

**San José State University**  
**Political Science**  
**POLS 15B - Essentials of U.S. & California Government, Section 4**  
**Spring 2018**

**Course and Contact Information**

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<b>Office Hours:</b>	MW 2:00-3:00, 4:30-6:00 and by appointment (including weekends)
<b>Class Days/Time:</b>	MW 3:00-4:15
<b>Classroom:</b>	Hugh Gillis Hall (HGH) 116
<b>GE/SJSU Studies Category:</b>	US2, US3, D3

**Welcome!**

Welcome to POLS 15B – a survey of the construction of the U.S. and California’s government. This class will be an exciting exploration of theory, history and function of U.S. governance systems. Why do we have government at all? How is it organized? When has it succeeded? Why does it often fail? Most importantly, how and when can we use government as mechanism to improve society and how do we make ourselves better and more efficacious citizens?

This class uses a historical lens to explore how many of the problems in today’s society have their genesis decades, often centuries ago. We will learn how and why America’s governance system is unique in the world, both as a first mover in the development of liberal democracy but as one of the world’s few Federalist systems. Finally, we will deep dive on the policy ramifications of the U.S. government system and explore how even small changes in governmental function can have massive practical ramifications for everyday citizens.

**Faculty Web Page and MYSJSU Messaging**

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, can be found on the Canvas learning management system course website. Please make sure you are consistently reachable via the messaging system as e-mails through the Canvas system and the student’s individual e-mails are how I maintain contact with the class over the course of the semester. The responsibility for being up-to-date on developments in the class and assignments lies with the student.

By enrolling in this course you consent to all course requirements listed in this syllabus, published on our Canvas site, and announced in class. You accept responsibility for accessing the Canvas course website to download any required handouts, assignments, or readings. You also accept responsibility for checking the course website regularly for any announcements. You also accept responsibility for receiving any messages sent via the MySJSU email system. Make sure that MySJSU has your current email address. Contact me by Thursday of week one if you cannot access the Canvas website, download and read .pdf files, link to other websites, or send or receive email.

## **Course Description**

**From the SJSU Course Catalog:** Treatment of essentials of U.S. and California government. 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

**From the SJSU GE Guidelines (S14-5):** In this course you will be exposed to alternative interpretations of the historical events and political processes that have shaped the social, economic, and political system in which you live. This course will provide a multicultural framework, including both conflict and consensus perspectives, of the choices and options available to individuals and groups in their social, economic and political relations. The focus of the course is the growth of a multicultural society and the interactions, including cooperation and conflict, as these many and varied peoples have dealt with social, economic, and political issues

## **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 midterm and final exams, the questions on in-class quizzes, case study memos and the ideology quiz reflection paper.**
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 midterm and final exams, case study memos and the questions on in-class quizzes.**
3. **GELO 3 (D3):** Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. **Assessed by the policy paper assignment and the supporting evidence assignment.**
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 the policy paper assignment, case study memos, and the ideology quiz reflection paper.**

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 policy paper assignment, supporting evidence assignment and case study memos.**
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 policy paper assignment and the case study memos.**

## Required Texts/Readings

### Textbooks

*Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. The Logic of American Politics, 8th ed. (Sage CQ Press, 2017)*  
ISBN# 1506358667

*Guide to California Government, 16th ed. (League of Women Voters of California, 2015)*  
ISBN# 0963246526

Please note: Older editions of these books are acceptable to purchase though it is strongly recommended that a student not buy an edition more than five years old. Moreover, key information, page numbers and chapter numbers may vary from edition to edition. It is the student's responsibility to account for these discrepancies when they exist.

### Other Readings/Media

Tamar Gendler, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Politics and Economics*  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mm8asJxdcds&t=20s>)

Kraft & Furlong, *Public Policy: Politics, Analysis, and Alternatives*  
*Chapter 1 Available on Canvas*

PBS NewsHour, Diagnosing the systemic problems plaguing the VA  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GD7WCJKKA8>)

Adam Ruins Everything, Why You Should Tell Coworkers Your Salary  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7xH7eGFuSYI>)

Adams Ruins Everything, The Disturbing History of the Suburbs  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ETR9qrVS17g>)

Gunned Down: The Power of the NRA  
(<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/gunned-down/>)

CQ Researchers, *Issues for Debate in American Public Policy Selections*, 16<sup>th</sup> Edition

Chapters 4, 6 & 13 available on library reserve  
([https://www.amazon.com/Issues-American-Selections-Researcher-Seventeenth/dp/1506347150/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1502225717&sr=8-1&keywords=cq+researcher](https://www.amazon.com/Issues-American-Selections-Researcher-Seventeenth/dp/1506347150/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1502225717&sr=8-1&keywords=cq+researcher)) if you wish to purchase your own copy

## **Course Requirements and Assignments**

### **Assignment #1 – Syllabus Quiz (Due Before Class, January 28<sup>th</sup>)**

By the second class, students must take the syllabus tutorial (the link will be posted on Canvas), in order to demonstrate knowledge of the class' structure, policies and expectations.

