

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT & POLITICS, POLS C1000

## IVC, SPRING 2026 (8 WEEKS, ONLINE)<sup>1</sup>

**Professor:** Steven Paul Cauchon

**Phone:** 760-355-6288

**Office Hours:** M. 9 -10 AM & 1- 4 PM [via Zoom](#)

**Office:** 1713

**Email:** [steven.cauchon@imperial.edu](mailto:steven.cauchon@imperial.edu),  
(Canvas Inbox for quicker response)

---

### COURSE OVERVIEW & OBJECTIVES

Welcome to our course! We will begin our journey by discussing the origin, development and operation of government and political institutions in the United States. As we continue on, you will learn more about the foundation of the American regime and the ideas, interests, & circumstances that helped shape it. You will also learn to analyze political behavior and the formal structures and institutions that make up the American political system. Throughout this journey, we will engage some of today's most pressing issues: immigration, gun control, and the rise of social media in politics. By the time you have finished this course, you will have an improved understanding of American politics, a more developed political voice, and an increased interest in civic engagement!

---

### TEXTS

- Glen Krutz and Sylvie Waskiewiz (2019), *American Government 3e*: ISBN-13: 978-1-951693-38-1. [Access to the text is free here](#) and via Canvas.
- All other course readings will be posted on Canvas within each module.

---

### STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Develop an understanding of civic responsibility
- Participate in activities that promote the public good (e.g. the voting process, jury duty, community service)
- Examine the election and voting process

---

<sup>1</sup> All course materials and lectures are protected by copyright and may not be reproduced or distributed without my written consent.

---

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- The significance of the Declaration of Independence concerning the American political philosophy.
- The Articles of Confederation and the principal reasons why they were replaced by the Constitution.
- The significant features of the Constitution and the major ways that the Constitution changes.
- The concept of federalism and how it has changed throughout American history.
- The significance of the Bill of Rights, and the continuing debate over civil liberties.
- The role of public opinion and the media in the American political system.
- The importance of the American political parties, lobbying, and interest groups.
- The American election process, including political campaigning and voter behavior.
- The formal structure of the Congress and the committee system, the legislative process, and congressional powers.
- The principal powers of the presidency and how they expanded dramatically in the 20th century.
- The American bureaucracy.
- The American judicial system and how it is affected by critical issues in American society.
- The organizational structure, powers, and challenges confronting California's state and local governments.

**CREDIT HOUR STATEMENT:** Students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least nine hours a week engaged in the below assignments and course content.

---

## COURSE GRADING & REQUIREMENTS<sup>2</sup>

Discussion Posts (Weekly)	(25%)
Course Exam #1 (See schedule below)	(25%)
Course Exam #2 (See schedule below)	(25%)
Course Exam #3 (See schedule below)	(25%)

**DISCUSSION POSTS (25%):** Discussion forums open each Monday with **initial posts due Wednesday by 11:00 PM** and **peer replies due Saturday by 11:00 PM**. To ensure our conversations are grounded in evidence, your initial post must **cite the textbook and/or the module's associated video(s)** (see Canvas for specific instructions). Please be aware that **your first submitted post is the one that will be graded**, even if it is blank or incomplete, and posts cannot be edited after submission. **Plagiarism and AI-detection tools** are used for all discussion posts. Because discussion forums are time-sensitive and depend on peer interaction, **missed posts cannot be made up**. However, to support you throughout the semester, **your lowest discussion post grade will be dropped automatically**. Students requesting an extension or makeup for this assignment will be referred to the syllabus policy.

**COURSE EXAMS (75%):** Exams may include multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short-answer questions drawn from the readings, lectures, and supplemental videos for that Learning Unit. Exams are taken through a Canvas-supported online proctoring system; further instructions will be provided in Canvas. Students must have a compatible computer or laptop and stable internet connection, though no camera, microphone, or personal identification is required. Except for the final Course Exam, each exam remains open until the next exam becomes available, and a late penalty is automatically applied each day it is late; because this applies to all situations, **do not message about missed deadlines**. Only catastrophic situations with verifiable documentation presented during office hours may receive further consideration, and **all extension or make-up request messages will be referred to this policy**. If you experience technical issues before or during the exam, you must first contact Canvas Support and then provide me with the case number so I can investigate. Once an exam is started, it cannot be reset or made up, and **personal technical issues are not grounds for accommodation**. For reliable computers and internet access, I strongly recommend using the campus library. For dates, please see the Assignment Schedule

### GRADE SCALE

A+ = 100 – 97%	B = 86.9 – 84%	C- = 73.9 – 70%
A = 96.9 – 94%	B- = 83.9 – 80%	D+ = 69.9 – 67%
A- = 93.9 – 90%	C+ = 79.9 – 77%	D = 66.9 – 60%
B+ = 89.9 – 87%	C = 76.9 – 74%	F = 59.9% and Below

---

<sup>2</sup> Please note that if extra credit is given, no category can exceed 100% in one's grade calculation. I reserve the right to make changes to the below assignments in order accommodate class progress and/or scheduling changes. Check Canvas for more details about each assignment.

---

## EXPECTATIONS & IMPORTANT POLICIES<sup>3</sup>

### COMMUNICATION

- **The best way to contact me is through Canvas Inbox.** I will generally respond to messages 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. Make sure your phone message is also sent via Canvas Inbox as my ability to respond to voicemails and texts are limited.
- Canvas Inbox is for short questions clarifying assignments, grading inquiries, or specific lecture items. **In-depth questions about course readings, an entire lecture, etc. are appropriate for office hours.** For general questions, please **consult the syllabus first** and use the **Canvas Q/A forum to consult your peers.**
- Scores of all assignments & exams will be posted on Canvas. If you wish to discuss your grade, please communicate via Canvas or office hours. Once grades are posted, **use Inbox, not “assignment comments,” in Canvas to communicate as I no longer see these comments after an assignment is graded.**
- If you need accommodations due to disabilities, unforeseen circumstances, etc. be proactive—I can better assist you before, rather than after assignments are due. Any disability accommodation must have approval from our disability services office before the assignment becomes available for it to be applicable.

### DROP POLICY

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

### STUDENT CONDUCT & ONLINE NETIQUETTE

- 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 must 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 & MISSING ASSIGNMENTS

- Students are responsible for any work lost or late due to technical problems. Please see each assignment’s detailed policy above.
- Students can’t make up or submit late assignments that are due in final week of our course due to grade submission deadlines. Any accommodation for this week must be submitted before the end of the final week, via office hour.

---

<sup>3</sup> See end of syllabus for more details on college and course policies

## ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Dates highlighted in green are first 8-week session, yellow for second 8-week session.

MODULE, WEEK, & DATE	LEARNING UNIT, TOPIC & LEARNING OBJECTIVES	READING	ASSIGNMENT
	<b>LEARNING UNIT #1</b>		
<b>WEEK #1</b>			
<b>Module #0</b> <span style="background-color: green;">2/16</span> <span style="background-color: yellow;">4/20</span>	<b>Introduction to the Course</b> 1. Discuss how to be successful in this course 2. Learn about your instructor and your fellow peers	Syllabus	<b>Complete syllabus quiz to avoid being dropped</b>
<b>Module #1</b> <span style="background-color: green;">2/16</span> <span style="background-color: yellow;">4/20</span>	<b>What is Politics &amp; Why Does it Matter?</b> 1. Explain what government is and what it does/ought do 2. Discuss sources and solutions to collective action problems & conflict 3. Describe American political culture & the power of ideas, narratives, and authority 4. Discuss the is/ought distinction & apply it to American inequality	<i>American Government</i> , Chapter 1	<b>Discussion Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>
<b>WEEK #2</b>			
<b>Module #2</b> <span style="background-color: green;">2/23</span> <span style="background-color: yellow;">4/27</span>	<b>The Constitution &amp; Its Origins</b> 1. Critically think about circumstances & narratives about the founding of the United States	<i>American Government</i> , Chapter 2	<b>Discussion Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Examine the Articles of Confederation and identify the goals, divisions, &amp; compromises that shaped Constitution.</li> <li>3. Briefly review key aspects of the U.S. Constitution.</li> <li>4. Reflect on how we should think about the Constitution and its democratic shortcomings today.</li> </ol>		
<b>Module #3</b> <span style="background-color: #90EE90;">2/23</span> <span style="background-color: #FFFF00;">4/27</span>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>American Federalism</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the foundations of American federalism &amp; the ways in which it divides power between national and state governments.</li> <li>2. Describe the historical expansion of federalism &amp; the ways in which the national government can influence the states.</li> <li>3. Explain historical trends in immigration at the state &amp; federal level.</li> <li>4. Analyze the restrictive &amp; integrative approaches used by states &amp; local governments.</li> </ol>	<i>American Government,</i> Chapter 3	
<b>WEEK #3</b>			
<b>Module #4</b> <span style="background-color: #90EE90;">3/2</span> <span style="background-color: #FFFF00;">5/4</span>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fundamental Liberties</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> </ol>	<i>American Government,</i> Chapter 4	<b>Discussion</b> <b>Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>

