

POLITICAL SCIENCE 2 (54746)
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
REEDLEY COLLEGE – SPRING 2021

This course will be 100% online, delivered asynchronously. There will be no live class meetings.

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Description of Course:

In Political Science 2 we will cover the fundamental elements of the American and California political systems. We will start with the framing of the federal Constitution, then continue with a discussion of the structure of national government in this country. We will also address American political culture as well as interest groups and the media. We will study the operation of our government, looking at the structure and function of Congress, the presidency and the court system. Our discussion of national politics will conclude with a discussion of national policies. The remainder of the course will be devoted to a study of government in California.

Course 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 US 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 practice 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 honest.
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 policy and defense policy.

19. 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.

Course Student Learning Outcomes:

Student Learning Outcomes 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 the various “policy inputs” on the development of public policy in the United States and California.

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

Required Texts:

Wilson, James Q., DiIulio, Jr., John J., Bose, Meena, and Levendusky, Matthew. *American Government: Institutions and Policies*, 16th ed. (enhanced)

Gerston, Larry N., Currin-Percival, Mary, Percival, Garrick, and Christensen, Terry. *California Politics and Government: A Practical Approach*, 15th ed.

Grading:

There are 700 points possible in the class, allocated as follows:

Opening Discussion Post:	40 points
Discussion Board Posts:	30 points
Discussion Board Responses:	30 points
Chapter Quizzes:	150 points
Midterm Examination:	150 points

Term Paper:	100 points
Final Examination:	200 points

Extra Credit

Score of four or higher on all chapter quizzes:	50 points
Score of three or higher on all chapter quizzes:	25 points
Score of two or higher on all chapter quizzes:	10 points

A = 90% - 100%
B = 80% - 89%
C = 70% - 79%
D = 60% - 69%
F = 59% and below

Chapter Quizzes

There will be a chapter quiz for each of the thirty chapters in our two textbooks. There is a specific section in each module for the quizzes.

The purpose of the quizzes is to keep everyone up to date with the reading. The quizzes will only be available for certain dates during the module. If a student does not take the quiz when it is open (unless there are compelling circumstances), the student may not take it, and will receive a zero for that quiz.

You may consult any material you would like while taking the quizzes, and you may collaborate with other students.

Each quiz will consist of five multiple choice questions, worth one point each. You have ten minutes to complete each quiz.

Because of the importance of the quizzes, I have also offered extra credit for completing them well. Any student who completes all of the quizzes, with a score of four or higher, will receive 50 extra points. Any student who completes all of the quizzes with a score of three or higher will receive 25 extra points. Any student who completes all of the quizzes with a score of two or higher will receive ten extra points. (Note that a student scoring four or higher on all of the quizzes will receive only 50 points, and not an additional 25 for also scoring over three on all of the quizzes, nor another ten for scoring over two. Likewise, a student scoring three or higher will receive only 25 points, not an extra ten as well.)

It is not recommended to access and take tests or quizzes through the Canvas app or on a mobile device.

The quizzes are supposed to automatically submit at the end of ten minutes, however, you should submit them to make sure.

Discussion Boards

For each module, we will have a discussion board question. Each student must post an answer to the discussion question for that module. Your initial response should display your comprehension of the topic and your own thoughts on the material and should be between two and four paragraphs.

Each student must also submit a response to another student's initial post in which you respond to the prompt for the response. Your response should similarly display your comprehension and thoughts and should be between one and three paragraphs.

The discussion board posts and responses require a synthesis of the material. To achieve a high grade, students must demonstrate a mastery of the subject matter beyond just reading the textbook.

Term Paper

Details regarding the term paper will be provided later in the semester. If the paper is not turned in by the deadline which will be provided, it will not be accepted unless there are compelling circumstances. If such circumstances exist, the student must contact Professor Yonker to make arrangements.

Collaboration

Students may collaborate on all assignments other than the midterm examination and the final examination. In addition, while you may collaborate, you must turn in original work for the discussion board posts and term paper.

Exams

The midterm and final examinations are to allow students to demonstrate what you have learned. The midterm examination will also provide feedback to students. Unless announced otherwise, both examinations will be a combination of true/false, multiple choice, and essay questions. You may consult any materials you would like on the exams, but you may *not* collaborate with other students, or anyone else. Details of the online administration of the exams will be provided.

Make-up midterm exams will only be given under special circumstances. In order for a student to qualify to take a make-up midterm exam, there must be compelling circumstances, to be determined at Professor Yonker's sole discretion. If such circumstances exist, a student will be allowed to make up a midterm exam. Failure to promptly contact Professor Yonker concerning a missed midterm exam will result in the student receiving a zero for that midterm exam.

