Course Syllabus

Political Science 2—American Government

Course: Political Science 2

Instructor: Dr. Kathleen L. Reyna

Email: Kathleen.Reyna@scccd.edu

**Texts / Readings**

**Required:**

Federal Government Textbook**: Keeping the Republic, 8th Author Christine Barbour/Gerald Wright**.

(A California book is also sold in the Madera bookstore as part of the bundle. These books are to be returned as a set if you are selling back)

California Textbook: **California Politics: A Primer; Author: Renee Van Vechten**

Selected readings may be posted to Blackboard or assigned prior to class by the instructor.

Recommended Resources:

Student Resource for Text: https://edge.sagepub.com/barbour8e

Collegiate dictionary ● a reputable newspaper or news magazine

Writer’s style manual (includes APA format) ● further recommendations may be announced.

**Course Description:**

This course is designed as an introduction to this nation’s governmental institutions and political processes.

It will have four major foci. First, we will be examining the theoretical and constitutional basis of the American political system. Second, we will examine the institutional structure of our national government--Congress, the Executive, and the Supreme Court. Third (to be divided into two sections), we will be focusing on how Americans seek to translate their political aspirations and beliefs into governmental policy--the meaning of elections, the significance of political parties and interest groups, and the role of public opinion in our political system as “policy inputs,” and what these factors mean to the character of foreign and domestic policy. Finally, we will review significant controversies that have contributed to our fundamental legal character (civil liberties and civil rights).

As specified in the college’s course outline of record for this class, upon successful completion of this class a student will be able to:

Recognize the basic principles of democracy in the United States.

Understand the checks and balances system, recognizing how each branch of government functions in relation to the other two branches. Students will identify the key responsibilities and limitations of each branch.

Be able to discuss the relationship between public opinion and policy outcomes in the United States.

Be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the American two-party system and the effects of so-called “third party” movements.

Be aware of the impact of interest groups on American government and in American politics, including a developed appreciation of the role of the First Amendment in protecting group activities.

Be able to apply his/her knowledge of the evolution of civil rights in the United States to current events.

Recognize the importance of the Bill of Rights in guaranteeing civil liberties in the United States.

Be acquainted with the key elements of domestic and foreign policy, and relate how events can dictate our government’s priorities.

Appreciate the relationship between voting and the development of public policy, both in the United States and in California.

Recognize the issues/factors at play concerning the relationship between media and public opinion.

My goal in teaching this course is to help you further develop your analytical skills and ability to clearly state and argue your viewpoints based on a working knowledge of the materials.

What I expect from you as a political science student : (1) a commitment to complete all reading assignments in a timely and thorough manner; (2) once the reading is completed, I expect you to be able to participate in class room discussion and base your opinions, statements or answers on the readings completed; (3) I also expect that you refrain from rushing to judgments or conclusions until you are satisfied with the amount of information that allows you to make an informed and defensible stance; (4) I encourage you to question the assumptions that many would blindly accept.

Basis for Evaluation:

Assignment points each total points

4 California Summaries 25 100 (10%)

4 Federal Examinations 100 400 (40%)

1 Final Examination 200 200 (20%)

Research Project Paper 150 150 (15%)

Participation / Conduct ----- 150 (15%)

TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE 1000 (100%)

Point Range Percentage Final Grade

1000 – 900 100 – 90% A

899 – 800 89 – 80% B

799 – 700 79 – 70% C

699 – 600 69 -60% D

599 and below 59% and below F

**Summaries**:

Students will prepare four written summaries dealing with California politics throughout the term. Students will be advised of topics prior to the due date. A quiz may be substituted for the summaries. Quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions taken from either lecture materials, reading assignments or specific postings to the Blackboard system. Students will be made aware of this change in advance IF it occurs.

**Examinations:**

There will be four 100-point examinations and a 200-point FINAL examination. All students will need either a Scantron form 882-E AND/OR a “Blue Book” for all examinations. Students should have in their possession both Scantron and Bluebook on the day of the exam.

***MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS WILL ONLY BE GIVEN UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES***. Some official verification of the need to miss the exam will be required before a make-up exam is approved by the Instructor. Verification (example: doctor’s notes) does NOT guarantee a make-up. If approved, a make-up examination must be completed within a reasonable time of the original date of administration. If prior accommodations are not made with the instructor, student will not be given the opportunity to make-up the missed exam and will receive a zero (0) for the testing assignment.

