

# PoliSci 2: American Government

Spring 2011 Section: 52103  
Wed. 6 – 8:50 p.m. Room CCI 204

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## **Course Description:**

This course is designed to introduce the student to the primary structures and functions of the American and State of California governmental systems and to acquaint them with the fundamentals of political science. The emphasis of the course will be placed upon the three primary branches of both state and national governments, the functioning of the government bureaucracies, and the formulation of public policy. 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:**

Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Recognize the basic principles of democracy in the United States.
2. 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.
3. Be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the American two-party system and the effects of so-called "third party" movements.
4. Be able to apply his/her knowledge of the evolution of civil rights in the United States to current events.
5. Recognize the importance of the Bill of Rights in guaranteeing civil liberties in the United States.
6. Be acquainted with the key elements of domestic and foreign policy, and relate how events can dictate our government's priorities.
7. Appreciate the relationship between voting and the development of public policy, both in the United States and in California.

## **Required Text:**

Dye, Thomas R. and Sparrow, Bartholomew H., *Politics in America* (8<sup>th</sup> Edition), (New York: Longman) 2009. (PA).

Bound with

Field, Mona, *California Government and Politics Today* (12<sup>th</sup> Edition), (New York: Longman) 2009.

## **Method of Evaluation and Grading:**

### Exams:

There will be two written exams: a mid-term and a non-cumulative final. Exams emphasis assigned readings and lecture material. The mid-term exam is worth 100 possible points, while the final exam is worth 130. A blue book will be required for these exams.

### Textbook Study Guide:

A Study Guide Handout will be made available, on Blackboard, for every lecture topic that we will cover in class. I will be collecting eight (8) study guides throughout the session. For each study guide collected, you have the opportunity to earn up to 25 points. A handout explaining the grading,

availability and due dates for this assignment is posted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to retrieve this handout.

MyPoliSciLab Assignments:

*MyPoliSciLab* is an online resource found on the textbook companion website. *MyPoliSciLab* gives students the opportunity to apply what they learn from readings and lectures through “multimedia, tutorials, simulations, tests and quizzes.” For this class, I am asking you to complete ten (10) online interactive exercises. A handout explaining the requirements for the *MyPoliSciLab* online assignments is posted on Blackboard. It is your responsibility to retrieve this handout.

GAME:

An acronym that stands for **G**reat **A**ttendance plus **M**aximum **E**ffort, both are necessary to be successful in my class and are key components in accessing your participation. To reinforce the importance of GAME, I am instituting a “carrot and stick” policy. First, every student will begin with 55 points of GAME (the carrot). Each absence—excused or unexcused—will lead to a ten (10) point deduction of GAME (the stick). Remember, GAME is part of your class points, so keep your GAME tight, and your grade will benefit.

There is a total of 585 points available. Here is a concise breakdown of the worth of each assignment, its weighted value in a percentage, and how final grades will be assigned:

<u>Assignments:</u>	<u>Points:</u>	<u>Weighted %</u>	<u>Point Value Range</u>	<u>Awarded Grade</u>
Mid-term Exam	100	17.1	526 and above	= A
Final Exam	130	22.2	468 – 525	= B
<i>MyPoliSciLab</i>	100	17.1	409 – 467	= C
Study Guides	200	34.2	351 – 408	= D
GAME	<u>55</u>	<u>9.4</u>	350 and below	= F
	585	100		

Course Policy:

Class Attendance

Students are expected to attend class regularly, to be in class on time, and not leave class early. Roll will be taken at the beginning of the last hour of class. If you are not in your seat when roll is taken, it is your responsibility to inform me, before you leave class, you were present. If you fail to do so, you will incur an absence, which will adversely affect your GAME points. In addition, you **WILL BE DROPPED** from this class, if you are absent **two (2) or more classes** within the **first nine (9) weeks** of class. Please communicate with me any situations that may affect your ability to follow this policy.

Class Environment

It is expected that a mutual level of respect is to be afforded to your peers. The suppression of another student’s opinion **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**. All students should aspire to create an atmosphere of high intellectual learning. This can only be accomplished if we come to class with forward-thinking, open-minds.

Cell Phones, MP3’s, etc.

