

San José State University
Department of Political Science

Pols 15-11: Essentials of U.S. and California Government,
Spring 2021

Course and Contact Information

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| Instructor: | Sabrina Pinnell |
| Office Location: | Clark 404D ¹ |
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| Email: | Sabrina.Pinnell@sjsu.edu |
| Office Hours: | M W 9-10 via Zoom – see below for link ³ |
| Class Days/Time: | Asynchronous class |
| Classroom: | N/A |
| GE/SJSU Studies Category: | AI (US2 & US3); D3 |

Course Format

For Spring 2021, this class is completely online and asynchronous, using Canvas as the primary platform. Students should have access to a computer capable of accessing this page at <http://sjsu.instructure.com>. You will need to use your student ID information to log on, and you can access the class webpage on your Dashboard.

Lectures for this class will be YouTube videos that are linked to the Canvas page – see the Module for a particular topic to access these videos. Discussions will occur under the Discussion feature on Canvas. You will also be using Canvas for submitting assignments, taking quizzes and tests, and checking your grades. Please see the first module on Canvas for more information.

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1. As this class is online and SJSU is largely closed, I will not be in my office on a regular basis.
 2. If you are unable to contact via email due to an emergency, please call the Political Science Office at this number so they can contact the instructor.
 3. The Zoom link from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android:
<https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/84898700890?pwd=bVlnNVNJQW9BRXhvcnVIQ2ZTSDhWQT09>
Password: 270673

Office hours will be on Zoom, either the regularly scheduled hours on M W 9-10 a.m., or appointments if necessary at other times. Additional inquiries or questions can be submitted either via email, or to the FAQ/General Discussion Thread on Canvas. I will do my best to respond to emails within 24 hours, although there may be delays on weekends and holidays.

Course Description

From the SJSU 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 (D3).

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 principles, 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.

Department of Political Science Learning Outcomes

The Political Science Department has the following objectives for its students:

- 1) Breadth: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.
- 2) Application and Disciplinary Methods: Students should be able to formulate research questions, engage in systematic literature searches using primary and secondary sources, evaluate research studies, and critically analyze and interpret influential political texts. Students should be able to apply these techniques to identify, understand, and analyze domestic and international political issues and organizations.
- 3) 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.
- 4) 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.

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. This requirement will be fulfilled through quizzes tied to specific modules, discussions and the exams for the course.

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. This requirement will be fulfilled through Exams 1 and 2 as well as discussions.
3. **GELO 3 (D3):** Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. This will be fulfilled through discussions and essays on the exams.
4. **GELO 4 (D3):** Identify the dynamics of ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. This will be fulfilled through discussions and essays on exams.
5. **GELO 5 (D3):** Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. This will be fulfilled through discussions and essays on exams.
6. **GELO 6 (D3):** Apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national and international levels. This will be fulfilled through discussions.

Students are expected to complete the writing equivalent of ~1500 words or more in this class. This will be accomplished through three in-class essays attached to Exams 1-3.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

The major texts for this course are Neal Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi and Margaret Weir et al.'s We The People, 12th Core Edition (W.W. Norton, 2019; ISBN: 978-0-393-66463-8 for paperback; for ebook you can use <https://digital.wwnorton.com/wethepeople12core>)⁴ and the League of Women Voters of California, Guide to California Government, 16th edition (Sacramento, CA: League of Women Voters Education Fund, 2016; ISBN: 978-0-9632465-2-3).⁵ Both of these texts are available through Spartan Bookstore and are required. Earlier editions of books may not have the most current information used in the course, so it is strongly recommended that you get the editions listed here.

Other Readings/Materials

Additional readings may be assigned to specific modules over the course of the class; there may also be podcasts and other types of materials assigned in a given week for you to consume. You can see these listed on both the syllabus schedule, and in the introduction page for each module. For obvious reasons, these materials will be electronic and have links in the modules.

4 . We The People will be listed as WTP in the Schedule for readings.

5 . Guide to California Government will be listed as LWV in the Schedule for readings.