### **Assignment #2 – Ideology Quiz Reflection Paper (Due Before Class, February 5<sup>th</sup>)**

This is an exciting writing assignment that gives you the opportunity to think more about your own background and how your life events and environment have affected the way you view the political world. A detailed prompt will be available on Canvas at the beginning of week 2. *To receive credit, students will submit a reflection of around 500 words on their experience to Canvas before class on February 5th and participate in the class discussion about the articles in class. Late assignments will not be accepted.* See the prompt on the class' Powerpoint slides for further information. This assignment assesses GELOs 1 and 4.

### **Assignment #3 – Supporting Evidence (Due Before Class, February 26<sup>th</sup>)**

You will need to provide supporting evidence for all three of your papers (see paper instructions, below). The purpose of this homework is to assist you in finding journal articles and interpreting results to provide such support. This assignment has two parts: (1) In class, each student will be assigned a footnote found in one of the Kernell chapters. You will find the journal article in the library system and save an electronic copy of it. You will write one paragraph summarizing the major findings in the article. You will then write a second paragraph on whether or not you agree with Kernell et al's interpretation of the article. (2) You will find a second book, article or report that also cites the article you were assigned. Discuss the differences or similarities between how Kernell et al. utilize the work and the how the second source you discover does the same. Write one final paragraph describing the process you used to find the articles in the library system. *To receive credit, students will submit all four paragraphs described above, and an electronic copy of both articles to Canvas before class on February 26<sup>th</sup> and participate in the class discussion about the articles in class. Late assignments will not be accepted.* This assignment assesses GELOs 3 and 5

### **Assignment #4 – Case Study Response Memos (Due Before Class February 19<sup>th</sup>, March 21<sup>st</sup> & April 16<sup>th</sup>)**

Throughout the course of the semester, we will review 3 case studies in the *CQ Issues for Debate* text. You must submit a 500-word response memo for these cases. The purpose of these memos is to prepare the class such that we can have a productive and lively discussion of the topic. These memos need not be stressful or particularly detailed. Each student will have a specific question assigned to them that they must be prepared to discuss in class intelligently. In addition, please address the following:

- 1) Why is the issue covered in the chapter considered to be a problem? Do different groups have differing opinions on whether the issue is a problem or what exactly the problem is?
- 2) Why is this issue a *public* problem? Why should the government be involved or *should* the government even be involved at all? Is this something the market could handle without government interference? Is this a political problem or a technical problem or both?
- 3) What are your thoughts on this issue? Is there something you feel the chapter overlooked/shortchanged?

*To receive credit, students must turn their memos to Canvas before class begins on the respective day. Late assignments will not be accepted.* This assignment assesses GELOs 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6.

### **Assignment #5 – Policy Paper Problem Statement (Due Before Class April 18<sup>th</sup>)**

This assignment serves as an early “first draft” of your policy paper. It is a 1-2 page document that outlines a public problem including the problem’s scope, magnitude and trend citing relevant sources including government reports and academic articles. *To receive credit, students must turn their memos to Canvas before class begins on the respective day. Late assignments will not be accepted.* This assignment assesses GELOs 3, 4, 5 and 6.

### **In-Class Quizzes (Various)**

There will be six quizzes covering the lectures and assigned readings, given in class. Quizzes will not be announced ahead of time. The purpose of these quizzes is to test whether students are coming in to class with basic comprehension of the reading material in order to inform class discussion. *6 in-class quizzes will be given, of which 4 will count for the student’s grade.* Thus, a student can miss up to two quizzes and still receive a perfect score. The quizzes will assess GELOs 1 and 2.