Cell phones and MP3 players are to be turned off. Not only is texting while in class and/or ringing cell phones a distraction, it is down-right disrespectful. If it is imperative that your phone must remain on, please inform me prior to the start of class. I will then ask you to place your phone on vibrate. On the days of exams, no technological devices will be allowed to be on. Failure to follow these instructions will lead to the dismissal from my class.

Making-up Missed Exam:

I am aware that “Life happens.” Therefore, in the event that an exam is missed due to “life”, then I will allow **one** exam to be made up with written verification that details the extenuating circumstances

that affected your ability to attend class. Exam make-up dates will be established according to my schedule.

Academic Honesty:

All work for this course must be your own. Anyone guilty of academic dishonesty will fail the course and be reported to the Dean of Students.

Withdrawal from the Course:

Under college policies, students bear the responsibility of withdrawing from a class if they choose to stop attending class. Students who fail to drop the class and stop attending will receive an "F" for the final course grade.

**Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities**

If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media (i.e., Braille, large print, electronic text, etc.) per the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact me as soon as possible.

**Important Dates**

- January 21 : Last day to drop full-length class for refund eligibility.  
January 28 : Last day to drop class to avoid a "W".  
March 11 : Last day to drop class (letter grades assigned after this date).  
April 18 – 22: Spring Break.  
May 18 : Final Exam at 6 – 8:50 p.m.
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**Course Outline:**

**Week One (01/12)**

**Lecture Topics: Introduction to the course; Politics.**

**Read: PA, pp. 3 – 21.**

**Week Two (01/19)**

**Lecture Topics: Politics (cont.); American Political Culture.**

**Read: PA, pp. 25 – 52.**

**Week Three (01/26)**

**Lecture Topics: The Founding and The Constitution.**

**Read: PA, pp. 57 – 71.**

**Week Four (02/02)**

**Lecture Topics: The Founding and The Constitution (cont.); Federalism.**

**Read: PA, pp. 71 – 86; 105 – 118.**

**Week Five (02/09)**

**Lecture Topics: Federalism (cont.); Civil Liberties.**

**Read: PA, pp. 118 – 133; 489 – 515.**

**Week Six (02/16)**

**Lecture Topics: Civil Liberties (cont.).**

**Read: PA, pp. 517 – 532.**

**Week Seven (02/23)**

**Lecture Topics: Civil Rights.**

**Read: PA, pp. 537 – 549.**

**Week Eight (03/02)**

**Lecture Topics: Civil Rights (cont.); Mid-term review.**

**Read: PA, pp. 549 – 554; 566 – 572.**

**Week Nine (03/09)**

**Lecture Topics: NONE! MID-TERM EXAMINATION! BRING A BLUE BOOK!**

**Week Ten (03/16)**

**Lecture Topics: Political Parties.**

**Read: PA, pp. 205 – 223.**

**Week Eleven (03/23)**

**Lecture Topics: Political Parties (cont.); The Congress.**

**Read: PA, pp. 234 – 243; 321 – 331.**

**Week Twelve (03/30)**

**Lecture Topics: The Congress (cont.); The President.**

**Read: PA, pp. 346 – 366; 373 – 383.**

**Week Thirteen (04/06)**

**Lecture Topics: The President (cont.); The Courts.**

**Read: PA, pp.; 391 – 408; 454 – 467.**

**Week Fourteen (04/13)**

**Lecture Topics: The Courts (cont.).**

**Read: PA, pp. 467 – 485.**

**Week Fifteen (04/20)**

**NO CLASS! SPRING BREAK!**

**Week Sixteen (04/27)**

**Lecture Topics: Politics and The Economy; Politics and Social Welfare.**

**Read: PA, pp. 577- 580; 601 – 608.**

**Week Seventeen (05/04)**

**Lecture Topic: Politics and Social Welfare (cont.); Politics and National Security.**

**Read: PA, pp. 608 – 615; 627 - 636.**

**Week Eighteen (05/11)**

**Lecture Topic: Politics and National Security (cont.); Final Exam Review.**

**Read: PA, pp. 637 – 649.**

**Week Nineteen (05/18)**

**Lecture Topic: NONE! FINAL EXAMINATION! BRING A BLUE BOOK!**

**\*\*\*The Instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus, as needed.**