

Political Science 150
An Introduction to American Government & Politics

TTH 9:30-10:50

Instructor: Dr. Russell Richardson

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Office Hours

Monday 5-6 p.m.

T-Th 8:30-9:30

By Appointment

COURSE APPROACH & OUTCOMES

Introduction to American Government and Politics will provide you with an overview of the American democratic system, touching briefly on a variety of interrelated topics. Through lecture, classroom interaction, and discussion you will develop an understanding of the basic issues and elements of power affecting the nation's decision-making processes.

By the end of the course you will be able to:

1. Identify the basic institutions of the government of the United States and the State of California.
2. Define and explain terms and concepts basic to an understanding of the American political process.
3. Compare and contrast democratic theories of American government.
4. Engage in an educated, thoughtful, objective discussion of American political issues.
5. Exhibit a heightened sense of personal political efficacy and civic responsibility.

DISCUSSION, DEBATE, & CLASS PARTICIPATION

This class will include a fair amount of discussion. Student opinions & ideas are meant to be an integral part of the course. In other words, your views count. You won't be penalized for disagreeing with the instructor, the written material, or with each other. However, you will be expected to defend your opinions. In a classroom atmosphere that sponsors student involvement, it is important to keep an open mind. This class is about asking questions that often have no "right" answers. Don't be afraid to try looking at things from a different point of view. Remember that conversation is a natural way for human beings to think together. And most importantly, respect your classmates and their views, even when you disagree.



Discussion is most educational when a myriad of different opinions and viewpoints are included. Every student will be part of a process of team debate, the details of which are explained below. To encourage additional participation every student will be required to make one contribution to the class conversation during the semester. Students will receive pass/fail credit for their contribution by submitting a one-page summary of their participation. A form on which to summarize the participation will be provided by the instructor. The student's participation must be "substantive" rather than fleeting or minimal.

TEXTBOOKS

We the People: Essentials Edition (7th) by Benjamin Ginsberg, et. al. (ISBN: 978-0-393-93266-9)
Governing California (2nd) by J. Theodore Anagnoson, et. al. (ISBN: 978-0-393-93291-1)
Faultlines (2nd) by David T. Canon (Ed.) et. al. (ISBN: 0-393-93016-5)

These textbooks are sold as one “bundle” by the bookstore and with special pricing provided by the publisher. The cost of all three books is less than the average cost of one American Government textbook. However, you will only be able to resell your textbooks if you are able to return **all three** books, as the bookstore will need to “re-bundle” the books for sale to other students next semester.

ACTIVITIES, TESTS, AND PROJECTS

Pass/Fail Activities

Some activities in the class will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Such activities are designated as such because they require, relatively speaking, a minimal amount of effort and are part of what every student is expected to contribute to the class community. For instance, everyone will be asked to write a short personal bio on the class web site to facilitate the development of relationships in the class. Failure to complete pass/fail activities will result in points being deducted from one’s overall point total.

Tests

Three tests will be given during the semester. Each of these tests will cover an assigned unit based on the class textbooks and related material covered in class. The tests will be composed of multiple choice and true-false questions. Each test will count 100 points. Two tests will be given during the semester and one, a final, at the end. The final will be based on material from the last unit in the class. However, there will be an “optional final” as well, which will carry a point value of 50 and which will be based on selected material from the first two units. The optional final will only be taken by those students who choose to do so and will only count if it serves to improve one’s overall grade.

American Faultlines Debate and Paper

Politics is, in part, a process by which issues are debated and policies determined. And American democracy has always been a hotbed of political debate and citizen involvement. To bring this process into the classroom students will be part of a team project in which a major issue in the book *Faultlines* is debated. Following the debate each student will write an individual paper (5-7 pages) that summarizes the topic, presents the student’s position, and evaluates the learning produced by the project.

The project will be assigned a total point value of 100 points with separate scores calculated for the paper, debate participation, and the outcome of the debate. Detailed information on the project will be provided separately by the instructor.

GRADING

Major activities are assigned point values. At the end of the course all points will be added together and the percentage of the total points (an average) will be determined. The scale below will be applied:

90% - 100% = A = 360-400 points
80% - 89% = B = 320-359 points
70% - 79% = C = 280-319 points
60% - 69% = D = 240-279 points
0% - 59% = F

You may determine your grade in the course at any time by adding the points received for course activities and dividing by the total number of points possible at that time to determine an average. That average may then be applied to the scale above. Grades will be posted online; the online posting system will be explained thoroughly in class.

