

San Jose State University
Fall 2017
PolS 15B: Essentials of US and California Government
August 23 – December 18, 2017
9:00 – 10:15 am
DMH 161

INSTRUCTOR: Frances L. Edwards, M.U.P., Ph.D., CEM
 Professor, Political Science

OFFICE: Clark 447

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays 10:30 am Noon and 4:00 pm – 5:30 pm

OFFICE PHONE: (408) 924-5559 (only during office hours; please do not leave a message)

EMAIL: Pols001sjsu@yahoo.com

SOFTWARE STANDARD: Microsoft Office 2010 or compatible

NOTE: THIS IS A GREEN CLASS!
PAPERS WILL BE SUBMITTED ELECTRONICALLY
THROUGH THIS E-MAIL ADDRESS.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Treatment of essentials of U.S. and California government.

Every American and resident of the United States should understand how the government works. The United States is a federal democratic republic, and California has extended democracy further through the referendum and initiative process. The United States has multiple levels of government from small, one-school districts like the Luther Burbank School district in San Jose to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, from Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania to Los Angeles, from Delaware to Alaska. In this course, we will discuss the organization of the United States, the roles of the different elements of the government, with an emphasis on the constitutional basis for our government.

Note: Satisfies the American Institutions requirements in U.S. Constitution (US2) and California Government (US3), and the Core GE requirement in Social Sciences: Social Issues (D3). GE Area: D3, and American Institution Requirement: US2 and US3

COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of forty-five hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week, or 9 hours, with 3 of the hours used for lecture in a 3 unit course) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to small group consultations, meeting attendance, or other practical applications of student learning as described in the syllabus.

The tentative course calendar is included in this syllabus, including assignment due dates, exam dates, dates of student presentations, and expected topics for each class. The purpose is to show you the number and kind of activities that this course will include. DURING THE SEMESTER THERE MAY BE CHANGES, AND IF THESE ARE NEEDED STUDENTS WILL BE NOTIFIED IN ADVANCE OF ANY CHANGES.

METHODS:

The class will be a combination of reading, writing, personal research, lecture and discussion. Students may be called upon by name to address concepts from the readings. Students should take the time and effort to read the materials when they are assigned, and be prepared to actively participate in discussion. Regular attendance is expected. Participation in class is 15% of your grade. Participation in the class and related discussions will enhance your grade simply because you will have knowledge necessary to pass the test that might not otherwise be available.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

Student Learning Objectives

SLO 2: Students will be able to explain how political decisions are made, their consequences for individuals and society, and how individuals and groups may affect the decision-making process. As students analyze the meaning and content of the democratic process as it has evolved in the United States and California, at a minimum, they should be able to describe:

- a) the foundations of the political system, (assessed through quizzes and final exam)
- b) the links between the people and government, (assessed through quizzes and final exam)
- c) the operations of California government (assessed through Class 27 quiz and Council report)

SLO 3: Students should also be able to:

- a) identify the tools of political action and collective decision-making at the local, state, national, and global level (assessed through quizzes and final exam); and
- b) articulate the values and assumptions that inform their civic engagement (assessed through quizzes, small group discussions and final exam)

Political Science Learning Objectives

- To understand the components and functions of American government
- To understand the components and functions of California government
- To understand the roles and responsibilities of a citizen in the United States

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. **GELO 1 (US2):** Explain how political decisions are made, their consequences for individuals and society, and how individuals and groups may affect the decision-making process. Analyze the meaning and content of the democratic process as it has evolved in the United States and California, and describe the foundations of the political system and the evolving institutions of government, the links between the people and government, and the operations of California government. **Assessed by multiple-choice questions on the final exams, and the questions on the quizzes.**
2. **GELO 2 (US3):** Identify the tools of political action and collective decision-making at the local, state, national, and global level, and articulate the values and assumptions that inform their civic engagement. **Assessed by multiple-choice questions on the final exams, the quizzes and the Council report.**
3. **GELO 3 (D3):** Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. **Assessed by essay on final exam.**
4. **GELO 4 (D3):** Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, gender/sexual, age-based, class, regional, national, transnational, and global identities and the similarities, differences, linkages, and interactions between them. **Assessed by class participation, council report and final exam essay.**
5. **GELO 5 (D3):** Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. **Assessed by the council report and final exam essay.**
6. **GELO 6 (D3)** Apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national, and/or international levels. **Assessed by the council report assignment.**

REQUIRED READING:

Larry Gerston, *California Government and Politics*. ISBN: 9781305953499. 14th edition
 James Q. Wilson, et al., (2016). *American Government: Brief Edition*. ISBN-13: 978-1305956346. 13th Edition.

