

San José State University
Department of Political Science
Political Science 102-1: State Government and Politics
Spring 2017

Professor: Garrick L. Percival

Office Location: Clark Hall 453

Telephone: (408) 924-5553

Email: garrick.percival@sjsu.edu (preferred contact)

Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3, Thursday 2-3, and by appt.

Class Days/Time: Tuesday and Thursday 12-1:15pm

Classroom: DMH 149A

CANVAS Website: <http://sjsu.instructure.com>

Course Description

This course provides an overview of state government and politics in the U.S. governing system. While often overlooked, especially among national media outlets, state governments have a tremendous impact on citizens' daily lives and welfare. Decisions about environmental pollution, taxes, the stringency of punishments on drug users and criminals, the kinds of educational or welfare opportunities available, or the degree of gridlock on state highways (among many other issues) are influenced, to a large degree, by the decisions of state government.

But as U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said long ago, the U.S. States are "laboratories of democracy." How states go about solving problems that people care about differ dramatically. For example, in capital criminal cases, a state like Texas uses the death penalty (relatively) frequently. Many residents there support the use of capital punishment. Yet there are also many other states that don't even have the death penalty (Minnesota), and still others (California) that have the death penalty but don't actually use it. Why is this? What causes a state to use the most extreme form of punishment imaginable (taking someone's life) while, in another state, the idea seems barbaric. What's more puzzling still is that despite these differences each state's laws and practices fall under this larger rubric we call the United States of America, where everyone is ostensibly treated equal.

This, of course, is a question that resonates beyond the narrow (but important) confines of capital punishment. It's another way of asking why states do what they do more broadly. What explains why states take a particular course of action? Answering this requires us to undertake a comparative analysis of state government. State government and politics vary markedly. States come in different sizes, with different racial, cultural, and political histories. Given this we will examine the role the U.S. states play in the larger federalist system and how "state context" shapes intergovernmental relations in an increasingly complex policy making environment. States also have different constitutions with different institutional designs and powers. We will examine the important role that state institutions play--the design of state legislatures, the presence/absence of term limits, gubernatorial powers, and the structure of state court systems. We will investigate the degree to which state policy outcomes are representative of what the public wants and the role that organized interests and political parties play in state election and

policymaking. Throughout the semester we will take a particularly close look at California government and politics and investigate whether California is a political trendsetter, an aberration, or something else.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

Political Science Program Learning Outcomes

- **Breadth**
Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
- **Application**
Students should be able to apply a variety of techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
- **Disciplinary methods**
Student should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, have competence in systematic data gathering using library sources, government documents, and data available through electronic sources, should be able to evaluate research studies, and should be able to critically analyze and interpret influential political texts.
- **Communication Skills**
Students should master basic competencies in oral and written communication skills and be able to apply these skills in the context of political science. This means communicating effectively about politics and/or public administration, public policy, and law.
- **Citizenship**
Students should acquire an understanding of the role of the citizen in local, state, national, and global contexts and appreciate the importance of lifelong participation in political processes.

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

- CLO1.** Demonstrate knowledge of social science theories of government and politics and use them to explain the behavior, decisions, and outcomes of state governments in the United States (**Assessed by quizzes 1-6, midterm exam, final exam, and term paper**)
- CLO2.** Critically analyze the role and function of state governments in the American federalist system (**Assessed by quizzes 1-2; midterm exam, term paper**)
- CLO3.** Demonstrate knowledge of the politics, public issues, and governing processes of California's state government (**Assessed by quizzes 4-5; midterm exam; final exam**)
- CLO4.** Develop a set of practical skills that facilitate your engagement with, and participation in, state government and politics. (**Assessed by State Politics Simulation exercise**)

Required Texts/Readings**

Textbooks

- Thomas Dye and Susan Macmanus. *Politics in States and Communities*. 15th edition. Pearson.
- League of Women Voters of California. *Guide to California Government*. 16th edition.
- Additional readings are also listed on the course outline below.