**Research Project:**

The research paper is a CRITICAL ANALYSIS paper that should reflect the students understanding of the class and its fundamental principles. Let me remind you of the weight of points assigned to this project and the impact that it has upon your grade. All submitted projects MUST include “works cited” and appropriate citations noting the materials used for the final draft. The entirety of the paper and ALL citations must be formatted according to American Psychological Association (APA) specifications.

When submitted, these materials should be typed in 12-point font, 1.5 spacing, and have 1” margins. I understand that APA formatting specifies 2.0 spacing, I will accept either, however I prefer 1.5. I will pay close attention to margins and font. Students must use complete sentences and paragraphs. These materials will be graded primarily on content, completeness and ambition of the topic to be addressed; however, a small portion of your grade will be based on grammar, spelling, and overall presentation.

PLEASE NOTE: ALL RESEARCH PROJECTS MUST BE SUBMITTED AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS ON THE DESIGNATED DUE DATE (5 minutes after class begins will be considered late), AND LATE PROJECTS WILL HAVE POINTS DEDUCTED;

ALL STUDENTS MUST SUBMIT A RESEARCH PAPER IN ORDER TO RECEIVE EXTRA CREDIT FOR THIS CLASS. IF A PAPER IS NOT SUBMITTED, A ZERO WILL BE GIVEN IN THE RESEARCH PORTION AND ALL EXTRA CREDIT POINTS MAY REMOVED.

**Participation, Conduct, and Attendance**

Participation:

An important part of the course is student participation. Everyone is required to answer questions and offer input regarding the subject matter and materials assigned. This includes the turning in of assigned work such as summaries, tests and papers. If materials are not turned in, this will affect your participation points. At a minimum, a good way to ensure your ability to participate effectively in class discussions would be to take five to ten minutes prior to the class beginning and review your notes from reading assignments. I also encourage you to outline each chapter and/or jot down notes to aid you in the recall of information. In addition, I will call on students to respond to questions posed in class, so you should always be ready to answer. I will allow you to glance at any notes or materials that you have used to prepare for class, however I strongly encourage you to have a working knowledge of the materials that a quick and thoughtful answer can be given.

Because of my background, I use a teaching method known as the “Socratic Method” and have included a quick synopsis of what this format entails, please read it carefully, as it will aid you in understanding my approach in class.

\*The Socratic Method is widely used in contemporary legal education by many law schools in the United States. In a typical class setting, the professor asks a question and calls on a student who may or may not have volunteered an answer. The professor either then continues to ask the student questions or moves on to another student.

The employment of the Socratic Method has some uniform features but can also be heavily influenced by the temperament of the teacher. The method begins by calling on a student at random, and asking about a central argument or idea of the assigned readings. The first step is to ask the student to paraphrase the information, in order to ensure that the student has read and has a basic understanding of the facts. (Students who have not read, for whatever reason, must take the opportunity to "pass," which most professors allow as a matter of course a few times per term.) Assuming the student has read and can articulate the information requested, the teacher then may ask if the student agrees with the information relayed. The teacher then typically plays Devil's advocate, trying to force the student to defend his or her position by rebutting arguments against it.

These subsequent questions can take a few forms. Sometimes they seek to challenge the assumptions upon which the student based the previous answer until it breaks. Further questions can also be designed to move a student toward greater specificity, either in understanding a rule, an idea or an argument. The teacher may attempt to propose a hypothetical situation in which the student's assertion would seem to demand an exception. Finally professors use the Socratic Method to allow students to come to solid principles on their own through carefully worded questions that spur a particular train of thought.

One hallmark of Socratic questioning is that typically there is more than one "correct" answer and more often, no clear answer at all. The primary goal of the Socratic Method is not to answer usually unanswerable questions, but to explore the contours of often difficult issues and to teach students the critical thinking skills they will need. This method encourages students to go beyond memorizing the facts of a book and instead focus on application of knowledge to tangible fact patterns.

Sometimes, the class ends with a quick discussion of doctrinal foundations to anchor the students in the understanding of an issue. In other classes the class simply ends and students are forced to figure out for themselves the ideas and principles that were at issue.

For this method to work, the students are expected to be prepared for class in advance by reading the assigned materials and by familiarizing themselves with the general outlines of the subject matter.