You will also need a writing handbook for use in creating your letter and your council meeting report. Most of you have a writing handbook from your English Writing class. If not, I recommend purchasing Diane Schmidt, *Writing in Political Science*. Used copies are readily available on the internet. It has a guide to writing different types of documents, as well as an **APA citation guide**, which is the citation standard for this class. APA citation guides are also available for free at the library website, of which the Purdue University is probably the easiest to use:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Please review this at http://sa.sjsu.edu/student_conduct. "Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at San Jose State University and the University's integrity policy, require you to be honest in all your academic course work. Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the office of Student Conduct and Ethical development."

Instances of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism, presenting the work of another as your own, or **the use of another person's ideas without giving proper credit**, will result in a **failing grade and sanctions by the University**.

For this class, all assignments are to be completed by the individual student. **IF YOU CHEAT, PLAGIARIZE, FAIL TO ATTRIBUTE DIRECTLY COPIED OR PARAPHRASED MATERIAL, BUY A PAPER, USE SOMEONE ELSE'S PAPER, OR IN ANY OTHER WAY VIOLATE THE ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY, YOU WILL FAIL THIS COURSE**, regardless of previous standing!

CLASSROOM COURTESY:

Students come to class to learn. The professor comes to class to teach. If you are not focused on the activities of the class, please do not come. As a courteous person you will be sure that your cell phone is turned off during class. If your phone rings during class you will be expected to leave to answer it. Texting is not acceptable in class. Playing games, e-mailing, reading non-class material is all unacceptable behavior. The class meets only twice a week, and we want to use that time as a learning community. Please respect each other and the professor.

RECORDING AND SHARING LIMITATIONS:

Common courtesy and professional behavior dictate that you notify someone when you are recording him or her. You must obtain the instructor's permission to make audio or video recordings in this class. Such permission allows the recordings to be used for your **private, study purposes only**. The recordings are the **intellectual property of the instructor**; you have not been given any rights to reproduce or distribute the material.

Likewise, you must obtain the written permission of any guest speaker and every class member if you will be recording presentations or class discussions.

Students desiring to record any part of any class must justify the need to record the material and obtain the instructor's written permission. Students with functional limitations should obtain a letter from the Accessible Education Center.

Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, PowerPoint shows or homework solutions without the specific written instructor consent.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs **maintains university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc.**"

You may find all syllabus related University Policies and resources information listed on GUP's [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>

Information about the latest changes and news is available at the [Advising Hub](http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/advising/>

SJSU WRITING CENTER

The SJSU Writing Center is located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. All Writing Specialists have gone through a rigorous hiring process, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment or to refer to the numerous online resources offered through the Writing Center, visit the [Writing Center website](http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter> . For additional resources and updated information, follow the Writing Center on Twitter and become a fan of the SJSU Writing Center on Facebook. (Note: You need to have a QR



Reader to scan this code.)

SJSU COUNSELING SERVICES

The SJSU Counseling Services is located in the New Student Wellness Center, Third floor, Room 300B, (corner of 7th and San Carlos St., across from the Event Center).

Professional psychologists, social workers, and counselors are available to provide consultations on issues of student mental health, campus climate or psychological and academic issues on an individual, couple, or group basis. To schedule an appointment or learn more information, visit [Counseling Services website](http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/counseling>

MAKE-UP POLICY:

Serious personal or dependent family illness that can be documented is the only acceptable excuse for not taking a quiz on time. If you are ill contact the professor to make arrangements to take the quiz in the first class that you attend. You will be given a reasonable extension for submission of missing work if it is a prolonged illness, but since all papers are submitted on-line, being sick for one day is not an excuse for failure to turn

in work the day it is due. **There are no make-ups for missed presentations.** Incompletes are discouraged.

PARTICIPATION:

Students may be called upon by name to address concepts from the readings. Students should take the time and effort to read the materials provided when they are assigned, and be prepared to actively participate in discussion of the topics, using both citations of the readings and their own defended views. Regular attendance is expected and will enhance your grade simply because you will have knowledge necessary to complete the quizzes and final exam that might not otherwise be available except from class discussion.

