, or the observance of a religious holiday. In order to be excused, you will need to email the original documentation. Unexcused late work may be accepted, but at my discretion.*

**MISSING ASSIGNMENTS & GRADE CHALLENGES**

- *You are responsible for any work lost or late due to technical problems.*
- *Missing assignments and requests to re-grade must be reported/requested within one week of the assessment being graded. Grade challenges must be accompanied with detailed explanation & evidence justifying the request.*

**IVC Student Resources**

IVC wants you to be successful in all aspects of your education. For help, resources, services, and an explanation of policies, visit <http://www.imperial.edu/studentresources> or click the heart icon in Canvas.

**Anticipated Class Schedule/Calendar**

DAY	TOPIC & LEARNING OBJECTIVES	READING	ASSIGNMENT
	<b>LEARNING UNIT #1 (1/2 – 1/5)</b>		
<b>THURSDAY</b>	<p><b>What is Politics &amp; Why Does it Matter?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain what government is and what it does/ought do</li> <li>2. Discuss sources and solutions to collective action problems &amp; conflict</li> <li>3. Describe American political culture &amp; the power of ideas, narratives, and authority</li> </ol>	<p>Syllabus</p> <p><i>American Government,</i> Chapter 1</p>	<p><b>(Please note that due to class starting on Thursday, Discussion #1 and Exam #1 have been removed from this week's assignments)</b></p>



	4. Discuss the is/ought distinction & apply it to American inequality		
<b>FRIDAY</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Constitution &amp; Its Origins</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critically think about circumstances &amp; narratives about the founding of the United States</li> <li>Examine the Articles of Confederation and identify the goals, divisions, &amp; compromises that shaped Constitution.</li> <li>Briefly review key aspects of the U.S. Constitution.</li> <li>Reflect on how we should think about the Constitution and its democratic shortcomings today.</li> <li>Examine how progressivism was beginning to capture the nation's attention in the early 1900s</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government</i>, Chapter 2</p> <p>Reeves, Chapter 1</p>	<p><b>Get 10/10 on syllabus quiz and update profile picture by 11pm next Wednesday for extra credit</b></p>
<b>LEARNING UNITE #2 1/6-1/12</b>			
<b>MONDAY</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>American Federalism &amp; Progressivism</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the foundations of American federalism &amp; the ways in which it divides power between national and state governments.</li> <li>Describe the historical expansion of federalism &amp; the ways in which the national government can influence the states.</li> <li>Explain historical trends in immigration at the state &amp; federal level.</li> <li>Analyze the restrictive &amp; integrative approaches used by states &amp; local governments.</li> <li>Identify the early trials and triumphs of American Progressivism.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government</i>, Chapter 3</p> <p>Reeves Chapters 2 &amp; 3</p>	<p><b>Submit initial post to Discussion #2 by 11 pm Sunday to avoid being dropped</b></p>



<p><b>TUESDAY</b></p>	<p><b>Fundamental Liberties &amp; WWI</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain how the Bill of Rights relates to the federal government and to the states.</li> <li>2. Describe how the First Amendment protects both church and state, as well as individuals' religious freedom.</li> <li>3. Show how the protections of freedom of speech and of the press have been tested.</li> <li>4. Discuss the extent of an individual's right to privacy and bear arms.</li> <li>5. Analyze the impact of WWI on American politics.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 4</i></p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapter 4</i></p>	
<p><b>WEDNESDAY</b></p>	<p><b>Political Parties,</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe political parties and what they do.</li> <li>2. Outline how parties operate as an organization, in government, and in the electorate.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 9</i></p>	<p><b>Discussion #2 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b></p>
<p><b>THURSDAY</b></p>	<p><b>Interest Groups, &amp; the Roaring 20s</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe how interest groups use lobbying activities to get the public policy they want.</li> <li>2. Compare public and private interest groups.</li> <li>3. Examine how the "Roaring 20's" led to the belief that American prosperity was limitless.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 10</i></p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapter 5</i></p>	<p><b>Course Exam #1 Due Sun by 11 pm (This exam will test content from Learning Units #1 and #2)</b></p>
<p><b>FRIDAY</b></p>	<p><b>COURSE EXAM #2</b></p>		<p><b>Complete exam #2 by 11 pm Sunday</b></p>
<p><b>LEARNING UNIT #3 1/13-1/19</b></p>			
<p><b>MONDAY</b></p>	<p><b>Public Opinion &amp; the Great Depression</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze how well American citizens measure up to notions of an "ideal democratic citizen."</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 6</i></p>	



