

**San José State University**  
**Political Science**  
**POLS 15 Section 10 Spring 2021**

**Course and Contact Information**

Instructor: Dr. Kristina Mitchell  
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Office hours: Tuesdays at 1pm

**Course Description (Required)**

**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**

**Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) (Required)**

**Course and GE Learning Objectives (CLOs and GELOs):**

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

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 government, the links between the people and government, and the operations of California government. (assessed by Exam 1)

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 active learning project)

GELO 3 (D3): Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. (assessed by weekly assignments)

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 Exam 2)

GELO 5 (D3): Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. (Assessed by Exam 3)

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 Active Learning Project)

**Textbook**

MindTap for Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government, Enhanced 6 Months  
**Check Canvas!**

Renée B. van Vechten (vV), *California Politics: A Primer* 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, CQ Press (ISBN-13: 978- 1-4833-7559-5 for the newest version; ISBN-13: 978-1-4833-4013-5 for the previous)

## Course Requirements and Assignments (Required)

### MindTap Assignments

You will complete MindTap Assignments each week. These are available in your Canvas course must be completed prior to the deadline.

### Exams

There will be two midterm exams and a final exam. All exams are open notes and open book. You will take these exams online. Your two highest exam scores will be used to calculate your grade (one exam score is dropped). There are no makeup exams for any reason whatsoever. You must take the final exam.

### Active Learning Project

You will upload a presentation to the class on an active learning project you have undertaken over the course of the semester. You have from today until the presentations to engage in a local political activity. **Note: None of these political activities must be done in person! In fact, please look for virtual or online options only!**

Ideas for local activities you can participate in for active learning:

- Virtually attend a city council meeting
- Virtually attend a school board meeting
- Virtually attend local Democrat or Republican party meeting or event
- Watch the Democratic or Republican National Convention
- Track a piece of legislation in the Texas state legislature (check their website for info. Note, you do not need to drive to Sacramento to track legislation!)
- Register to vote
- Contact the mayor or your Congressperson to tell them your opinion on a political issue
- Watch a court case

If you have an idea that is not listed above, please email me for approval. You will create a power point presentation that is 5-10 slides that outlines your experience. In your presentation you will 1) describe your active learning project activity, 2) explain how it relates to the concepts we have learned in class so far, 3) offer your insight into how it made you a more engaged political citizen. Note: the power point should be succinct! You should never have more than 50 words on a single slide. Give me the highlights. You must ALSO submit a 400-500 word essay outlining those same three things. You will upload your assignments in Canvas by the deadline.

### Mini-Lecture Reflection

About once a week, I will post a mini-lecture as an announcement related to something in political science or topical in American Government. Twice during the semester, you'll write a 150-200 word reflection on ANY of the lectures that have been posted.

## **Final Paper**

Your final paper must be at least 900 words (about 4 pages double spaced). You will find a current event in the U.S. politics and write a paper that connects that event to the concepts you have learned in this course. More information about the specifics of the paper will be provided in Canvas.

## **Grade Distribution**

The grading breakdown for the course assignments is as follows:

- Average for MindTap Assignments – 18% total
- Mini Lecture Reflections – 6% each (12% total)
- Active Learning Project Essay – 15%
- Active Learning Project Presentation – 10%
- Final Paper – 15%
- Exams – 15% each (30% total)

You can use this grade distribution to calculate what is possible for you based on your grades on assignments. Please note the weighting of each assignment and keep it in mind as you complete your work.

## **Final Grade Determination**

97 & above: A plus

92-96: A

90-91: A minus

87-89: B plus

82-86: B

80-81: B minus

77-79: C plus

72-76: C

70-71: C minus

67-69: D plus

62-66: D

60-61: D minus

59.99 & below: F

I do not have a policy of rounding grades. Rounding and curving decisions are made by the professor after all final grades are calculated. Even an 89.999 can be considered a B plus. Grades are not assigned based on individual need.

- Do not contact me with a question or request for your final grade to be rounded, curved, or increased.
- Do not contact me asking for extra credit that has not been specifically offered to the whole class via email announcement.

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 three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus.