GRADING COMPONENTS:

Participation	15 points
Plagiarism tutorial	5 points
Council Meeting Report/presentation	15 points
List of Representatives/Letter to a public official	5/5 points
Quizzes	20 points
Final Exam	25 points
Pre-test/post test	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

GRADE VALUES:

A+	98 and above
A	93-97
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	82-87
B-	80-81
C	75-79
D	70-74
F	69 and below

PLAGIARISM TUTORIAL:

Every student will take the plagiarism tutorial at the library's website. Access it from this URL: <http://tutorials.sjlibrary.org/tutorial/plagiarism/index.htm>. At the end you will receive a page with a score. **You must get an 80 or better to complete the assignment.** Repeat the tutorial until you get 80 or better. Be sure you understand the rules for citing materials. Cut and paste the score sheet showing your **name and your acceptable (80 or better) score** into an e-mail. **Send that score sheet to the class e-mail by August 30, 2017.**

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QUIZZES:

There will be a quiz at the beginning of selected classes. The average of the quizzes will be 20% of the final grade. There are no make-ups for quizzes, except for documented severe illness or requirements to attend other events for other courses, which must be documented with a syllabus or an e-mail from the other professor.. Missed quizzes will be counted as “0”. The lowest grade will be dropped for each student before figuring the final grade.

COUNCIL MEETING REPORT:

On October 17, 2017, you will attend the city council meeting of your choice. Most city councils meet on Tuesday. San Jose meets from 1:30 pm – 5 pm and on certain weeks they also have an evening session focused on items of special interest to the community. Other city council meetings start at 5:30 pm or 6:00 pm or later. Check with the City Clerk’s Office for which week they meet and at what time. We will not have class on November 27 in exchange for the council meeting night. You must stay at the city council meeting for 1.5 hours or the length of the meeting, whichever is shorter, but you are encouraged to stay until the meeting is over, if possible. Get a copy of the agenda at the City Clerk’s website for the city of your choice. For example, the San Jose agenda is available at <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=399> Review the items to be covered and note the staff reports that are available. Get a copy of the staff report for the topic you will write about.

When you get to the Council meeting get an agenda from the back tables in the Council Chamber, as there can be changes up to the start of the meeting. Select one agenda item that causes discussion during the council meeting and take notes on which council members speak and what position they take on the issue. Was there public testimony or comment on the topic? Was there an obvious stakeholder group participating? (e.g., Friends of the Library, a neighborhood association) Did the public or stakeholder testimony seem to influence the Councilmembers?

If you have a class or work conflict with Tuesdays see me to set up an alternate method to attend a city council meeting. **Any changes must be arranged by October 2!**

Write a 5 page report, double spaced, Times New Roman font, on your experience, DUE October 25. Discuss the following issues:

Select an action item on the agenda that generated discussion (not consent, not committee reports) and write about it as follows, using your observations from the meeting, news media coverage of the issue in advance of and after the meeting, and the staff report obtained from the City Clerk’s website or the city clerk’s office. (You will be able to access the agenda about 10 days before the meeting, and the staff reports the Friday before the meeting. Review both before you go to the council meeting to be familiar with the topics at hand.) See if the Mercury News or any media outlet had an article or editorial about any of the topics before or after the meeting.

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1. Introduction:
 - a. How many Councilmembers were present? Who else was on the dais?
 - b. About how many people were in the audience?
 - c. How long did the meeting last?
 - d. How many items on the agenda generated discussion?
 - e. How many items on the agenda were passed with little or no discussion (**not counting consent**)?
2. Analysis of the item:
 - a. Name and number of the item
 - b. Who sponsored the item? A city department, Councilmember, stakeholder group? (see staff report)
 - c. What was the discussion of the item focused on?
 - d. What stakeholders spoke about the item?
 - e. Did the public testimony appear to influence the Council?
 - f. Was there newspaper coverage of the item before the council meeting, or an editorial on the item?
 - g. Which Councilmembers spoke about the item and what positions did they take?
 - h. Was the proposed staff recommendation accepted? Were there any amendments?
 - i. How much will it cost?

Students must take care that appropriate APA citations are used. You will be using staff reports and newspaper reports, and possibly quotations from people at the meeting. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the meeting date or the page in the source from which it was taken. Ideas from others may be paraphrased and must also be referenced, although quotations marks are inappropriate.

