

San José State University
Department of Political Science
Pols 15. Essentials of US and California Government
Class number: 30288
Section
Spring 2021

Instructor: Robert Ovetz, Ph.D.

Office location: online

Phone: 415 602 1585 (please use only in case of emergency)

Email: robert.ovetz@sjsu.edu

Office hours: Thursday, noon to 1 by phone or Zoom, and other times by prior appointment. Please email other suggested days and specific times Mon to Fri from 9 am to 6 pm. The Zoom link is the same for each week.

Class days and time: This is an all on-line class with no scheduled class meetings other than the first day of class, Wednesday 1/27 from 10:30-11:30 am

Classroom: none

Supplemental Instructor: Vaishnavi Sunkari, vaishnavi.sunkari@sjsu.edu, student support sessions TBA

Course Description

Treatment of essentials of U.S. and California government. Satisfies the American institutions requirements in U.S. Constitution US2 and California government US3, GE Area D2, and the Core GE requirement in Social Sciences: Social Issues D3.

SJSU GE Guidelines

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.

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 as described in the syllabus.

Political Science Program Learning Outcomes (PSPLO)

Upon completion of the Political Science major program, students should be able to demonstrate the following learning outcomes.

PSPLO 1 Breadth: Students should possess a broad knowledge of the theory and methods of the various branches of the discipline.

PSPLO 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.

PSPLO 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.

PSPLO 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.

General Education Learning Outcomes (GELO)

Upon successful completion of this 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 of government, the links between the people and government, and the operations of California government.

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.

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

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.

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

GELO 6 (D3): Apply multidisciplinary material to a topic relevant to policy and social action at the local, national, and/or international levels.

Learning Outcomes	How the LOs Will be Assessed		
	Exams	Weekly Essays	Constitutional Amendment Paper
PSPLO 1	√		
PSPLO 2	√	√	√
PSPLO 3		√	√
PSPLO 4			√
GELO 1	√	√	√
GELO 2	√	√	
GELO 3	√		√
GELO 4	√		
GELO 5		√	√
GELO 6	√	√	√

Important Dates

Notes: Class does not meet every Tuesday and Thursday but only these following dates.

Wednesday 1/27—First day of class, class meeting from 10:30-11:30 am, complete the Syllabus Quiz, and post your photo to the Canvas page

Wednesday 2/10—**Democracy & Declaration of Independence Short Essay** due by 11:59 pm

Thursday 2/11—Take and complete the **Democracy & Declaration of Independence Exam** by 11:59 pm

Thursday 2/25—**US & CA Constitution Short Essay** due by 11:59 pm

Thursday 3/4—**Federalism Short Essay** due by 11:59 pm

Wednesday 3/5—Take and complete the **US & CA Constitutions and Federalism Exam** by 11:59 pm

Tuesday 3/30 and Thursday 4/1—No class, Spring Break

Tuesday 4/6—**Congress & CA Legislative Branch Short Essay** due by 11:59 pm

Wednesday 4/7—Take and complete **Congress & CA Legislative Branch Exam** by 11:59 pm

Tuesday 4/20—**US & CA Executive Branch Short Essay** due by 11:59 pm

Wednesday 4/21—Take and complete the **US & CA Executive Branch Exam** by 11:59 pm

Tuesday 5/4—**US & CA Judicial Branch Short Essay** due by 11:59 pm

Wednesday 5/5—Take and complete **US & CA Judicial Branch Exam** by 11:59 pm

Wednesday 5/12—**Elections & Money in Politics Short Essay** due by 11:59 pm

Thursday 5/13—Last day of class; take and complete **Elections & Money in Politics Exam** by 11:59 pm

Thursday 5/20—**Constitutional Amendment Paper** due by 11:59 pm

Wednesday 5/25—**Final exam** (complete by 11:59 pm) and the last day that late Short Essays may be turned in late by 11:59 pm

Grading

Grading will be based on a combination of preparation for class including doing the readings **before** they are scheduled to be discussed, student learning questions, participation in the discussions, mid-term and final exams, and the Constitutional Amendment Paper.