	4. Discuss the extent of an individual's right to privacy and bear arms.		
<b>Module #5</b> 3/2 5/4	<p align="center"><b>Political Parties</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe political parties and what they do.</li> <li>Outline how parties operate as an organization, in government, and in the electorate.</li> <li>Describe how interest groups use lobbying activities to get the public policy they want.</li> <li>Compare public and private interest groups.</li> </ol>	<i>American Government, Chapter 9</i>	
<b>Module #6</b> 3/2 5/4	<p align="center"><b>Interest Groups</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe how interest groups use lobbying activities to get the public policy they want.</li> <li>Compare public and private interest groups.</li> </ol>	<i>American Government, Chapter 10</i>	<b>Course Exam #1 Due Friday by 5 pm</b>
<b>LEARNING UNIT #2</b>			
<b>WEEK #4</b>			
<b>Module #7</b> 3/9 5/11	<p align="center"><b>Public Opinion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze how well American citizens measure up to notions of an "ideal democratic citizen."</li> <li>Describe the principle-agent problem in American politics.</li> <li>Discuss how Americans become politically socialized.</li> <li>Describe &amp; evaluate different techniques used to gauge public opinion.</li> </ol>	<i>American Government, Chapter 6</i>	<b>Discussion Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>
<b>Module #8</b> 3/9 5/11	<p align="center"><b>Voting &amp; Elections</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the reasons why Americans vote—or don't vote.</li> <li>Discuss campaigns, how they are financed, &amp; and their impact on democratic politics</li> </ol>	<i>American Government, Chapter 7</i>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore how POTUS is elected</li> <li>Analyze how POTUS is really elected.</li> </ol>		
<b>WEEK #5</b>			
<b>Module #9</b> <span style="background-color: yellow;">3/16</span> <span style="background-color: yellow;">5/18</span>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Media</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain the roles and responsibilities of journalists.</li> <li>Describe the link between media and politics.</li> <li>Discuss the relationship between citizens and the media.</li> </ol>	<i>American Government,</i> Chapter 8	<b>Discussion</b> <b>Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>
<b>WEEK #6</b>			
<b>Module #10</b> <span style="background-color: yellow;">3/23</span> <span style="background-color: yellow;">5/25</span>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Struggle for Equal Rights</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Summarize key events and outcomes in the struggle for equality of African Americans.</li> <li>Outline the criteria used by the courts to determine if and when the law can treat people differently.</li> <li>Identify tools used by citizens to expand the promise of civil rights.</li> <li>Explain the different paths to equality taken by other gender, racial, &amp; marginalized groups.</li> </ol>	<i>American Government,</i> Chapter 5	<b>Discussion</b> <b>Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b>  <b>Course Exam #2</b> <b>Due Friday by 5 pm</b>
<b>LEARNING UNIT #3</b>			
<b>WEEK #7</b>			

<p><b>Module #11</b>  <b>3/30</b>  <b>6/1</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Congress</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> </ol>	<p><i>American Government,</i>  Chapter 11</p>	<p><b>Discussion</b>  <b>Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b></p>
<p><b>Module #12</b>  <b>3/30</b>  <b>6/1</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><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,</i>  Chapters 12</p>	
<p><b>Module #13</b>  <b>3/30</b>  <b>6/1</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Bureaucracy</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> </ol>	<p><i>American Government,</i>  Chapters 15</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4/6</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>BREAK</b></p>		
<b>WEEK #8</b>			
<p><b>Module #14</b>  <b>4/13</b>  <b>6/8</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The Courts</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> </ol>	<p><i>American Government,</i> Chapter 13</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Discussion Wed/Sat by 11 pm</b></p>
<p><b>Module #15</b>  <b>4/13</b>  <b>6/8</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><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,</i> Chapter 14</p>	
<p><b>Module #16</b>  <b>4/13</b>  <b>6/8</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><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 style="text-align: center;"><b>Final Exam Due Friday by 5 pm</b></p>

---

## GENERAL POLICIES & INFORMATION

### GRADE SCALE

A+ = 100 – 97%  
A = 96.9 – 94%  
A- = 93.9 – 90%  
B+ = 89.9 – 87%

B = 86.9 – 84%  
B- = 83.9 – 80%  
C+ = 79.9 – 77%  
C = 76.9 – 74%

C- = 73.9 – 70%  
D+ = 69.9 – 67%  
D = 66.9 – 60%  
F = 59.9% and Below

### ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

IVC values critical thinking and communication skills and considers academic integrity essential to learning. Using **AI tools** as a replacement for your own thinking, writing, or quantitative reasoning goes against both our mission and academic honesty policy and will be considered academic dishonesty, or plagiarism unless you have been instructed to do so by your instructor. In case of any uncertainty regarding the ethical use of AI tools, students are encouraged to reach out to their instructors for clarification.

**Plagiarism** is to take and present 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 correctly 'cite a source', you must ask for help. **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, or assisting others in using materials, which are prohibited or inappropriate in the context of the academic assignment in question. Anyone caught cheating or 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. Please refer to the General School Catalog for more information on academic dishonesty or other misconduct. Acts of cheating include, but are not limited to the following: (a) plagiarism; (b) copying or attempting to copy from others during an examination or on an assignment ;(c) communicating test information with another person during an examination; (d) allowing others to do an assignment or portion of an assignment, (e) use of a commercial term paper service.