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Describe the principle-agent problem in American politics.</li> <li>3. Discuss how Americans become politically socialized.</li> <li>4. Describe &amp; evaluate different techniques used to gauge public opinion.</li> <li>5. Examine the impact of the Great Depression on American social and economic policy</li> </ol>	Reeves, Chapter 6	
<b>TUESDAY</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Voting, Elections, &amp; WWII</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Analyze the reasons why Americans vote—or don't vote.</li> <li>2. Discuss campaigns, how they are financed, &amp; and their impact on democratic politics</li> <li>3. Explore how POTUS is elected</li> <li>4. Analyze how POTUS is really elected.</li> <li>5. Explore how WWII cemented the US's status as a global superpower.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government,</i> Chapter 7</p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapter 7</i></p>	<b>Discussion #7 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Media &amp; Post WWII Challenges</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the roles and responsibilities of journalists.</li> <li>2. Describe the link between media and politics.</li> <li>3. Discuss the relationship between citizens and the media.</li> <li>4. Examine the challenges facing the US after WWII.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government,</i> Chapter 8</p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapter 8</i></p>	<b>Discussion #3 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>
<b>THURSDAY</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Struggle for Equal Rights &amp; the So-called Best Years</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Summarize key events and outcomes in the struggle for equality of African Americans.</li> <li>2. Outline the criteria used by the courts to determine if and when the law can treat people differently.</li> <li>3. Identify tools used by citizens to expand the promise of civil rights.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government,</i> Chapter 5</p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapters 9 and 10</i></p>	<b>Discussion #9 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Explain the different paths to equality taken by other gender, racial, &amp; marginalized groups</li> <li>5. Analyze how the so-called Best Years depended on one's racial and socio-economic status.</li> </ol>		
<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>COURSE EXAM #3</b>		<b>Complete Course Exam #3 by 11 pm Sunday</b>
	<b>LEARNING UNIT #4 1/21-1/26</b>		
<b>TUESDAY</b>	<p><b>Congress &amp; the Era of Upheaval</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain Congressional power and how it's internal/external checks &amp; balances work.</li> <li>2. Describe the tensions between local representation and national lawmaking.</li> <li>3. Examine how party leadership can influence the legislative process.</li> <li>4. Explore how the political and social upheaval of the 60s lead to the rise of Richard Nixon</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 11</i></p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapters 11 and 12</i></p>	
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<p><b>The Executive,</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compare the modern presidency with the founders' expectations for a limited executive.</li> <li>2. Identify strategies and tools presidents employ to overcome the constitutional limitations of the office.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 12</i></p>	<b>Discussion #4 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>





<p><b>THURSDAY</b></p>	<p><b>The Bureaucracy and the Dynamic Conservatism</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain the characteristics of what the federal bureaucracy is and does</li> <li>2. Compare the spoils &amp; civil service system &amp; discuss the attempts to privatize or eliminate parts of the bureaucracy</li> <li>3. Analyze how the so-called Years of Disillusionment lead to the rise of Dynamic Conservatism.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapters 5</i></p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapter 13</i></p>	
<p><b>FRIDAY</b></p>	<p><b>COURSE EXAM #4</b></p>		<p><b>Complete exam by 11 pm Sunday</b></p>
<p><b>LEARNING UNIT #5 1/27-1/3</b></p>			
<p><b>MONDAY</b></p>	<p><b>The Courts &amp; The Close of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Explain how the courts operate.</li> <li>2. Outline the institutional rules and political influences that shape the Supreme Court.</li> <li>3. Evaluate Hamilton’s claim that the judiciary was the “least dangerous branch of government.”</li> <li>4. Examine how the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century relates to ongoing issues in the 21<sup>st</sup>.</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 13</i></p> <p><i>Reeves, Chapters 14 and 15</i></p>	
<p><b>TUESDAY</b></p>	<p><b>California State &amp; Local Gov’t</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outline the unique features of California’s state &amp; local gov’t</li> <li>2. Discuss how one can have an impact on state &amp; local politics</li> </ol>	<p><i>American Government, Chapter 14</i></p> <p>Reti, Chapters 1 and 10</p>	



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<p><b>WEDNESDAY</b></p>	<p><b>California State of Mind</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review the unique history of California through the lens of Governor Pat Brown</li> <li>2. Examine the impact that water, infrastructure, and social movements had had on California politics</li> </ol>	<p>Watch California State of Mind Via Canvas</p>	<p><b>Discussion #5 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b></p> <p><b>California State of Mind Extra Credit quiz Wednesday by 11 pm</b></p>
<p><b>THURSDAY</b></p>	<p><b>CA Gov't Capstone</b></p>		<p><b>CA Capstone due Thursday by 11 pm</b></p>
<p><b>FRIDAY</b></p>	<p><b>COURSE EXAM #5</b></p>		<p><b>Course Exam #5 due 11 PM Sunday</b></p>
<p><b>MONDAY</b></p>	<p><b>Concluding Remarks</b></p>		

**\*\*\*Subject to change without prior notice\*\*\***