

Political Science 001 – Introduction to American Government Section 80, Spring 2017– Dr. James Brent

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Office Hours:
Mondays 8:00-9:00 and 10:30-12:00
Wednesdays 8:00-9:00
Thursdays 4:30 to 6:00

It is very important that all students read this syllabus closely and completely, because you are responsible for all of the information contained therein.

This is a GE course that fulfills the American Institutions Requirement. As a result, the learning objectives for this course are established by university policy. At the end of this course, all students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of”

³⁵/₁₇ the foundations of the political system, including the evolution of the philosophies of the U.S. and California constitutions, political culture, separation of powers, bureaucracy, federalism, and relations among various levels of government. Students should also analyze the evolving institutions of government, including a study of the powers of the President, Congress, and the Judiciary

³⁵/₁₇ the links between the people and government, including participation and voting, political parties, interest groups, and public opinion and socialization. Students should also analyze the rights and obligations of citizens, the tension between various freedoms of expression and due process and the maintenance of order, and the efforts to end racial and gender discrimination in both the public and private sectors of society

³⁵/₁₇ the operations of California government, including the similarities and differences between the California and U.S. Constitutions, the relationship between state and local government in California, the basic issues of California politics, and a careful assessment of the impact of demographic changes on the history and politics of the state and the nation.

Textbooks

The main “textbook” in this course is an online (electronic) multimedia textbook entitled *Globalyceum*. The cost is about \$40. I will follow up with additional details about how to access the site.

In addition, there is one traditional textbook that can be purchased at Amazon.com or other retail sites (although you will not need it until the second half of the course)

Van Vechten, Renee. (2016) *California Politics: A Primer* (4th edition). Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-1483375595

Course Modules (What You Are Responsible For)

This course is divided into 9 topics, or “modules.” Most of the modules last for two weeks, except for Modules #2 and #9, which each last for only one week. Each module begins at noon on a Monday and ends at noon one or two weeks later. **Assignments related to each module are always due at noon on Monday.**

Each of the 9 modules contains the following elements. You must complete each element of each module:

1. Assigned Readings – Each module has an assigned reading from *Globalyceum* or *California Politics* that you will be responsible for on the exams.
2. Lectures – Each module has between one and five short lectures that you must view. You will be responsible for the content of these videos on the exam. These can be accessed by clicking the “modules” tab
3. Web-Based Activity (Research Assignment) – In each module, you will be asked to write a short paper based on internet research on a particular issue related to that module. These can be found by clicking the “assignments” tab. **Web-based activities are always due at noon on their respective due dates**

In addition, there will be a midterm, a final exam, and a final paper.

There are a maximum of 220 possible points, which are distributed accordingly:

Web-Based Research Assignments	80 points
Midterm Exam (March 22 & 23)	40 points
Final Exam (May 18 & 19)	40 points
Outline & List of Sources	10 points
Research Paper (due Nov. 28 or Dec. 12)	50 points

Calculating Your Grade – For this class, I grade on a traditional 90/80/70 scale. Grades within 2 points of any number divisible by 10 will earn a “plus” or “minus” depending on whether it is higher or lower than the number. For example, you must earn a 93% or higher to earn an “A.” Grades between 90% and 92% will receive an “A minus.” Grades between 88% and 89% will earn a “B+.” Grades between 83% and 87% will earn a “B”, grades between 80% and 82% will receive a “B minus.” And so on.

The Assignments Explained

Web-Based Assignments -- For each of the 9 modules of this course, you will be given a activity/assignment relevant to that particular module. Usually, the activity will require you to locate and retrieve information from the Internet and present an analysis of that information to your classmates, although some involve taking and submitting pictures. More information about the specific activities can be found from the course homepage by clicking on the icon that says "assignments".

Students must complete 8 of the 9 assignments. Assignments are worth 10 points each, These assignments will not be accepted if submitted later than the end of the “grace period” (explained below), no matter what the reason. However, students can skip one assignment without suffering any damage to their grade in the course. If a student submits more than 8 assignments, I will count only their 8 highest scores

The Midterm and Final Examinations -- In this course, you will be required to take a midterm exam and a final exam. These exams will be administered on-line and are, therefore, open-book, open-note exams. Each exam will be a combination of short-answer, multiple-choice and essay questions. The final exam is NOT cumulative. The midterm covers modules 1-5 and the final exam covers modules 6-9. Each exam will be available on-line for a 48-hour period. You must begin the exam within that 48-hour period. You will have 90 minutes to complete each exam. Access to course lectures and Globalyceum will be disabled once the exam period begins.

Research Paper

Even after only a few days in office, President Trump & the Republican Congress have already challenged many of the fundamental assumptions and practices of American government. For your research paper, you will be asked to select one specific proposal Trump or Congress has made or action they have taken and argue for or against its adoption.

This assignment has three parts:

1. Topic Selection & Approval (0 points)
2. Outline & List of Sources (10 points)
3. Paper (50 points)

Step 1 - Topic Selection & Approval (due February 27)

Please send me an email (james.brent@sjsu.edu) telling me what specific proposal or action you want to write about. I will send you a reply email letting you know whether your topic is approved or not. There are NO points associated with this.