### 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 DSP&S 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.

- [Student Health Center](#). A Student Health Nurse is available on campus. In addition, Pioneers Memorial Healthcare District provide basic health services for

students, such as first aid and care for minor illnesses. Contact the IVC [Student Health Center](#) at 760-355-6128 in Room 1536 for more information.

- [Mental Health Counseling Services](#). Short-term individual, couples, family and group counseling services are available for currently enrolled students. Services are provided in a confidential, supportive, and culturally sensitive environment. Please contact the IVC Mental Health Counseling Services at 760-355-6310 or in the building 1536 for appointments or more information.

#### **ATTENDANCE**

- A student who fails to attend the first meeting of a class or does not complete the first mandatory activity of an online class may be dropped by the instructor as of the first official meeting of that class. Should readmission be desired, the student's status will be the same as that of any other student who desires to add a class. It is the student's responsibility to drop or officially withdraw from the class. See [General Catalog](#) for details.
- Regular attendance in all classes is expected of all students. A student whose continuous, unexcused absences exceed the number of hours the class is scheduled to meet per week may be dropped. For online courses, students who fail to complete required activities for two consecutive weeks may be considered to have excessive absences and may be dropped.
- Absences attributed to the representation of the college at officially approved events (conferences, contests, and field trips) will be counted as 'excused' absences.

#### **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 refer to the IVC General Catalog available at [http://www.imperial.edu/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=4516&Itemid=762](http://www.imperial.edu/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=4516&Itemid=762)

#### **INFORMATION LITERACY**

Imperial Valley College is dedicated to help students skillfully discover, evaluate, and use information from all sources. Students can access tutorials at <http://www.imperial.edu/courses-andprograms/divisions/arts-and-letters/library-department/info-lit-tutorials/>

#### **VETERANS CENTER**

The mission of the IVC Military and Veteran Success Center is to provide a holistic approach to serving military/veteran students on three key areas: 1) Academics, 2) Health and Wellness, and 3) Camaraderie; to serve as a central hub that connects military/veteran students, as well as their families, to campus and community resources. Their goal is to ensure a seamless transition from military to civilian life. The Center is located in Building 600 (Office 624), telephone 760-355-6141.

#### **EXTENDED OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM AND SERVICES (EOPS)**

The Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) offers services such as priority registration, personal/academic counseling, tutoring, book vouchers, and community referrals to qualifying low-income students. EOPS is composed of a group of professionals ready to assist you with the resolution of both academic and personal

issues. Our staff is set up to understand the problems of our culturally diverse population and strives to meet student needs that are as diverse as our student population. Also under the umbrella of EOPS our CARE (Cooperative Agency Resources for Education) Program for single parents is specifically designed to provide support services and assist with the resolution of issues that are particular to this population. Students that are single parents receiving TANF/Cash Aid assistance may qualify for our CARE program, for additional information on CARE please contact Lourdes Mercado, 760-355- 6448, [lourdes.mercado@imperial.edu](mailto:lourdes.mercado@imperial.edu). EOPS provides additional support and services that may identify with one of the following experiences:

- Current and former foster youth students that were in the foster care system at any point in their lives
- Students experiencing homelessness
- Formerly incarcerated students

To apply for EOPS and for additional information on EOPS services, please contact Alexis Ayala, 760-355-5713, [alexis.ayala@imperial.edu](mailto:alexis.ayala@imperial.edu).

### **STUDENT EQUITY PROGRAMS**

- The Student Equity Program strives to improve Imperial Valley College's success outcomes, particularly for students who have been historically underrepresented and underserved. The college identifies strategies to monitor and address equity issues, making efforts to mitigate any disproportionate impact on student success and achievement. Our institutional data provides insight surrounding student populations who historically, are not fully represented. Student Equity addresses disparities and/or disproportionate impact in student success across disaggregated student equity groups including gender, ethnicity, disability status, financial need, Veterans, foster youth, homelessness, and formerly incarcerated students. The Student Equity Program provides direct supportive services to empower students experiencing insecurities related to food, housing, transportation, textbooks, and shower access. We recognize that students who struggle meeting their basic needs are also at an academic and economic disadvantage, creating barriers to academic success and wellness. We strive to remove barriers that affect IVC students' access to education, degree and certificate completion, successful completion of developmental math and English courses, and the ability to transfer to a university. Contact: 760.355.5736 or 760.355.5733 Building 100.
- The Student Equity Program also houses IVC's Homeless Liaison, who provides direct services, campus, and community referrals to students experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act. Contact: 760.355.5736 Building 100.