### **Policy Research Paper (Due 11:59 pm, May 7th)**

You will be required to write a (minimum 1,500 word) research paper addressing a domestic policy reform of your choice. You will posit a public problem, justify that it is a problem, research this issue, and describe and critically evaluate both the current policy and at least one possible policy change that you will propose. Finally, you will describe at least one action you could take as a citizen in support of this policy. I will provide a detailed prompt for the policy paper assignment on Canvas later in the semester. In your paper, you will be required to use 4-5 government report or peer-reviewed academic sources and use either APA or APSA formatting. *The paper is due at 11:59pm on December 4th. Late papers will be graded; however, a later paper will be penalized 1 letter grade points for each day it is late. Thus, papers more than 5 days late will fail automatically.* The policy paper will assess GELOs 3, 4, 5 & 6.

### **Midterm Exam (Beginning of Class, March 14<sup>th</sup>)**

The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, definitions and essay questions. A review sheet of relevant terms and essay questions will be provided ahead of time. The exam will assess GELOs 1 and 2. Bring a Scantron 882-E and #2 pencil. The midterm exam is scheduled for the beginning of class on March 12<sup>th</sup>.

### Final Exam (12:15p, May 17<sup>th</sup>)

The final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. A review sheet of relevant terms and essay questions will be provided ahead of time. The exam will assess GELOs 1 and 2. Bring a T&E 200 scantron and #2 pencil. The midterm exam is scheduled for the beginning of class on May 17th.

### Class Participation

Students will be graded on the quality and quantity of their participation in class discussion, group projections and during lectures. Specifically, students are expected to participate in interactive question and answer sessions through **Peardeck.com** (I will explain the logistics of how this works in class). At the end of every class, the student's responses will be judged on their comprehensiveness, thoughtfulness and the extent to which they reflect students having done the readings. Answers to class discussions need not be "correct" per se, so long as they reflect genuine engagement with the material.

Assignment & Exam Schedule	
Syllabus Quiz	January 28th
Ideology Quiz Reflection Paper	February 5th
Case Study #1	February 19th
Supporting Evidence	February 26th
Mid-term Exam	March 14th
Case Study #2	March 21st
Case Study #3	April 16th
Policy Problem Statement	April 18th
Policy Paper	May 7th
Final Exam	May 17th

While I expect you to attend class regularly, per University Policy F-15-12 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>), students will not be graded on daily attendance. One of the purposes of this class is to help simulate the stamina necessary to stick with a project day-in, day-out even as your interest in it naturally waxes and wanes. It is very, *very* unlikely that a student who misses class regularly will do well. More importantly, classroom discussion will tease out much of the important nuance in the readings. As such, regular attendance is strongly encouraged.

Your grade will be calculated as follows:

Grading Paradigm			
98 - 100%	A+	77 - 79.9%	C+
93 - 97.9%	A	73 - 76.9%	C
90 - 92.9%	A-	70 - 72.9%	C-
87 - 89.9%	B+	67 - 69.9%	D+
83 - 86.9%	B	63 - 66.9%	D
80 - 82.9%	B-	60 - 62.9%	D-
	Below 60%	F	

And assignments and exams will be weighted accordingly:

Assignment	%
Quizzes (2% points each)	8
Participation	10
Midterm Exam	15
Policy Paper	20
Final Exam	20
Assignments	27
Syllabus Quiz (2%)	
Ideology Quiz Reflection Paper (4 %)	
3 Case Study Memos (12%, 4% each)	
Supporting Evidence (4%)	
Policy Paper Problem Statement (5%)	

### **Make-up/Late Policy**

There are no make-up exams or other assignments without appropriate documentation (serious medical illness or serious medical emergency, religious holiday, pre-approved university-sanctioned event or activity, military orders, family emergency) that you were unable to complete the assignment on time.

This also applies to in-class assignments. If you are seriously ill, you must notify me as soon as possible by email or on my office phone that you will be unable to complete an assignment on time. Except in cases of documented medical emergency, you **MUST** notify me before the scheduled assignment.

Out of fairness to your colleagues, work, missing an alarm, and generally not feeling well will not be accepted excuses for missing assignments. Be sure you schedule all of our assignments right away. If you have a vacation or similar event planned during one of these assignment days, you may want to take this course during another session or make arrangements to hand in the assignment early.

Major assignments like the policy paper will be graded if handed in late; however, these will be penalized commensurate with how late they were. If you have reason to think you will not make a deadline, always at least discuss it with me first. I can't guarantee anything, but I can guarantee a fair hearing.

Communication will always lead to a better outcome for you than not communicating.

### **Classroom Policies and Protocol**

#### **Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all meetings for the courses in which they are enrolled as they are responsible for material discussed therein, and active participation is frequently essential to ensure maximum benefit to all class members. Attendance is fundamental to course objectives and is the responsibility of the student.