Step 2 – Outline & List of Sources (due April 17)

Using the “assignment” tab in Canvas, please submit a one-page outline of your paper, along with a list of 15 sources that you might use in the paper. These sources should be credible, unbiased sources, and at least five (5) should be peer-reviewed articles, law review articles, or other academic sources. You should use proper bibliographic form, but I do not care whether you use MLA, APA, or another style. [Please note: By listing sources here, you are NOT committing yourself to using those exact sources in your final paper.]

Step 3 – The Paper (due May 1 or May 15)

Your final draft should be a minimum of 8 pages long and should use a minimum of 8 high-quality sources. Please note five important aspects of this assignment:

- ³⁵₁₇ This is an analytical paper. In other words, your paper should be devoted to defending your conclusion using logic and evidence. It should use only credible sources, and it should back up its assertions with facts taken from credible sources. It should also consider both sides of the issue.
- ³⁵₁₇ This is a research paper. That means that you should conduct research to find relevant information to support your conclusion. Although I am interested in your opinion, you must be able to support that opinion with facts and figures and evidence. You will obtain these facts and figures and evidence from your research. Please note that the better and more numerous your sources, the higher your grade is likely to be. Academic sources are especially encouraged. *Papers that use only web sites as sources cannot receive a “A” or “B.” Papers that use Wikipedia or an online encyclopedia as a source cannot receive an “A.”*
- ³⁵₁₇ This is a paper about government. Although your paper should certainly address the issue of whether the proposal is a good idea (would it work?), it should also address issues such as its constitutionality, its effect on federalism, its effect on separation of powers (if any), etc.
- ³⁵₁₇ You must provide attribution. In an academic paper, you must cite your sources within the text of the paper, as well as provide a “works cited” page at the end. This applies both to direct quotes from other authors AND circumstances in which you merely use the ideas or information reported by another author. *Please note: all papers are automatically submitted to Turnitin.com.*
- ³⁵₁₇ Your writing counts. Points will be deducted for poor spelling and grammar.
- ³⁵₁₇ Effort counts. This paper should be at least 8, typed, double-spaced pages long, and it should use a minimum of 8 sources. Papers that demonstrate more effort are more likely to receive a higher grade than papers that demonstrate less effort.
- ³⁵₁₇ Certain Topics Are Off Limits – There are several topics that you may not write about. These include any proposals or actions related to gay marriage, marijuana, the death penalty, or gun control.

My Late Policy

The Research Paper – I do accept the research paper if submitted late. In fact, there are two alternative due dates for the research paper. If you submit the paper by noon on Monday, May 1, you will receive written feedback from me along with your grade (although you will not receive the opportunity to revise the paper – merely feedback that explains how your grade was arrived at). If you want extra time to work on your paper, you may submit it by noon on Monday, May 15 and it will be considered “on time,” but it will not receive any written feedback from me. Papers submitted after noon on May 15 will be considered late and will receive a penalty of one letter grade.

The Web-Based Research Activities – I do NOT accept these assignments late, regardless of the excuse. There are no exceptions to this policy whatsoever. However, to accommodate students who have technical difficulties, you do enjoy a 60-minute “grace period.” If you miss the submission deadline due to technical issues, you may email it to me instead at james.brent@sjsu. However, I must receive the submission within 60 minutes of the original due date and time (in other words, no later than 1:00 p.m. on the due date). Under no circumstances will I accept assignments submitted after the grace period expires.

Contacting Me

I am happy to receive your questions and feedback. I would ask that you contact me in one of two ways:

- 1) via email at james.brent@sjsu.edu
- 2) From Canvas -- click “Inbox” and then the “new message” icon at the top to send me a message

Please do NOT use the “comment” feature to send me messages, as I do not receive all of them.

In addition, I will occasionally post “announcements” in Canvas. It is very important that you make sure to read all of these announcements.

List of Course Modules and Assigned Readings

Module #1 – The American Constitution (January 26 through February 6)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 1

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: February 6 at noon

Module #2 – Federalism (February 6 through February 13)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 2

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: February 13 at noon

Module #3 – Civil Liberties & Civil Rights (February 13 through February 27)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 3

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: February 27 at noon

Module #4 – American Elections (February 27 through March 13)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 4

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: March 13 at noon

Module #5 – Political Parties & Interest Groups (March 13 through March 20)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 5

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: March 20 at noon

MIDTERM ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY, MARCH 22 AND 23

Module #6 – Congress (March 20 through April 10)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 6

Van Vechten, Chapter 4

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: April 10 at noon

Module #7 – The Presidency & the Executive Branch (April 10 through April 24)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 7

Van Vechten, Chapter 5

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: April 24 at noon

Module #8 – The Judiciary (April 24 through May 8)

--READING: Globalyceum, Module 8

Van Vechten, Chapter 6

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: May 8 at noon

Module #9 – California Politics and Government (May 8 through May 15)

--READINGS: Van Vechten, Chapters 2, 3 7, 8 and 9

--ASSIGNMENTS DUE: May 15 at noon

FINAL EXAM ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, MAY 18 AND 19

University Policies

Per University Policy S16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, etc. will be available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo>