**PLSI 2: Introduction to American Government and Politics**

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| **Semester:** Spring 2023 | **Professor:** Gurleen Litt |
| **Time & Date: M/W** | **E-mail:** Gurleen.litt@reedleycollege.edu |
| **Section:**  **Building/Room #:** Forum, Room 1 | **Office Hours**: Tuesdays via Zoom (link will be posted on canvas) or Schedule an in person meeting |
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**Course Description:** This course surveys the processes and institutions of national, state and local governments in the United States through a review of the organization, distribution and orientation of political power in American society. Among the topics discussed are individual political attitudes and values, political participation, voting, parties, interest groups, Congress, the presidency, Supreme Court, the federal bureaucracy, civil liberties and civil rights, and domestic and foreign policy making. Attention is paid both to the present state of the American political system and to its historical roots.

**Required Materials:**

Wilson, James Q., DiIulio, Jr., John J., Bose, Monica, and Levendusky, Matthew. American Government: Institutions and Policies, 16th ed. Boston: Cengage, 2019. (This will be listed as Wilson on the course schedule)

\*\*Textbooks are also available as eBooks. You can access them by purchasing the e-version in the Bookstore or using the links below.

*American Government: Institutions and Policies, 16th ed.:* <https://www.cengage.com/c/american-government-institutions-and-policies->16ewilson/9781337568395PF/

**Examinations and Major Assignments:**

*Exams:* There will be 4 exams, each will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer questions. The questions will be pulled from the lecture notes but will also include some from the text and supplemental readings. The multiple-choice portion of the exam will be administered in person, while the short essay portion will be administered through canvas.

*Abstracts:* Over the course of the semester you will have to do 2 article briefs/abstracts. An abstract is an informative summary of a qualitative or quantitative research article. You cannot use new articles for this assignment.

*Paper Proposal/Outline:* You must submit a 1-2 page topic proposal to select your topic. Keep in mind that the topic must have potential for the policy paper.

*Policy Paper:* Instructions detailing all of the requirements for the policy paper will be passed out at a later date.

\*\*Assignment Submissions: All assignments are due on Canvas. In the case if a (rare) Canvas malfunction, please email me your assignment by the due date. All papers, citations, reference pages, and in-text citations must follow APA formatting guidelines.

\*\*Revisions: Students will receive the opportunity to revise portions of their writing assignments for up to 5% of the assignment’s original value. Students must contact the instructor about doing a revision within ONE week of receiving their graded assignment. More detailed guidance on the writing of revisions will be provided at the appropriate time.

\*\*Late Penalty: Students will be penalized 15% of the total points possible for a writing assignment if it is submitted to the instructor after the due date. An assignment is considered late if it is submitted to the instructor after the conclusion of the class period listed in the syllabus as the due date for the assignment.

However, if students notify the instructor of extenuating circumstances PRIOR to the original due date of the assignment, the instructor MAY waive the late penalty. It should be noted that the instructor MUST FORMALLY APPROVE a later due date. It is also the decision of the instructor as to what constitutes an extenuating circumstance.

**Grading:** Students will earn points for the course in the following manner:

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| Class Participation (In class and Discussion Board Posts) | 150 points |
| Abstracts (2) | 100 points |
| Paper Proposal | 100 points |
| Policy Paper | 250 points |
| Chapter Quizzes | 100 points |
| Exams (4) | 300 points |
| **TOTAL** | **1000 points** |

*Grading Scale:* 1000 points to 900 points = A; 899 points to 800 points = B; 799 points to 700 points = C; 699 points to 600 points = D; 599 points and below = F.

*Class Participation*: There are two components to a student’s grade for class participation. The first is class discussion. What does it mean to participate in this course? There are several elements that will be taken into consideration for your grade on participation. These include the following: **(1) Frequency/ regularity:** Students do not need to participate every class period, but should do so on a regular and recurring basis. It should be noted that students will need to be in class to participate. If student attendance starts to lag at any point in the semester, it is the instructor prerogative to take attendance and count this towards students’ participation grade; **(2) Quality:** Students should be able to demonstrate both an understanding of the material in the readings as well as applying it to case and real-world experiences. This latter aspect is related to critical thinking; **(3) Interaction with the class:** Students should be able to stimulate discussion amongst one another via probative questions, as well as by offering insightful comments and responses; and **(4) Active listening:** Students should be attentive to the issues raised by both the instructors and fellow students. Students should be engaged in the course even when they are not speaking. Active listening allows for a higher quality of course interaction. The second is participating in online discussion board posts.

*Attendance:* To be eligible for 100% of your participation grade, you must attend 100% of scheduled classes. You do not get points for showing up to class, but you can lose them for failing to do so.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. Study both the theory and practice of “democracy.”

2. Research the forces and political philosophies that influenced the founding fathers of the United States and the framers of the Constitution.

3. Compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution of the United States of America, including a discussion of the Federalist and Anti-Federalist factions.

4. Review the role played by the U. S. Constitution in (a) creating our federal system of government, with its subsequent divided responsibilities, and (b) establishing the separation of powers and checks and balances principles at the national level, as well as the implications of such.