**I also encourage you to read a newspaper, online journal, or blog that covers California politics and government. *The Los Angeles Times* (latimes.com), the *San Jose Mercury News* (mercurynews.com) or the *Sacramento Bee* (sacbee.com) are all good sources, but there are a number of others. John Meyers, who covers the state capitol for the. Rough and Tumble, <http://www.rtumble.com>, is a great website

that compiles the day's top stories in California government. News items that are relevant to the course will be posted on Canvas from time to time and may be required reading for the quizzes and exams.

Course Requirements and Assignments

SJSU classes are designed such that in order to be successful, it is expected that students will spend a minimum of forty-five hours for each unit of credit (normally three hours per unit per week), including preparing for class, participating in course activities, completing assignments, and so on. More details about student workload can be found in University Policy S12-3 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-3.pdf>.

Your course grade will be determined by the following 6 components

	<u>Points Possible</u>
Midterm Exam	200 points
Final Exam	200 points
Quizzes (6)	120 points
Term Paper	160 points
State Leg. Politics Simulation	80 points
Class Participation	40 points

Total 800 points

Course Letter Grades will be assigned using the following scale:

A+=99-100%	A=93-98%	A- =90-92%	B+=87-89%
B=83-86%	B-=80-82%	C+=77-79%	C=73-76%
C-=70-72%	D+=67-69%	D=63-66%	D-=60-62%
F=59% or below			

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer or essay questions drawn from assigned readings and lecture/discussion material. A short study guide will be provided 1 week before the exam.

Final Exam

The final exam will be comprehensive and consist of both multiple choice and short answer or essay questions. Please note the date and time of the final exam listed on the course schedule below. A short study guide will be provided 1 week before the exam.

Quizzes

There will be five quizzes (all multiple choice/true false format) during the semester to test your knowledge on that week's assigned readings. Quiz dates are listed on the course outline (see below). Quizzes will be open note, open book, and administered on the Canvas site for the course. I will provide more detail about the quizzes during the second week of class.

Term Paper Assignment

A 8-10 page paper will be required. The paper will ask students to research and analyze a public policy of their choice with emphasis placed on a policies adopted and implemented at the state level. I will provide a separate memo for this assignment outlining the requirements and grading criteria.

State Legislative Politics Simulation

In the final two weeks of the semester, students will be participating in state politics simulation. A separate memo detailing the requirements of this assignment will be distributed during week 6 of the semester. Simulation roles will be assigned right after the midterm exam.

Class Participation

It is expected that students come to class ready to engage with their colleagues and with the day's assigned material. Your participation grade will reflect the degree to which you actively participate in group or class discussions, complete occasional in-class "mini" critical thinking exercises, and ask or answer questions during lecture.

Classroom Protocol and Policies

Proper Use of Technology

At times we will be using our tablets, smartphones, and laptops to work on assignments and group projects in class. **Aside from those times, your phones and computers need to be turned off and put away.** In the classroom environment, texting, social networking, web searching—or any of the myriad things we all can do with with our technology—hurts our ability to listen and communicate as effectively as possible. If you absolutely must use your phone, please leave the classroom. Students who violate this policy more than once will be asked to leave.

Late Exam and Term Paper Policy

Make--up exams are only given in cases of excused absences in accordance with the university's policy on excused absences. Circumstances that may lead to an excused student absence are subpoenas, jury duty, military duty, religious observances, documented illness, illness of a dependent, and bereavement for immediate family. If you are a member of a SJSU varsity intercollegiate athletic team, please provide me with your team schedule during the first week of the class.

Papers that are turned in late will be penalized 10 points for every 24 hours

past the original due date. For example, a paper turned in 10 minutes past the scheduled time it was due will be marked down 10 points. This same penalty will apply to a paper turned in up to 24 hours past the original due date. For every 24 hours after that, a paper will be penalized an additional letter grade and so on until the start value is an 'F'. Please be aware of this policy and be sure to get your writing assignments turned in on time.

Class Notes and Additional Useful Information

This is a course that covers a lot of material in a short period of time. I expect every student in class to participate by asking questions and actively participating in group and class discussions. Although attendance in the class is not mandatory it is obviously difficult to participate if you do not attend class. You each have a lot to bring into the class and the course becomes much more rewarding if you frequently participate.