Because accessibility is a potential issue, any *required* materials in oral form (such as a podcast) will have a transcript available. Optional materials under “For More Information” in modules may not have any accessibility guarantee, but they are not required to complete class tasks.

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 at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9A.pdf>.

This course includes the following methods to evaluate student performance:

| | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| Quizzes | 10 x 10 points |
| Discussions | 10 x 10 points |
| Exams | 3 x 100 points |
| Final Exam | <u>100 points</u> |
| | 600 points |

Quizzes: There will be a quiz to test your knowledge of the syllabus at the start of the course, and at the end of every topic module. Each quiz will be under Quizzes on Canvas and available for 24 hours on the day it is held (see Schedule in the syllabus and the module for dates). These quizzes are open-book and open-note. You have three attempts to take the quiz with 20 minutes per attempt, and your highest score will be recorded in the gradebook. You may also go back to review the questions before you submit the quiz. These quizzes are meant to encourage your digestion of the material in the module. If you miss the quiz due to an excused emergency, you need to verify this with the instructor to be able to make up the quiz at a later time.

Discussions: Given the asynchronous nature of the class, participation for the course will not be measured by lecture attendance. But it is necessary to verify that students are completing material and to measure their progress in the modules, so along with quizzes, there is at least one discussion to complete per module. You will find assigned discussions under Discussions on Canvas, and linked to particular modules. Discussions usually require you to consider information, answer various questions in an initial post, and then later respond to another student’s post over the course of the discussion period. This participation adds up to a possible 10 points for discussion. Note that access to discussions occurs when a module is unlocked. Failure to complete these assignments will only be excused if there is a verifiable emergency.

Exams: This is an online course, so Exams 1-3 for this class will all be online. In order to test your knowledge of the information but also the ability to use it analytically, exams will be in three parts, to be completed over 24 hours – 12:00 a.m.-11:59 p.m. on the day scheduled. See Schedule for the dates of the exams. The format is outlined below.

Part I is a multiple-choice section of 15 questions, each worth 2 points each for a total of 30 points of your grade. You will have 45 minutes to complete this part of the test, although you can take this at any time in the 24-hour period. You will find this part of the test under Quizzes. Each question has four answer choices, which may be in randomized order. Please note that unlike quizzes, you will have one attempt to answer each question, and questions will lock after answering. Take your time, and make sure you have a stable internet connection before doing this part of the test.

Part II is a set of two short-answer questions, each worth 10 points each for a total of 20 points. You will be given a prompt to answer in 4-5 sentences, no more than a paragraph. You must upload your written answers to both questions to Assignments by the end of the 24-hour period. To check for unoriginal material, answers will be reviewed by Turnitin after you upload them. There will be a rubric at the assignment prompt.

Part III is a choice of one of two essay questions, to be answered in 2-3 pages (250-750 words if double-spaced, 12-point font with 1" margins and page numbers). You will need to answer all parts of the question in essay form, with an introduction, body of points that covers all of the question, and a conclusion. This essay must also be uploaded to Canvas under Assignments by the end of the 24-hour period. To check for unoriginal material, answers will be reviewed by Turnitin after you upload them. Part III is worth 50 points, with 40 for content and 10 for writing. There will be a rubric at the assignment prompt.

Please see the module on test format on Canvas for more information. Note that collaboration on this test is *not permitted* for any part of it, but that this test is open-book and open-note for all sections.

Students are expected to take exams as scheduled; they will not be given in advance of their scheduled dates and make-ups will only be permitted due to a verified emergency. Travel plans are not considered emergencies. Makeups must occur within a one-week time period from the scheduled date. Contact the instructor ASAP if you miss a test to schedule a makeup.⁶

Final Exam: According to the Final Exams schedule, asynchronous courses can only have their finals at specific times during the period. They can be extended from that time. Therefore, I have selected the start of the exam at 5:15 p.m. on May 20th, extended over 24 hours until 5:14 p.m. on May 21st. This will be comprehensive for the course and will be in two parts. Part I will be 25 multiple-choice questions worth two points each for a total of 50; you will find these under Quizzes. Part II will be 5 short-answer questions that you will need to answer in 4-5 sentences for a total of 50 points; this will be uploaded to Canvas under Assignments. This exam is open-book and open-note, but no collaboration between students is permitted during the test.