5. Examine the federal system as a practical device to accommodate—within one government—national and local needs unique to the United States.

6. Evaluate the relationship between the Bill of Rights, the government, and the concept of “civil liberty,” noting that liberty is both the absence of governmental intrusion and the result of a set of guarantees that protect the individual against the excesses of government.

7. Assess the idea of civil rights as the rights of all citizens to equal protection of the law, as provided in the 14th Amendment of the Constitution. Students will also explore the development of civil rights, using the evolving civil rights of African-Americans and other groups as examples.

8. Consider his/her role as a voter in the United States political system and survey the varying forms and systems of elections used in the United States, including primary elections, general elections, California referendum and initiative elections, California recall elections, and the electoral college.

9. Gain an understanding of the characteristics of the American political party system and the functions parties serve in the process of governing.

10. Analyze the issues surrounding the development of public opinion, and its influence on the formation of public policy.

11. Examine the influence of different means of mass communication (media)—both news-based and entertainment-based—on the development of public policy, and the techniques employed by each.

12. Evaluate the positive and negative effects of the countervailing influences of interest groups in American politics, the tactics of interest groups, and the means employed for keeping them hones.

13. Appraise the powers and limitations of the office of the President of the United States and examine the roles he/she plays as a ceremonial, political, administrative, military, and legislative leader.

14. Examine the various powers/roles of Congress, different theories of representation, and the strengths and weaknesses of the legislative, or lawmaking, process.

15. Study the role of the national courts in interpreting the Constitution, shaping individual rights, and determining the distribution of governmental power. Students will also consider the subtleties of constitutional interpretation, noting that the Constitution is a living document that adapts to changing needs.

16. Explore the vastness and complexity of the bureaucracy. Students will investigate the different national departments and agencies, the characteristics of their growth and evolution and the mechanics of reorganization and reform; and to comprehend the difficulties of effective reform.

17. Examine the programs in the area of domestic policy intended to promote “the general welfare.”

18. Investigate the forces that shape American foreign and defense policy.

20. Study the structure, major functions, and significant powers of both the State of California and local governmental entities. Additionally, students will examine the relationship of state and local institutional powers to the concept of Federalism and survey various examples of direct and indirect democracy at the state and local levels.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** These are statements about what the discipline faculty hope you will be able to do at the end of the course. This is NOT a guarantee. The ultimate responsibility for whether you will be able to do these things lies with you, the student. In addition, the assessment of Student Learning Outcomes is done by the department in order to evaluate the program as a whole, and not to evaluate individual faculty performance.

1. Recognize the Constitutional processes and principles as they occur in modern U.S. and California politics.

2. Relate the structures, roles and powers of the national, state and local governments.

3. Recognize the impact of various "policy inputs" on the development of public policy in the United States

and in California.

4. Identify the categories of policies made by governments within the United States, and relate the questions

underlying these policies.

**Course Policies**: It is expected that you will keep up with the readings. This means reading the assigned material BEFORE class, so that you can provide meaningful insights during our discussions. To promote a constructive learning environment for all, there are classroom guidelines which need to be adhered to:

1. No talking in class (this, of course, does not refer to class-related discussion).

2. No use of cell phones, etc. during class. Failure on the part of one (or more) persons to adhere to this policy will result in the loss of points.

3. No reading newspapers or other materials during class.

4. No sleeping in class. Sleeping is done better at home than in the classroom.

5. No leaving the classroom during videos or lectures early unless you have either received prior permission from me or in case of emergency (my definition, not yours).

6. No coming into class late. Late is more than 5 minutes late (and this is pushing it). If you are habitually late to class, this will be considered behavior that is disruptive to the class.

7. Respectful treatment of fellow students and their opinions concerning class-related topics. This means NOT making or directing any comments of a personal nature to any one of your fellow class members. It also means paying attention and remaining silent when someone else is talking. I insist on an environment in which individuals feel comfortable articulating their arguments and relaying their relevant experiences. While I encourage open expression, our statements must be framed as complete arguments, not just opinions, and presented respectfully. Words or deeds that marginalize people because of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, class, age, sexual orientation, gender presentation, or abilities disrupts the safety of our learning community and will not be tolerated in my course. Failure to abide by these guidelines may warrant your removal from the class.

\*\*Essentially, any behavior that disrupts the class will not be tolerated.

While these guidelines are not all encompassing, they do provide a basic idea of acceptable classroom behavior for you to follow. Failure to follow these guidelines could result in the following: (1) Meeting with the instructor; (2) Loss of points earned in class; (3) Other disciplinary action and/or removal from class.

**Academic Integrity:**  With regard to cheating, the Student Conduct Standards in the 2020-21 Catalog for Reedley College states:

“Cheating is the act or attempted act of taking an examination or performing an assigned, evaluated task in a fraudulent or deceptive manner, such as having improper access to answers, in an attempt to gain an unearned academic advantage. Cheating may include, but is not limited to, copying from another’s work, supplying one’s work to another, giving or receiving copies of examinations without an instructor’s permission, using or displaying notes or devices inappropriate to the conditions of the examination, allowing someone other than the officially enrolled student to represent the student, or failing to disclose research results completely.”