It is expected that you will attend class regularly although attendance is not an explicit portion of your grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain class notes from a colleague in class. If you are late, please do not be disruptive. If you know that you need to leave early, please give me a heads up before class and sit near the door so as to draw as little attention as possible when leaving. Every student is expected to participate in class discussion regularly.

**Cellphones, laptops, and other technology**

You may not use your cell phone in class for non-class purposes. If you need to have it on for family reasons, please let me know ahead of time, turn it on vibrate and leave it out of sight. If you must make an emergency text, feel free to step outside of class. All other texting needs to take place before or after class. Laptops, tablets, and other such technology are allowed in class but for notetaking and educational use only. I reserve the right to bar specific students from using these technologies if they are making inappropriate use of them during class time. Please see me if you have questions about this policy or questions regarding SJSU academic accommodations related to this policy.

**Recording of Lectures**

Please obtain my permission before taking an audio or video recording of lectures or other class activities. I will almost certainly grant such permission but it is common courtesy to let people know you will be recording them before you do so. Thus, out of respect to your colleagues and to me, please do not record this class without my explicit permission.

**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 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>”

**Workload and Credit Hour Requirements**

Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally 3 hours per unit per week with 1 of the hours used for lecture) for instruction or preparation/studying or course related activities including but not limited to internships, labs, clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

**Course Schedule**

Date	Topic	Readings/Media	Due
Unit #1 - The Basis of Government in the U.S.			
24-Jan	Why have government at all?	<i>Gendler Introduction</i>	
28-Jan	What can government do?	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 1	Syllabus Quiz
30-Jan	What should government do?	Kraft & Furlong - Chapter 1	
	The Philosophical Basis of the U.S. Government		Ideology Quiz
5-Feb		Kernell - Chapter 2 & Appendix 2	Reflection Paper
7-Feb	The Constitution - The Rules of the Game	Kernell - Appendix 3, 4 & 5	
12-Feb	The Bill of Rights	Kernell - Appendix 3, 4 & 5	
14-Feb	The Promise & Difficulties of Federalism	Kernell - Chapter 3	
19-Feb	Case Study #1 - Reforming the VA	CQ Researcher - Chapter 13, <i>Systemic Problems at the VA</i>	Case Study #1



Unit #2 - Institutions of the U.S. Government			
21-Feb	The U.S. Congress I	Kernell - Chapter 6	
26-Feb	The U.S. Congress II	Kernell - Chapter 6	Supporting Evidence
28-Feb	The U.S. Presidency I	Kernell - Chapter 7	
5-Mar	The U.S. Presidency II	Kernell - Chapter 7	
7-Mar	The Federal Judiciary	Kernell - Chapter 9	
12-Mar	Mid-term Review		
14-Mar	In Class Mid-term		Mid-term
19-Mar	The Bureaucracy I	Kernell - Chapter 8	
21-Mar	Case Study #2 - Unions at a Crossroads	CQ Researcher - Chapter 4, <i>Adam Ruins Everything - Wages</i>	Case Study #2
26-Mar	The Bureaucracy II	Kernell - Chapter 8	
28-Mar	Spring Break	Give Your Brain a Genuine Break!	
2-Apr	Spring Break	No Class!	
4-Apr	Institutions of California Government	GCG - Chapters 4-6	
Unit #3 - Values, Politics and Political Actors			
9-Apr	Civil Rights/Civil Liberties I	Kernell - Chapter 4	
11-Apr	Civil Rights/Civil Liberties II	Kernell - Chapter 4	
16-Apr	Case Study #3 - Housing Discrimination	CQ Researcher - Chapter 6, <i>Adam Ruins Everything - Suburbia</i>	Case Study #3
18-Apr	Civil Rights/Civil Liberties III	Kernell - Chapter 5	Policy Problem Statement
23-Apr	Political Parties - Democracy's Formal Organizations	Kernell - Chapter 12	
25-Apr	Interest Groups - Democracy's Informal Organizations	Kernell - Chapter 13 <i>Frontline: Gunned Down</i>	
30-Apr	The News Media	Kernell - Chapter 14	
2-May	U.S. Voting, Campaign & Elections I	Kernell - Chapter 11	
7-May	U.S. Voting, Campaign & Elections II	Kernell - Chapter 11	Policy Paper
9-May	California Voting, Campaign & Elections	GCG - Chapters 1-3	
14-May	Final Exam Review		
Final Exam - Thursday, May 17 @ 12:15pm			