Makeups are possible only unless you have a verifiable emergency or are taking three exams in the period for the test; if the latter is the case, campus policy makes clear that you need to contact the instructor no later than three weeks before the last day of class to arrange a makeup. Any makeups will occur on the campus makeup day (May 26th).

6. Arrangements must be made ahead of the test time so that the quiz can be prepared for the first part of the test.

7. Important: Canvas does not note when exams begin on the webpage, even in its Calendar feature. Please note the beginning and end times in your calendar.

Grading Policy

This course is based upon a point system, with percentage of points earned on assignments and exams corresponding to the following grades: 97-100% is an A plus, 93-96% is an A, 90-92% is an A minus, 87-89% is a B plus, 83-86% is a B, 80-82% is a B minus, etc. Keep track of your points over the course of the semester as noted above, and you should have an idea how you stand in the class.

Note that “All students have the right, within a reasonable time, to know their academic scores, to review their grade-dependent work, and to be provided with explanations for the determination of their course grades.” See [University Policy F13-1](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf) at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F13-1.pdf> for more details. Point scores will be available on Canvas, but percentages for the categories and the overall course score may not be; contact the instructor if you need a grade check for the course.

Extra Credit Policy

There will be review sessions on Zoom before Exams 1-3 and the Final; you may earn extra credit by attending the sessions for Exams 1-3 (five points each). I will be taking attendance for verification.

Note that per Academic Senate policy (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S09-7.pdf>), any extra credit opportunities must be extended to all students in the class; this means that individual appeals for extra credit may not be considered apart from the entire class. Students may not request individual extra assignments for additional credit.

Travel Policy

For this course, if you know that you will be absent or unable to complete assignments ahead of time due to athletic or other campus activities, it is your responsibility to clear any extensions or excusals with the instructor ahead of the due date.⁸ Travel for other reasons, barring emergencies, may not be accepted as reasons for extensions or excusals for late work or makeup exams; any exceptions require instructor approval. If you have an emergency that makes it impossible to take an exam or complete an assignment, contact the instructor ASAP to discuss options to complete your work. But as noted above, no exams will be given in advance for any reason, and this includes the Final.

8. Ideally, athletes should present a schedule of away events that may affect the class and send the instructor an e-mail alerting her before each event to make sure that absences are excused.

Classroom Protocol

This is a course that will consider several controversial issues including diversity and minority rights in American politics, immigration and its effects on American politics and culture and the nature of citizenship. Students are expected to conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner in discussions and other communications, particularly to their fellow students. With that in mind, students should avoid any colloquial language, characterizations, remarks or outright slurs that pertain to groups in the abstract or to their fellow students in particular. Any remarks made in ways that attack a student's personality or physical characteristics that have nothing to do with his or her actual points in a discussion will not be tolerated. Students should review the Netiquette rules in the first course module for more information.

You should be aware that although Canvas is only accessible by registered students, much of it should be considered a public forum: your remarks in discussions and in group Zoom sessions will be recorded. Email also has confidentiality issues. Act accordingly.

Internet Failure Policy

Because class is online and away from campus this semester, your instructor is relying largely on home internet resources, as are most of you, to complete class tasks. SJSU does not have a formal policy on what to do if there is an internet failure on the instructor's end or on yours, so I am creating one here:

- 1) If internet access fails on the instructor's end, she must notify students that she is unavailable for immediate contact regarding class resources or materials, and that email replies will be delayed until the internet resumes. Notification will be through email, either from the instructor herself or the Political Science Office.
- 2) Power failures or shut-offs due to emergencies may also affect internet coverage. The instructor will do her best to notify students if there is such an emergency, and whether or not the class tasks will be adjusted accordingly.
- 3) Students may also lose internet coverage at times in the class, due to failure, power shut-off or other emergency. In such situations, if the lack of internet service will affect completing class tasks, the student needs to notify the instructor as soon as possible in case adjustments are needed. This is particularly important in cases of quizzes, exams or assignments. Note that any adjustments are at the instructor's discretion and will depend on the specific circumstances of the emergency.
- 4) While 3) addresses unforeseen emergency situations, students may not use *anticipated* internet interruptions as a reason for extensions on completing class tasks. Students should make arrangements at quiz, exam and other times to complete those tasks if they know ahead of time that their internet coverage will be interrupted. This could involve using internet coverage in another location, for example. If you as a student feel that you may not be able to fulfill class requirements ahead of time due to internet issues, you should contact the instructor to discuss options.