On most class days I will provide PDF versions of Power Point slides that provide brief headings and outlines of the day's material. These will be posted on the course Canvas site before each day's class.

The Canvas site will also be used to view relevant newspaper articles and academic papers, and when the time comes, check your performance on the graded assignments.

Finally, I am more than happy to help answer any questions you have about the course at any time during the semester. If my office hours do not work with your schedule please don't hesitate to make an appointment with me outside of normal office hours. To make an appointment the best way to contact me is via email. Of course you can talk with me right before or right after class as well. This should be a fun and rewarding semester. Work hard and good luck!

POLS 102-1: State Government and Politics (spring 2017) Schedule*

**Schedule is subject to change with fair notice and will be announced via email and/or in--class announcement.*

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
0	1/26	Course Overview <u>Readings</u> No Assigned Reading
1	1/31 & 2/2	Studying State Government: Do States Matter? <u>Readings</u> Dye and MacManus (hereafter D&M) Chapter 1 "13 Issues for States to Watch in 2017" (Canvas)
2	2/7 & 2/9	Federalism <u>Readings</u> D&M Chapter 2 Steven Teles "Kludgeocracy" (on Canvas) "State Politics vs. the Federal Government" (Canvas) Assignment: Quiz #1 due 2/9 at 11:55pm (on Canvas)
3	2/14 & 2/16	State Constitutions and Direct Democracy <u>Readings</u> D&M Chapter 2 Read Preamble and Declaration of Rights in the U.S. Constitution, California Constitution, Constitution of Iowa (links on Canvas)
4	2/21 & 2/23	Political Participation <u>Readings</u> D&M Chapter 4 The worst voter turnout in 72 years? (on Canvas) Assignment: Quiz #2 due 2/23 at 11:55pm (on Canvas)

5	2/28 & 3/2	<p>Political Parties and Campaigns</p> <p><u>Readings</u> D&M Chapter 5 Guide to California Government Chapters 1-2</p>
6	3/7 & 3/9	<p>State Legislatures</p> <p><u>Readings</u> D&M Chapter 6</p> <p>Assignment: Quiz #3 due 3/9 at 11:55pm (on Canvas)</p>
7	3/14 & 3/16	<p>The Politics of State Legislatures</p> <p><u>Readings</u> Guide to California Government, Chapter 4 Midterm Exam Tuesday 3/14</p>
8	3/21 & 3/23	<p>The Politics of State Legislatures and Intro of Governors and Execs.</p> <p><u>Readings</u> "How Have Term Limits Affected the California Legislature" Polarization Interrupted? California's Experiment with the Top-Two Primary" D&M Chapter 7 Assignment: Quiz #4 due 3/23 at 11:55pm (on Canvas)</p>
9	3/28 & 3/30	No Class: Spring Break!!!
10	4/4 & 4/6	<p>Governors and Executives Continued. . .</p> <p><u>Readings</u> Guide to California Government Chapter 5 Assignment: Quiz #5 due 4/6 at 11:55pm (on Canvas)</p>
11	4/11 & 4/13	<p>The Courts, Crime, and Correctional Policy</p> <p><u>Readings</u> D&M Chapter 9 Jeff Yates and Richard Fording, 2005. "Punishment in Black and White." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 67, 4: 1099-1121. (on Canvas)</p>
12	4/18 & 4/20	<p>The California Legal System</p> <p><u>Readings</u> <i>Guide to California Government</i>, chapter 6 "A Primer: The Impact of Three Strikes after More Than a Decade" (on Canvas) Assignment: Quiz #6 due 4/20 at 11:55pm (on Canvas)</p>

13	4/25 & 4/27	Metropolitics <u>Readings</u> D&M chapter 12
14	5/2 & 5/4	State Politics Simulation (in-class exercise) <u>Readings</u> Review relevant readings in the course to prepare for your simulation role Assignment: Term Paper Due Tuesday 5/4 at 11:55pm (submit on Canvas)
15	5/9 & 5/11	State Politics Simulation (in-class exercise) <u>Readings</u> No assigned readings
16	5/16	State Politics Simulation (in-class exercise) <u>Readings</u> No Assigned Readings
		Final Exam Wednesday May 24th, 9:45am-12pm