There will be no make-up for the final exam due to the time constraints at the end of the semester.

Grade Publication

Professor Yonker will attempt to grade the discussion board posts promptly following the due dates for the posts. The chapter quizzes will be graded automatically on Canvas. Professor Yonker will attempt to grade the midterm examination and term paper promptly after they are submitted. The final examination will be graded automatically on Canvas.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

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 extends to any act in which you engage for the purpose of obtaining unmerited academic credit. Students are expected to do their own work unless otherwise specified by the instructor (e.g. the instructions for an assignment indicate it is a group activity). If a student copies his or her work from another student or otherwise engages in the behavior mentioned in this paragraph, such activity constitutes cheating.

Plagiarism is “the fraudulent representation of someone else’s writing or other scholarly material as your own.” That is, the student tries to take credit for the work that someone else did. This includes, but is not limited to, any source you use for a paper, or submitting a fellow student’s homework while representing it as your own work. Please see the Reedley Course Catalog for more on cheating and plagiarism.

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). AR sections 5500(11) and 5520. The first offense may result in receiving a zero on the assessment (e.g. exam, quiz, assignment, or activity). A second offense may result in receiving a zero on the assessment, being reported to the Dean of Instruction for Division A, and removal (one or two days at the discretion of the instructor). A third offense may result in receiving a zero on the assessment, being reported to the Dean of Instruction for Division A, and a recommendation by the instructor for a short-term suspension, failure in the course, or expulsion. Students may also be subject to further disciplinary action by the College or the District.

Attendance Requirements:

Due to State Center Community College District policy, attendance records must be kept. Attendance will be kept based on completion of quizzes, which will occur approximately once or twice each week. There will be at least one per week. If a student takes at least one of the quizzes for that week, he or she will be considered present for that week. If a student does not take any quizzes during a particular week, that student will be considered absent for that week.

A student who has missed four classes prior to the tenth week of the semester may be dropped. However, a student cannot be dropped after the ninth week with respect to attendance.

For further information please contact Admissions and Records. The phone number is (559) 638-0323.

Late Work:

The policy for make up exams is set forth above. With respect to other course assignments, the policy is more lenient than usual, given our circumstances this semester. With a reasonable excuse, students will be allowed to make up missed work.

If a student has such an excuse, and would like to make up missed work, that student should contact Professor Yonker as soon as possible.

Behavioral Standards:

Students are expected to be polite and respectful when posting to the discussion boards in the class. There are no regularly scheduled class meetings, but during any live Zoom review sessions, students are expected to conduct themselves as if they were in an in-person classroom.

Relevant Deadlines:

Deadline to drop for refund: End of second week of class.

Deadline to add and deadline to drop to avoid a “W” on transcripts: End of third week of class.

Drop deadline: End of ninth week of class

Canvas:

This class will be administered entirely on Canvas. To use Canvas, go to the Reedley College website. Under “Quick Links,” select “Canvas.” Enter your user ID, password, and role (select “student”). Once you have gained access to your Canvas account, you can then click on any of your classes. You should also seriously consider changing your password to better secure your account.

You should check your Canvas account daily for important announcements, assignments, and course documents. It is critical that you have regular access to a computer with a reliable internet connection.

For help with Canvas, please review the information in the Reedley College Student Resources Page in the opening module of our course.

Academic Adjustment due to Disability:

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

Course Schedule:

Following is the schedule for this course. Additional specific assignments will be given within each module. Included in the assignments will be required discussion board postings. I will grade and monitor such discussions, and occasionally contribute my thoughts to facilitate further thought and discussion.

The readings for the first four modules are from *American Government: Institutions and Policies*; the readings for modules five and six are from *California Politics and Government: A Practical Approach*.

1/11-2/8: Module 1: The American System

2/9-3/9: Module 2: Opinions, Interests, and Organizations

3/10: Midterm Examination (Exam will be available for the entire day. Students will have a set time to complete the exam during day. The length of that time will be announced.)

3/11-3/28: Module 3: Institutions of Government

4/3-4/20: Module 4: Public Policy and American Democracy

4/21-5/2: Module 5: California Government – Part I

5/3-5/14: Module 6: California Government – Part II

5/17-5/21: Final Examination (Exam will be available for all of finals week. Students will have a set time to complete the exam during that week. The length of that time will be announced.)

THIS SYLLABUS IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE DURING THE SEMESTER