On Wednesday, August 30 class will be held in the Library to meet with the department's librarian, Paul Kauppila, to learn about the technologies that the library has to offer to support your research and learning. This will then ensure that you have the skills to find and read pre-meeting coverage and post meeting coverage of the council meeting. On October 25 be prepared to turn in your paper, discuss the council meeting in class, and report on the item you selected for your report.

The Council meeting report paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Points
a) The professionalism with which the essay is presented: clarity, appearance, grammar, spelling, appropriate word choice, "voice".	3
b) The comprehensiveness and care with which the council topic is described	3
c) The demonstration of understanding of the council members' positions	3
d) The demonstration of understanding of the stakeholders' positions: members of the	3

public, city staff members, business groups	
e) Analysis and completeness of the “introduction” items in the instructions above	3
TOTAL	15

LIST OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS/LETTER TO A PUBLIC OFFICIAL:

On the selected day you will send to the class e-mail the list of the elected officials that represent you now: **congress member, state senator, state assembly member, Board of Supervisors member, city council member (if your community has districts) or mayor**. Include the person’s name, title, mailing address and governmental area covered (e.g. congressional district number or city).

Grading = 5 for perfect list, one point off for every mistake or incomplete information.

You will then select from that list one of these officials to contact. Write a letter to the selected local, state or federal elected official on your list on any policy matter **UNDER HIS/HER CONTROL** that is of concern to you. Research a topic of personal interest to you, understand the current status of the matter, **and address your letter to the appropriate elected official**. Have a clear question or request that will generate a response. This material will be discussed and reviewed in class.

On a day to be selected you will turn in a corrected draft of your letter to the professor through the e-mail address for final grading and correction by the professor. **DO NOT MAIL IT YET!** When you get the professor’s comments back, correct your letter and send it, and e-mail a copy of the final version to the professor. If you get a response, please show the professor a copy of the answer. Possible topics could include financing of higher education, subsidy for solar power, homeless issues, affordable housing issues or development plans for the city. Examples: Congressmember Zoe Lofgren on immigration or high speed rail funding; State Senator Jim Beall on the funding for transportation programs or higher education tuition; Supervisor Cindy Chavez on medical care, mental health services or juvenile justice services; your councilmember on an issue that is important in your district (e.g., need for better park maintenance, pot clubs, gang diversion program, potholes in the street).

The letter will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Points
a) Completeness/correctness of the name and address for your representative	2
b) The professionalism with which the letter's issue is presented: clarity, appearance, grammar, spelling, appropriate word choice, "voice".	1
c) The comprehensiveness and care with which the request for assistance is framed.	1
d) The demonstration of understanding of the topic leading to the creation of a well-written letter	1
TOTAL	5

FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 18, 2017– 7:15 am– 9:30 am

The final exam will be in two parts. The first will be multiple choice, short answer or fill in the blank. There will be 45 minutes allotted for this part. The second part will be essay. You will have a choice of questions to write on.

For the essay portion you may have **one 8.5" x 11" sheet of notes, double sided**, that contains notes from any portion of the course or course materials, with your name on it. Bring at least 2 bluebooks and at least 3 pens or pencils to class. **You may not leave for any reason during the exam.** You will turn in your sheet of notes, the exam paper and your bluebooks together when you are finished, or at the end of class. They will all be returned when the test is graded.

Make up finals will only be available during finals week unless arrangements are made for an Incomplete before the end of finals period. Make-up finals are only offered for those with **a serious medical condition that is documented.** The make-up will be all essay and not the essays used for the class final.