TARDINESS, ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL

A class is not just a collection of facts to be memorized. If you allow it to be, it is a temporary community in which every session and every interaction offers an opportunity for learning. Consequently, attending class and attending on time should be the student's first and most important commitment. Nevertheless, a reasonable number of absences and lates are understandable. Two instances of unanticipated traffic, inoperable alarm clocks, and other surprise encounters with fate, which cause tardiness, are understandable. Additional instances usually indicate one has not made the class a priority.

The instructor has the right to disenroll a student from the course for excessive absences. According to school policy, you are allowed two absences in a TTh class to cover illness, unforeseen events and participation in school activities. After this number of absences you can officially be dropped from the class. In this class you will be allowed *three* absences. After the drop deadline, five points will be deducted from your point total for additional absences. Informing the instructor of the "reasons" for absences is not necessary. The first four are excused whatever the reason. After this number, points will be deducted whatever the reason.

Arriving late will not result in one being dropped from the course. However, arriving late is distracting for everyone and is, therefore, discouraged. Plus, a late may be counted as an absence if the student does not assume responsibility for checking in with the instructor at the end of class.

Work that is submitted late will have points deducted. Tests may be made-up only with written verification of one's excuse. The last day to withdraw from the course with a W is **October 16th**.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Doing well in any class requires concentration. Please be courteous to others in the class who are trying to concentrate. Entering the room late or leaving early are distracting. Having private conversations, eating in front of others, and answering phones and beepers takes everyone's attention off the topic at hand. Be conscious of the fact that you are now part of a learning community, not just an individual. **Please turn off your cell phone, PDA, etc. prior to the start of class. If you forget, and the phone rings, do not answer it. None of these electronic items should be on your desk during class.**

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Cheating on tests and plagiarizing writings are serious offenses. Be aware of their meanings and the consequences.

Cheating means getting unauthorized help on an assignment or test. You must not (1) receive from any other student or give to any other student any information, answers, or help during a test; (2) refer to any books, notes, or other unauthorized source of information when taking a quiz or test; (3) obtain questions before a test or tamper with a quiz, test, or other assignment after it has been graded.

Plagiarism means submitting work as your own that has been created by someone else. For example, copying material from a book, web site, or other source without acknowledging that the words or ideas are someone else's and not your own is plagiarism. If you copy an author's works exactly, treat the passage as a direct quotation and supply the appropriate citation. If you use someone else's ideas, even if you paraphrase the wording, appropriate credit must be given. You have also committed plagiarism if you purchase a paper or submit one as your own that you do not write.

Assignments involving cheating or plagiarism will receive a zero and will be referred to college officials for review.

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Be aware that you have rights as a student. If you feel you are being subjected to prejudicial or arbitrary treatment in this class or any other class, you should familiarize yourself with the student grievance policy and decide whether a grievance is merited. Always address your grievance with the instructor first, however. The student grievance policy is outlined in the college catalog.

As a student you have many unstated responsibilities, too many to list here. For instance, you are responsible for being prepared and on time. Most importantly, if you miss a class, you are responsible for updating yourself on class assignments before the next class meeting. As with the law, being unaware of an assignment is not an excuse for not doing the assignment. Please pay close attention to the course calendar, which will be provided and appears on the course web site.

COURSE WEB SITE

Our class has a site on Blackboard (the campus course management system), which you will find at: <http://bb7.canyons.edu>. If you are not familiar with Blackboard you may wish to complete the Blackboard Tutorial at COC's Distance Learning page. The tutorial will explain "how" to login to our class website and some of the key website features. The link to that page is:

http://www.canyons.edu/offices/distance_learning/OnlineOrientation/

Once you've completed the Blackboard tutorial, you may login to our class website. Please note that completing the tutorial does not mean you have logged in to our Political

Science 150 website. The tutorial will explain "how" to login to our class website. To login you must access the address given above.

Your username to start the semester is <your student ID number> and the password is , <student>. Please change your password after your initial log into the system. Once you have logged in, go to "Tools," "Personal Information," and "Edit Personal Information." Make any changes you desire to your personal information and **be sure to add your e-mail address** if it is not there.