Concerning plagiarism, the 2020-21 Catalog states:

“Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating: the use of another’s words or ideas without identifying them as such or giving credit to the source. Plagiarism may include, but is not limited to, failing to provide complete citations and references for all work that draws on the ideas, words, or work of others, failing to identify the contributors to work done in collaboration, submitting duplicate work to be evaluated in different courses without the knowledge and consent of the instructors involved, or failing to observe computer security systems and software copyrights [.]”

Academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism, constitute serious offenses that are subject to the disciplinary procedures of the State Center Community College District (the District). 3 As such, engaging in academic dishonesty, including but not limited to, cheating and plagiarism, will result in the following disciplinary process:

1. First Offence – The student will receive a “zero” on the assessment (e.g. exam, quiz, assignment, or activity) and referred to the Dean of Instruction for Division A.

2. Second Offence – The student will receive a “zero” on the assessment, referred to the Dean of Instruction for Division A, and removed from class (one or two days at the discretion of the instructor).

3. Third Offence – The student will receive a “zero” on the assessment, referral to the Dean of Instruction for Division A, and a recommendation by the professor for a short-term suspension, long-term suspension, failure in the course, or expulsion. Students may be subject to further disciplinary action by the College or the District.

**Academic Adjustments due to Disability:** If you have a verified need for an accommodation or accommodations due to disability as described in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. §§ 12101-12213; 42 U.S.C. §§ 225, 611) and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 701, et seq.), please notify your instructor as soon as possible (before or after class, email). All reasonable requests will be considered, and efforts will be made to accommodate your needs.

**COVID-19 Rules and Regulations:** PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS IF YOU ARE ILL WITH SYMPTOMS CONSISTENT WITH COVID-19, HAVE BEEN INSTUCTED TO QUARANTINE OR ISOLATE, OR KNOW YOU HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO COVID-19 AND HAVE NOT YET HAD A NEGATIVE COVID TEST AFTER COVID-19 EXPOSURE. According to the State Center Community College District:

“The state Department of Public Health (DPH) is strongly recommending wearing a mask for all indoor public settings. The DPH defines an effective mask as ‘having both good fit and good filtration. N95, KN95 and KF94 masks are highly recommended.’ The District will continue to “highly recommend” facial coverings by all individuals in indoor settings. The only exception is in those areas where healthcare and child development services are being provided.”

**DROP POLICY**:  If you decide to drop this course, **YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR** **FILLING OUT ALL OF THE NECESSARY PAPERWORK**.  For more details on dropping a class, please refer to the admissions and records office, the Reedley College catalogue or the Reedley College Class Schedule.

**Course Schedule** (\*This syllabus and assignment/exam schedule is tentative and subject to change as deemed necessary by the instructor) will be posted on Canvas.

January

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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. |
| 8. | 9  First Day of Class | 10 | 11  Introduction to American Politics and Policy | 12 | 13  Syllabus Quiz Due | 14 |
| 15 | 16  No School | 17 | 18  Chapter 1 | 19 | 20  Chapter 1 Quiz Due | 21 |
| 22 | 23  Chapter 2 | 24 | 25  Chapter 2 Quiz Due | 26 | 27  Policy Paper Topic Due | 28 |
| 29 | 30  Chapter 3  Chapter 3 Quiz Due | 31 |  |  |  |  |

February

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|  |  |  | 1  Chapter 4  Chapter 4 Quiz Due | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6  Policy Paper Outline Due | 7 | 8  Chapter 5  Chapter 5 Quiz Due | 9 | 10  Article Abstract 1 Due | 11 |
| 12 | 13  Chapter 6  Chapter 6 Quiz Due | 14 | 15  Activity/Review | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20  No School | 21 | 22  Exam 1 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27  Chapter 7  Chapter 7 Quiz Due | 28 |  |  |  |  |

March

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|  |  |  | 1  Chapter 8  Chapter 8 Quiz Due | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 | 7 | 8  Chapter 9  Chapter 9 Quiz Due | 9 | 10  Article Abstract 2 Due | 11 |
| 12 | 13  Chapter 10  Chapter 10 Quiz Due | 14 | 15  Policy Paper Rough Draft Due | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 19 | 20  Chapter 11  Chapter 11 Quiz Due | 21 | 22  Chapter 12  Chapter 12 Quiz Due | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 26 | 27  Exam 2 | 28 | 29  Chapter 13  Chapter 13 Quiz Due | 30 | 31 |  |

April

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
| 2 | 3  Spring Break | 4 | 5  Spring Break | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10  Chapter 14  Chapter 14 Quiz Due | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14  Policy Paper Due | 15 |
| 16 | 17  Chapter 15  Chapter 15 Quiz Due | 18 | 19  Chapter 16  Chapter 16 Quiz Due | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 23 | 24  Exam 3 | 25 | 26  Chapter 17  Chapter 17 Quiz Due | 27 | 28 | 29 |

May

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|  | 1  Chapter 18 | 2 | 3  Chapter 19 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8  California Politics | 9 | 10  California Politics | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 | 15  Finals Week | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |  |  |  |