Class	Date	Class Plan
1	8/23	Introduction/Welcome Attendance, add codes, pre-test. Introduction of students, review of syllabus and course expectations.
2	8/28	Readings: George Orwell essay; critical thinking materials. (e-mailed) Good writing in political science; what is critical thinking?
3	8/30	Plagiarism tutorial score due to professor at class e-mail. Library Day. Meet in the Room TBA at the library with Paul Kauppila, Political Science librarian. Learn about the research tools available to help with your papers, including Citation help, and sources for information on Council agenda items.
	9/4	NO CLASS...LABOR DAY... CAMPUS CLOSED
4	9/6	Wilson, Chapt 1: Study of American Government Who represents you at the federal, state and local levels? What do the different levels of government do? What issues concern you that are addressed by the different levels of government?
5	9/11	PATRIOTS' DAY Wilson, Chapt. 2: The Constitution; bring a copy of the US Constitution to class. Be prepared to review and discuss it.
6	9/13	Quiz on Chapt. 1 & 2: Government and Constitution Liberty versus security? Chapter 4: Civil Liberties Fighting terrorism versus surveillance. NSA leaks.
7	9/18	Chapter 5: Civil Rights
8	9/20	Chapter 3: Federalism
9	9/25	Quiz on Chapt. 3,4.&5 Civil Liberties, Civil Rights and Federalism Chapter 6: Public Opinion and the Media
10	9/27	Wilson Chapt. 7: Political parties and interest groups
11	10/2	Quiz on Chapt. 6 & 7: Public Opinion, Media, Political Parties and Interest Groups Chapter 8: Elections and Campaigns
	10/2	IF NEEDED: E-mail the professor by TODAY with the city and date of your alternative Council meeting and get approval.
12	10/4	Chapter 9: Congress
13	10/9	Quiz on Chapt 8 & 9: Campaigns & Elections and Congress Wilson, Chapter 10: The Presidency
14	10/11	City, county and state government roles – PPY; city hall tour video
15	10/16	Discussion of San Jose Council meeting; review of agenda; review of local newspaper coverage. Expectations for attendance at city council meeting. Logistics issues. READINGS: Review the news coverage of the issues on the Council

		Meeting agenda; research other information needed for the report on the city council meeting.
Exchanged for class 25, Nov. 27	10/17	Attend San Jose City Council meeting. Starts at 1:30pm. Stay until at least 2:45pm, but try to stay long enough to hear substantive discussion of issues. Write a report on this experience, instructions in syllabus. NOTE: if you cannot attend this council meeting due to a class or work conflict, you will have to find another local city council meeting to attend before this date. Many cities have evening meetings on Monday or Tuesday. E-mail the professor by OCTOBER 2 with the city and date of your alternate council meeting and get approval.
16	10/18	Wilson, Chapt. 11: The Bureaucracy
17	10/23	Guest Speaker: The Honorable Evan Low, Member, California State Assembly
18	10/25	COUNCIL REPORT <u>DRAFT</u> DUE TODAY Student oral reports/discussion on the 10/17 council meeting. Bring a complete draft to class of your report in either electronic or paper form <u>for your use</u> in the discussion of the council meeting. After you have heard all the discussion you may submit your final version electronically either at the end of class if it is ready, or you may revise it and submit it electronically by 5 pm on Friday, 10/27. NO PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER 10/27!
19	10/30	QUIZ on Chapt. 10 & 11: Presidency and Bureaucracy Wilson, Chapter 12: The Judiciary
20	11/1	Quiz Chapt. 12: The Judiciary LIST OF YOUR REPRESENTATIVES and DRAFT LETTER These may be electronic or paper drafts <u>for your use.</u> Bring to class a list of the following names and mailing addresses: Your congressman; your state senator; your assembly member; your member of the Board of Supervisors; the mayor/councilmember who represents your district. Correct in class after discussion. Using the draft letter each student will discuss the person the student is writing to and the topic each student is writing about, and why that is appropriate for that representative / level of government.
21	11/6	Submit corrected list of elected officials and letter by e-mail to professor for grading and correction. <u>Due by 9 am by e-mail.</u> Wilson, Chapt 13: Domestic Policy
22	11/8	Wilson, Chapt 13: Domestic Policy continued
23	11/13	Wilson, Chapt. 14: Foreign and Military Policy
24	11/15	Wilson, Chapt. 14: Foreign and Military Policy – Guest Speaker
25	11/20	Quiz on Chapt. 13 & 14: Domestic, Economic and Foreign Policy Gerston p. 1-100 – The unique features of California, its history, its governance.
	11/22	NO CLASS – CAMPUS CLOSED FOR THANKSGIVING
26	11/27	NO CLASS IN EXCHANGE FOR 10/24 COUNCIL MEETING
27	11/29	Gerston – critical issues in California continued

28	12/4	Quiz on Gerston 21 st Century California: emergency management: natural and technological threats, CBRNE terrorism, cybersecurity
29	12/6	Wilson, Chapt. 20 Issues for future concern: El Nino, drought; global warming, ice age Post test
30	12/11	LAST DAY OF CLASS- In class review- party
Final	12/18	Final Exam= 7:15 am...NOTE CLASS START TIME CHANGE!!!