Policy on Submitting Written Work in this Course

Students at the college level are expected to submit written work that fits the grammatical, stylistic and citation expectations for college-level work in English. All written assignments in this course are therefore graded in two ways: both in terms of content (information in terms of logic, quality of evidence, etc.) and in terms of writing. Given the exam-based nature of class essays, writing rules such as citation and spelling may be relaxed, and the bulk of the grade will be for content. But organization of your points in the essay, use of introduction/conclusion and ability to make an argument may be factors in grading. Lack of proper citation may also be considered. If you are at all uncomfortable with writing at the college level, you need to take steps to rectify this. You may want to see the instructor after exams are handed back if comments indicate that there are specific errors in argument or writing.

Collaboration and Source Use Policy

The University has a clear policy on Academic Integrity, but I feel that some issues need to be made more explicit within the body of this syllabus.

Per the SJSU Academic Integrity Policy, you may not submit work done in another course, in whole or in part, for evaluation in this course without prior instructor approval. This includes your own writing for another course – that is actually a form of plagiarism as well as cheating.

Use of class or outside materials on assignments or exams must be quoted if word-for-word and any information given proper attribution.⁹ Lack of doing this could affect both content and writing portions of your assignment or exam grade.

Collaboration in preparing for exams such as sharing notes and group study before exams is encouraged, but keep in mind that there may be more than one answer to an exam question. Collaboration during exams is cheating and will be treated as such.

If there are issues with source use or possible cheating, it is the policy of SJSU for the instructor to have a face-to-face meeting with the student(s) to clarify the issue and particulars before any decisions are made about possible sanctions. Serious infractions must be reported to the University per the Academic Integrity Policy for recording purposes, and possible administrative action.

To sum up – the University is serious about cheating and plagiarism, and so is your instructor. If you are concerned about how to use material for exams, contact me.

9. This includes lecture.

Final Exam Policy

Per University Policy S17-1, all classes must have a culminating activity that finishes the class. For Pols 15, this will be online via Canvas during the period from 5:15 p.m. on May 20th to 5:14 p.m. on May 21st. No final will be held before this scheduled time, and you should plan on taking the test at this time unless you have a verifiable emergency, or three or more scheduled finals in one day and you contact me no later than three weeks before the last day of class (April 26th). If you fall into one of these categories, a makeup exam is possible, on the scheduled makeup day (May 26th). Please see the relevant policy at <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S17-1.pdf> for more information.

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 <https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>. Please peruse these policies at the link, which cover academic integrity, religious holidays and recording information in class.

Disclaimer

All information in this syllabus, including due dates for evaluation instruments such as exams or papers may be subject to change with fair notice by the instructor, the Department of Political Science or San Jose State University.