Conduct:

A guaranteed way to lower your grade is to conduct yourself in an inappropriate manner in the classroom. Inappropriate behavior such as reading, talking, placing your head on desks as if sleeping, writing letters, text messaging, etc., during class, or failure to treat everyone in the classroom with respect will affect your grade negatively, as will cheating on exams or instances of plagiarism in out-of-class writing assignments.

Cheating is defined as “the willful and intentional practice of fraudulent and deceptive acts for the

purposes of improving a grade or obtaining course credit.” Cheating is NOT limited to examinations only.

It includes any act in which you engage for the purposes of obtaining unearned academic credit. For further discussion of this concept, please refer to the Reedley College Catalog.

Plagiarism is defined as “fraudulently representing someone else’s writing or other scholarly material as your own.” In other words, plagiarism is when you try to receive credit for someone else’s work, including, but not limited to, any source you use for a paper or submitting a fellow student’s homework while representing it as your own work.

Those who wish to practice such inappropriate behavior will likely be asked to leave the classroom, pursuant to California state law and the State Center Community College District’s Student Code of Conduct policy (California Education Code 76030-76033 and Board Policy 5410, respectively) and may receive a failing grade in this course by receiving a zero on the assignment, lose ALL extra credit points that the student either has earned or is eligible to earn, and receive a zero for ‘Participation and Conduct’ points.

**Cell phones and all other miscellaneous electronic devices are to be turned OFF during class and all ear buds shall be removed**. Not only is a ringing cell phone distracting, disruptive, and annoying, it is rude and disrespectful. If it is imperative that your phone must remain on, please inform me prior to the start of class. If I agree that your situation requires that your phone remain on, I will likely ask you to place your phone on vibrate; otherwise your phone will be OFF.

**On the days of exams, no technological devices will be allowed to be in the possession of the student.** You may leave in your car or you may place at the front of class on my desk. Failure to follow these instructions may lead to removal from my class and/or a loss of points on that examination.

Attendance:

Attendance is obviously one measure of participation, and you will not do well in the course if you regularly fail to come to class. Perfect attendance is best, and more than six hours of absences is definitely too many. Since part of the purpose of education is to prepare individuals for the workforce, and no individual will keep his/her job for long if he/she is repeatedly late, for the purposes of this class three unexcused late arrivals or early departures will be considered the same as an absence. Be advised that it is the policy of this college that the instructor may drop a student who has missed more than the equivalent of two weeks of instruction in a full term class.

ON EXAM DAYS YOU ARE REQUIRED TO BE IN CLASS WHEN CLASS BEGINS, I WILL NOT ALLOW LATE STUDENTS TO RECEIVE AN EXAM IN ORDER TO AVOID ANY DISTURBANCES TO YOUR FELLOW CLASSMATES WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE ENOUGH TO MAKE IT TO CLASS ON TIME. DO NOT ENTER THE CLASS LATE, YOU WILL BE DISTURBING THE CLASS.

Reading Assignments:

All reading assignments must be COMPLETED by the assigned class date. Keep in mind, the readings and the lectures are intended to complement, not replace, one another. Some material covered in the lectures will not be covered in the text; conversely, information in the text may not be addressed directly in class. In a testing situation, you will be responsible for all required items and items reviewed during lecture. If you have questions on any of the material, ASK!!! I want to help you learn about American politics and government, but your questions may not be answered unless you ask them. In order to participate in class you MUST read the assigned materials. Keep in mind that the participation is 150 points of your grade.

**Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have special needs as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), please notify me immediately. All reasonable requests for assistance will be considered, and efforts will be made to accommodate your needs. Students are responsible for making any needed accommodations with DSSP one (1) week in advance and are responsible for taking the exams on the same day and preferably the same time that they are scheduled for the class. If you fail to schedule these times with DSSP, you may take your exam in class, under normal classroom conditions. ( i.e. no extra time will be allotted.)

**Dropping (Withdrawal from) a Class**

In registering for a class, a student assumes the responsibility of meeting class standards of attendance and progress. This obligation remains until such time as the course is officially dropped. Errors in registration should be rectified during the first week of instruction. It is the student’s responsibility to drop a class in which she/he no longer wishes to be enrolled. A student may drop a class by obtaining, completing and filing an add/drop card from/with the Admissions and Records Office. The student may also drop a class via the district’s touchtone telephone registration system or web registration per instructions outlined in the college schedule of classes or the student may request to be dropped from class(es) by mailing a signed letter of request to the college.