Spelling and Grammar Guidance

Common Student Mistakes!!

1. Never use a long word when a short word will do. (George Orwell)
2. Never use “etc.” in a professional paper. It is meaningless. If you want to indicate that your list is only part of a larger potential list, say, “grapes, peaches and pears, *for example*,” or “*among other things*,” or a similar phrase.
3. Use your grammar checker, THEN proof read to be sure you selected the right usage in context.
 - a. Be careful of the “passive voice rule.” It is often appropriate, and if it should be changed to active voice, the suggested wording almost never makes sense.
 - b. Never use “change all” for a grammar rule, as it will lead to odd usages. Just read each suggestion and decide whether to change based on each sentence.
4. Use your spell checker, THEN proof read to be sure you selected the right word in context.
5. Check to be sure you are using the right homonym: Check especially for these four frequently misused sets:
 - a. Their, there
 - b. Right, write, rite, wright
 - c. Sight, site, cite
 - d. Its, it’s
6. Do not use contractions in formal writing unless it is a direct quote: Don’t, Can’t, It’s, Won’t, and all the others!
7. Check on capitalization. A sentence begins with a capital letter, as does a proper name of someone or someplace or an organization. Federal, state, city and local are only capitalized if they start a sentence or are part of a title or proper name. The federal government is not a proper name but the United States Government is, for example.
8. Capitalize at the start of most quotes, even when they are inside a sentence. Here is an example. I went to class and Professor Edwards said, “Do not ever use a contraction when writing for this class.” Titles are only capitalized when they come before a name: (Professor Edwards, the professor).
9. If you want to use an abbreviation or acronym (e.g., FEMA), be sure to spell it out the first time you use it. For example, “When James Lee Witt was head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), he came to San Jose. He wanted to show FEMA’s support for Mayor Susan Hammer.”
10. Be careful that you use “then” and “than” properly. “Then” is related to time sequences. For example, I went to school, **then** I took a nap.” A mnemonic that will help you to

remember the right order is that “Then” is related to “Time” and both have an “e”. “Than” is a comparison, such as, “I like cherries more **than** bananas.” Both have “a”.

11. Be careful in using the apostrophe for possessive and plural. For a plural word in English you just add the letter “s” or sometimes “es” or “ies.” **There is no punctuation for plural.** In general, to form a possessive you use “’s”. For example, “my **dog’s** bone.” The only exception is the word “its” which means “belonging to it” but does not take the punctuation. **It’s** means “**it is**,” a contraction, and you do not use contractions in formal writing.
12. In general you do not use commas after prepositional phrases. “In support of his position John gave two examples.” However, if you have several prepositional phrases before the main sentence you may set them off with commas to make it clear what relates to what. “In supporting his team for the finals, John wore a Shark’s shirt to school.”
13. Hyphens are used to join words that modify another word. For example, political-science professor, little-used car, pickled-herring merchant. Without the hyphens it might be hard to tell if the science professor was running for president, the used car was small, or the fish seller was drunk!
14. Abbreviations are only used for titles (Mr., Ms., Dr.) or standard suffixes (Jr., Sr., Ph.D.). States are abbreviated only when using a proper address, not in prose.
15. Numbers: spell out the word for numbers up to two words, and all numbers that begin a sentence (One hundred fifty boys went to school.) Write out the numbers if over 100 (e.g., 101 because that would be “one hundred one”). Always use the numerals for percentages, money, road routes or scientific calculations.
16. Italics within a sentence should be used for titles of works (books, movies, plays, poems, television programs), but not for Bible or Constitution. Italics are also used for foreign words, such as *vis a vis*. Avoid foreign words unless you are very sure you are using them correctly.
17. None and neither are always singular words. They were originally contractions that became their own words – none= no one, not one, and neither = not either one. So, singular verb forms are used with none and neither.
18. The verb agrees with the subject number. “There is one child here.” “There are no children here.” The verb does not agree with the complement. “**None** of the boys **is** going to the game.”
19. Gerunds are always singular. “**Encouraging** good writing **is** important.”
20. Pronouns must match the noun and verb. “The doctors finished their rounds.” “The doctor finished his rounds.” When you do not know the gender, use masculine. Singular generic nouns must take “he” or “she.” Do not use “they” to avoid the gender problem!