Pols 15: Course Schedule

Course Schedule

| Week | Date | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines |
|------|-----------|---|
| 1 | 1/27 | <p><u>Course Introduction</u> See Module for “Course Introduction” on Canvas</p> <p>Quiz (Syllabus and Netiquette) on 2/1</p> <p>(Optional) Introduction to course navigation/requirements and FAQ via Canvas on 1/29 at 2 p.m.: https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/81845695166?pwd=WUZIIdE1BdEJrL2p5b2JEcldpNXFWQT09 Password: 747908. There will be a recording link posted later if you cannot attend.</p> |
| 2 | 2/1-2/5 | <p><u>Topic 1: Constitution and Federalism</u> See Module for “Topic 1” on Canvas</p> <p>WTP, Chs. 2-3</p> <p>Quiz (Topic 1) on 2/5</p> <p>Discussion (Federalism and Vaccination) on Canvas: 2/1-2/8</p> |
| 3 | 2/8-2/12 | <p><u>Topic 2: Political Culture</u> See Module for “Topic 2” on Canvas</p> <p>WTP, Ch. 1; Ch. 6 (pp. 209-215)</p> <p>Quiz (Topic 2) on 2/12</p> <p>Discussion (Liberty and Equality) on Canvas: 2/9-2/15</p> |
| 4 | 2/15-2/24 | <p><u>Topic 3: Civil Liberties and Rights</u> See Module for “Topic 3” on Canvas</p> <p>WTP, Chs. 4-5</p> <p>Quiz (Topic 3) on 2/19</p> <p>Discussion (Civil Rights and Government Action) on Canvas: 2/16-2/24</p> |

| Week | Date | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines |
|-------------|-----------------|---|
| 4 | 2/26 | Exam 1 online, from 12:00 a.m.-11:59 p.m. on February 26th Exam Prep module on Canvas; review session TBA, on Zoom |
| 5-6 | 3/1-3/10 | <u>Topic 4: Legislative Branch</u> WTP, Ch. 12 LWV, Ch. 4 Quiz (Topic 4) on 3/8 Discussion (Adding States and Congress) on Canvas: 3/1-3/8 |
| 6-7 | 3/10-3/17 | <u>Topic 5: Judicial Branch</u> WTP, Ch. 15 LWV, Ch. 6 Quiz (Topic 5) on 3/15 Discussion (Term limits for federal judges) on Canvas: 3/10-3/17 |
| 7-9 | 3/17-4/5 | <u>Topic 6: Executive Branch</u> WTP, Chs. 13-14 LWV, Ch. 5 Discussion (Presidential Powers) on Canvas; 3/17-3/26 Quiz (Topic 6) on 3/22 |
| | 3/29-4/2 | SPRING BREAK – No Class or Office Hours |
| 9 | 4/7 | Exam 2 online, from 12:00 a.m.-11:59 p.m. on April 7th Exam Prep module on Canvas; review session TBA, on Zoom |
| 9-10 | 4/8-4/16 | <u>Topic 7: Elections</u> WTP, Chs. 8,10 (except pp. 393-403) LWV, Chs. 1-3 Quiz (Topic 7) on 4/12 Discussion (Should we have compulsory voting?) on Canvas: 4/8-4/16 |

| Week | Date | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| 11 | 4/19-4/23 | <u>Topic 8: Political Parties, Interest Groups and Campaign Finance</u> WTP, Ch. 9, 10 (pp. 393-403), Ch. 11 Quiz (Topic 8) on 4/26 Discussion (How do we select electors in the Electoral College?) on Canvas: 4/19-4/26 |
| 12-13 | 4/26-5/3 | <u>Topic 9: Media and Public Opinion</u> WTP, Chs. 6-7 Quiz (Topic 9) on 4/30 Discussion (Fairness Doctrine) on Canvas: 4/26-5/3 |
| 13 | 5/5 | Exam 3 online, from 12:00 a.m.-11:59 p.m. on May 5th Exam Prep module on Canvas; review session TBA, on Zoom |
| 13-15 | 5/7-5/17 | <u>Topic 10: Local Government</u> LWV, Chs. 7-9 Discussion (Prop 13 and Property Taxes) on Canvas, 5/7-5/14 |
| Final Exam | 5/20 | Online, 5:15 p.m. on May 20th – 5:14 p.m. on May 21st |

Exams 1-3: Information for Part III (Essay)

As part of Exams 1-3, you will need to draft an essay of 2-3 pages; the typewritten files should be double-spaced and with 1" margins for grading. The approximate length of an essay of this format is 250 words/page, so you should plan on writing ~750 words minimum. This part of the test will be open-book and open-note, but you will be expected to give credit to class materials (including lecture) and any outside sources you may use. This means citations in-text or notes, and a bibliography/reference page at end.

You will need to set aside time during the exam period to think over and outline your answer before you write. Each essay answer will have both informational components and an overall argument, so you need to know what your answers will be before you compose the essay.

