

SYLLABUS FOR POLS 102:

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

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Office Hours: By appointment only

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine the origin, development and operation of local, state and national political institutions within the United States, emphasizing the contemporary operations of the American political system. Students will gain an understanding of important American documents, the rights and powers provided therein, and the structure of the American system of government.

The goal of this course is to foster informed, responsible participation in public life. Knowing how to be a good citizen is essential to the preservation and improvement of the United States' democracy. Upon completion of this course, students will understand the major ideas, protections, privileges, and structures that affect the life of a citizen in the United States political system.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. **H&H:** A More Perfect Union, First Edition, McGraw-Hill Publishing, 2011.
Authors: Harrison and Harris.
ISBN #978-0-07-352638-6.
2. **Giventer:** Governing California, 2nd Edition, McGraw-Hill Publishing, 2008.
Author: Giventer, Lawrence.
ISBN #978-0-07-352633-1.

BASIC CLASSROOM RULES:

- ✓ Arrive in class on time with cell phones and mp3 players turned off and put away
- ✓ Remain in your seat until excused by the instructor
- ✓ Be respectful of EVERYONE
- ✓ Actively listen to and participate in classroom discussion and activities

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLO's) FOR THE COURSE

Outcome 1:	Develop an understanding of civic responsibility.
Outcome 2:	Participate in activities that promote the public good (e.g., the voting process, jury duty, community service).
Outcome 3:	Examine the election and voting process.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

Objective 1	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the early history of the United States of America including the history, meaning, and significance of the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the US Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
Objective 2	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history of federalism and its continuing importance in the United States today.
Objective 3	Students will demonstrate an understanding of past and present conflicts over the meaning and protection of Civil Liberties.
Objective 4	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the role of public opinion and the media in the American political system.
Objective 5	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of American political parties, lobbying, and interest groups.
Objective 6	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the American election process, including political campaigning and voter behavior.
Objective 7	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the formal structure of Congress and the committee system, the legislative process and congressional powers.
Objective 8	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the principal powers of the executive branch of the United States government including the ever expanding power of the president and the federal bureaucracy.
Objective 9	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the American judicial system and how it is affected by critical issues in American society.
Objective 10	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the organizational structure, powers, and challenges confronting California's state and local governments.

COURSE EVALUATION:

ASSIGNMENT:

PERCENT OF TOTAL GRADE:

Three non-cumulative exams	60% (20% each)
One smaller exam on California politics	15%
Weekly quizzes	15%
Attendance/participation	10%
Optional writing assignment	Up to 5% Extra Credit
Documentation of community service	Up to 5% Extra Credit

Exams:

The majority of your grade will be based on your performance on several in-class exams. These exams will be non-cumulative and will likely be a mix of matching, multiple choice, short answer and short essay questions.

Quizzes:

We will complete a quiz in class almost every week. Your top ten quiz scores will be averaged together to determine your overall quiz grade.

Attendance/Participation:

Ten percent of your overall grade is based upon your attendance and participation in class. If you need to miss class for any reason, arrangements must be made with your instructor BEFORE your absence if you expect to have that absence excused. Except in cases of emergency, you will only be allowed make up exams and the like if you speak to the instructor about your planned absence ahead of time. Look at the schedule below and plan accordingly!

Optional Writing Assignment:

Students can earn a total of five percent of extra credit by completing an optional writing assignment toward the latter end of the semester. Details will be forthcoming, but the assignment will likely involve an essay of around 1,000 words on a current controversial topic. The assignment will require significant research outside of class.

Community Service Assignment:

One student learning outcome for this course is to participate in activities that promote the public good. Each student will be required to do something to help the community. Documentation of up to ten hours of service can be used to earn extra credit in the class. Details to follow.

Other Minor Assignments:

Just because an assignment isn't listed above doesn't mean I can't assign it to you. It is essential that you come to class everyday to learn about any other possible work that may be assigned throughout the semester.

A WARNING ABOUT CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM:

If any student is caught cheating or engaging in plagiarism in my class at any time or in any way that student will immediately be issued a failing grade for the entire course. If any student is caught helping another student to cheat or engage in plagiarism that student will also immediately be issued a failing grade for the entire course. I will also report cheaters and plagiarists to the college administration and do everything in my power to get them expelled from IVC. If you have ANY question about what constitutes cheating or plagiarism then speak to me immediately. I will not listen to excuses and justifications after the fact and I will not show mercy. **DO NOT test me on this issue.**

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Students have the right to experience a positive learning environment; students who disrupt that environment can be asked to leave the class. Harassment of any kind will not be tolerated. Faculty and students also have the right of due process. For further information regarding student rights and responsibilities please refer to the IVC General Catalog available online at www.imperial.edu.

DISABLED STUDENT PROGRAMS AND SERVICES:

Every effort has been made to ensure that this course is accessible to all students, including students with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability who may need educational accommodations should notify the instructor and the Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSP&S) office as soon as possible. The DSP&S office is located in Building 2100, telephone 760-355-6312.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE:

Please note that while I will try to follow this outline as strictly as possible, I reserve the right to change certain reading assignments, due dates, etc. if necessary. Any changes will be announced in class in as timely a manner as possible.

Week 1 (August 20):

Intro to the Course and Instructor

Required Reading: H&H Chapter 1

Week 2 (August 27):

The History and Importance of the US Constitution

Required Reading: H&H Chapter 2

Week 3 (September 3):

Federalism

Required Reading: H&H Chapter 3

Week 4 (September 10):

The Bill of Rights and the History of Civil Rights in America

Required Reading: H&H Chapters 4&5

Exam I Review

Week 5 (September 17):

EXAM I

Week 6 (September 24):

Public Opinion and the Media

Required Reading: H&H Chapters 6 & 10

Week 7 (October 1):

Interest Groups and Political Parties

Required Reading: H&H Chapters 7 & 8

Week 8 (October 8):

Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Required Reading: H&H Chapter 9

Exam II Review

Week 9 (October 15):

EXAM II

Week 10 (October 22):

The Legislative Branch

Required Reading: H&H Chapter 11

Week 11 (October 29):

The Executive Branch

Required Reading: H&H Chapters 12 & 13

Week 12 (November 5):

The Judicial Branch

Required Reading: H&H Chapter 14

Exam III Review

Week 13 (November 12):

Exam III

Week 14 &15 (November 19 & 26):

The State of California

Required Reading: Giventer (all)

Last day of class (December 3):

EXAM IV ON CALIFORNIA

EXTRA CREDIT ASSIGNMENTS DUE