## **Classroom Protocol**

### **Course Rules**

1. Always maintain professional and respectful language, in class, in emails and in your coursework.
2. Any disruptive or disrespectful behavior will result in a loss of credit for the assignment and possibly a referral to the Office of Student Conduct. Racism, sexism, homophobia, or any other forms of bigotry are not acceptable in this class.
3. You are responsible for all information and announcements made in the course. Prepare to log onto Canvas every day to check for updates, changes, or new information. Read the course home page thoroughly and check announcements daily. Course rules, schedule, and day-to-day are subject to change, please pay close attention to course announcements.
4. Late work will not be accepted for any reason. To be clear, late work will not be accepted for any reason whatsoever.
5. Students may not print, save, photograph, or make any record of graded content in this course.

### **Professionalism**

Here is a quick-start on professionalism in your communication with your professors:

- Don't ask a question that you could have answered yourself. Read all information and instructions in Canvas before you send an email.
  - Use an appropriate Subject Line that identifies yourself and your concern (don't just say, "HELP")
  - Address the recipient by his or her professional title, such as Professor, Dr., Mr., or Ms. (NOT Mrs. or Miss unless instructed otherwise)
  - Your first sentence should introduce yourself and include your course and section number. • Be specific about what your request is. Demonstrate that you have read and understood course information and instructions.
  - Use proper grammar and spelling. Punctuate and capitalize. Proofread.
  - Allow 24 hours for a response to your email during the week. Do not expect email responses on weekends. Do not send multiple emails on the same topic within a 24 hour period without waiting for a response.
- If you send an email that does not follow these guidelines, don't be surprised if you get a response that states, "Please revisit the Professionalism section of your course home page and email again."

### **University Policies (Required)**

Per University Policy S16-9 (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant information to all courses, such as academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. is available on Office of Graduate and Undergraduate Programs' [Syllabus Information web page](#) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/> Please be sure to go over these policies..

### **Course Schedule**

Week 1 – Feb 3

## Introduction

What do I do this week?

- 1) Get your materials and log into the course
- 2) Familiarize yourself with the syllabus and requirements
- 3) Get to know the course and navigation

## Week 2 – Feb 10

### Democracy

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignment by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 1 Wrap it Up Quiz)
- 3) Work ahead to ensure you don't miss anything

## Week 3 – Feb 17

### Fundamentals

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignments by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 2 and 3 Focus Activities)
- 3) Work ahead to ensure you don't miss anything

## Week 4 – Feb 24

### Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignments by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 4 and 5 Wrap It Up Quizzes)

## Week 5 – Mar 3

### Parties & Interests

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignments by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 8 & 9 Wrap it Up quizzes, Chapter 9 Focus Activity)
- 3) Work ahead to ensure you don't miss anything

## Week 6 – Mar 10

### Exam

What do I do this week?

- 1) Complete your exam by Wednesday at 5pm

## Week 7 – Mar 17

### Campaigns & Elections

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignment by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 10 Focus Activity, Chapter 10 Wrap it Up Quiz, Chapter 11 Focus Activity)
- 3) Work ahead to ensure you don't miss anything

Week 8 – Mar 24

Legislative & Executive Branch

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignment by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 12 Focus Activity and Wrap It Up Quiz, Ch 13 Wrap it Up Quiz)
- 3) Complete your reflection based on one of the Mini Lectures that has been posted by Wednesday at 5pm

Week 9 – Mar 31

No Class – Spring Break

Week 10 – Apr 7

**Exam**

What do I do this week?

- 1) Complete your exam by Wednesday at 5pm

Week 11 – Apr 14

Judicial Branch

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignment by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 15 Focus Activity & Wrap it Up Quiz)

Week 12 – Apr 21

**Class presentations on Active Learning**

What do I do this week?

- 1) Upload your power point presentation and essay to Canvas by Wednesday at 5pm

Week 13 – Apr 28

Policy

What do I do this week?

- 1) Do your readings in MindTap
- 2) Complete your MindTap assignment by Wednesday at 5pm (Chapter 16 Watch & Consider; Focus Activity; Wrap it Up Quiz)
- 3) Complete your reflection based on one of the Mini Lectures that has been posted by Wednesday at 5pm
- 4) Work ahead to ensure you don't miss anything

Week 15 – May 5

**Final Paper Week**

What do I do this week?

- 1) Finish writing your paper
- 2) Submit your paper in Canvas by Wednesday at 5pm
- 3) Review for your final exam.

Week 16 – May 12

**Final Exam**

What do I do this week?

- 1) Complete your final exam by ***WEDNESDAY May 12<sup>th</sup> AT 5pm***