A proper exam essay has much the same organizational format as an out-of-class essay:

- 1) An *introduction* paragraph with a thesis for your answer, and a brief roadmap of the points you are going to use to back up your thesis. In short, how you are planning to answer the essay question.
- 2) A *body* of points that provide support for your thesis, with information provided as needed. You will not need to cite for these facts in an exam essay, but you may want to note specific authors if they provided ideas or information ("As Jefferson noted in the Declaration of Independence..."). The body must cover all parts of the question in terms of required information or argument. But it is not an outline or set of bullet points; like a regular out-of-class essay, you should write these points as paragraphs.
- 3) A *conclusion* that briefly summarizes your argument and verifies you answered the question. You cannot leave the essay with the last body paragraph; you must finish it.

The 2-3 page requirement for the exam is based on the idea that you will need that length to compose your essay if you have one introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs and a conclusion.

Grading of this essay will be based on a combination of content and writing, as outlined below.

Content: (40 points)

The bulk of the essay grade is based on whether or not you answered the question as given in the exam, and made a sufficiently good argument. Take the following example:

"The Declaration of Independence asserts that a major purpose of government is to protect the individual rights of citizens; it is founded for this purpose. But if government impinges on the rights of citizens after its creation, what should citizens do, according to the Declaration? Is this position a reasonable one in today's America? Give information from the document and the class material where necessary."

This question gives you both a clue as to what information you need to give as well as the argument you're going to make. You'll need to know enough about the Declaration from the reading and lecture to give the foundations on individual rights and the relationship between government and the public. But you'll also need to give some of your own opinion as to whether the Declaration's argument on revolt is feasible in the current American era if you object to the government's powers over your rights, and defend your position with information as well. (Keep in mind this document backed a revolution – do we have other options today?)

The forty points for content will therefore focus upon:

- Having a clear thesis, preferably at the start, for your argument;
- Answering all parts of the question – informational and argument;
- Developing all parts of the roadmap you made at the start, in terms of information and argument.
- Originality of the writing will be considered for the essays in Exams 2-3, given that you may be using sources for your argument. Be aware that relying on outside material for the bulk of your answer could result in a lower grade; you should plan on original writing for most of the essay.

Please note that just providing correct information, without a clear argument that carries through the essay, will earn you a 33 at best, or a middle-range B. Leaving the thesis until the end could mean a higher B, but not an A. You need to organize your thoughts before you write.

Writing: (5 points for organization + 5 points for citations)

Roughly 20% of your essay grade is based on writing. While the 24-hour period for Exams 2-3 will give you more time than an in-class essay, it is understood that the bulk of the grade for the essay will be on content. With that in mind, here are the concerns that could lower your grade in the writing part of the essay:

- Lack of introduction or conclusion. Just answering the points of the question, one at a time, is not an essay.
- Lack of organization. This is particularly evident when the essay is one large paragraph. Organize before you write, and split up your points into paragraphs.
- Answering the essay in bullet points or as an outline. That is not essay format.
- For Exams 2-3, lack of citations.

Writing issues such as spelling, verb tense/agreement, and punctuation will not be as important in grading. But citations are necessary for Exams 2-3, given the possibility that students may use sources to help inform their writing. You must cite for all facts not common knowledge, all definitions/ideas from the class materials or other sources, and quote material that is word-for-word from a source. Citations can be MLA, APA or any established citation style, but it must be used as required. Full citations in a bibliography should be at the end of the essay.

Essays must be uploaded to Canvas for grading and will be checked for source use via Turnitin.

Final Points

As noted above, you are not getting the specific essay questions in advance. Sudden disability due to injury or illness may require accommodations in testing but cannot be dealt with if you do not let the instructor know in advance; you cannot expect these on the test day with no notice. International students who feel less comfortable with English may want to meet with the instructor to discuss concerns but should plan on composing the essays in English to the best of their ability. This is not a writing class, but you are expected to satisfy some parts of the class requirements in writing; use this class as a means to master a form of writing that you need to know for other courses, particularly in the humanities and social sciences.