Grading Scale

A plus	96-100
A	93-95
A minus	90-92
B plus	86-89
B	83-85
B minus	80-82
C plus	76-79
C	73-75
C minus	70-72
D	60-69
F	0-59

Assignment

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage (100 total points each)</u>
Exams (highest 5 of the 6)	20
Final Exam	20
Short Essays (highest 5 of 6)	30
Constitutional Amendment Paper	30
<hr/> Total	100

Student Evaluation/Grading Policies

- **No withdrawals (W) will be granted** except for **verifiable** medical reasons.
- 10 percent will be deducted for each **week** that the Constitutional Amendment Paper and Short Essays are turned in late. A period of seven days or less is consider one week. No papers will be accepted after noon on the day of the final exam at 11:59 pm.
- The **lowest** Exam (**not** including the Final Exam) grade will be **dropped**.
- The **lowest** Short Essay grade will be **dropped**.
- There are **no make up, early, or late exams**. If you **miss** without a **demonstrable excuse** you will receive a 0. Missed final exams due to demonstrable medical, religious, or university related activities may be made up by prior arrangement only.
- The exams must be **taken and completed** by 11:59 pm of the last day of the week they are due.
- Be sure to check your grades on Canvas closely. If there are any questions about specific assignments other than the final exam they must be made to me by the day of the final exam.
- Note that your grade in Canvas is only for the graded assignments at that point in time and are subject to change with each new graded assignment. To estimate your grade at any point during the semester use the Canvas tool to fill in grades for future assignments.
- All assignments must be cut and pasted into the assignment text box to be graded. Do not post a link. No assignments will be accepted by email.
- Grades will be rounded up to the next letter only when the difference is .49 or less.

Classroom Policy

- No copies of the class video lectures are allowed except as an accommodation with campus documentation. University Policy S12-7, <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S12-7.pdf>, requires students to obtain instructor's permission to record the course.
- **Any act of plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" or no credit for the assignment.**
- Any student who has special needs that may affect his or her performance in this class is asked to identify his or her needs to Dr. Ovetz in private by the end of the first day of class and provide documentation as soon as possible. Any resulting class performance problems that may arise for those who do not identify their needs will not receive any special grading considerations.

Canvas

For help with using Canvas please see the Canvas Student Resources page at: https://www.sjsu.edu/ecampus/teaching-tools/canvas/student_resources/

On-Line Power and Connection Interruptions

Due to internet service, weather, high risk fire power shutoffs and other causes, internet service may be interrupted either preventing me from launching the class Zoom meeting or completing the grading in a reasonable amount of time (usually 1 week). Because I live in a high risk fire area which may experience intentional PG&E power shut offs and I do not have a landline, I may not be able to communicate with the class sufficiently to let you know that class was cancelled for these reasons. I will do my best to inform you about possible cancellations. Please check your SJSU email in these circumstances. It may be necessary to reschedule class meetings in the event of cancellations.

Required Readings

Required course readings can be found in the following assigned books and readings. You are expected to complete the readings at the start of each new topic.

The following books are required reading. You may purchase your own print or e-reader (if available) copies at the campus bookstore or on-line.

US Government Book

Katznelson, Ira, Mark Kesselman, and Alan Draper (2013) *The Politics of Power: A Critical Introduction to American Government*, W. W. Norton & Company: NY, 7th edition, 403 pp., ISBN-13: 978-0393919448. You may not use older editions of the book.

California Government Book

Field, Mona (2012) *California Government and Politics Today*, Pearson: NY, 14th edition, 160 pp., ISBN-13: 978-0205251780. You may use newer editions but not older editions of the book.

Historical Documents and the Reading Packet

There is also a “Reading Packet” folder with assigned readings under Files in Canvas.

Other Resources

The CQ Researcher and ABC-CLIO American Government databases available through the SJSU library website are good reference resources for topics covered in this class.

For more detailed background explanation of each part of the US Constitution go to <https://www.law.cornell.edu/anncon/> or any other reputable annotated constitution.

Library Liaison

Please contact Paul Kauppila the library liaison for Political Science to answer questions and provide help with research, citations, and other library needs. He can be reached by phone at (408) 808-2042 or by email at paul.Kauppila@sjsu.edu or <https://libguides.sjsu.edu/politicalscience>

University Policies

Per University Policy s16-9, university-wide policy information relevant to all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/gup/syllabusinfo/>) which is hosted by the Office of Undergraduate education. Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Office Hours

I will be available by Zoom during office hours to talk about the readings, video lectures, and the writing assignments. Office hours are also an opportunity to discuss a current event you plan to write about for your Weekly Essay or a possible amendment for your Constitutional Amendment Paper.

Office hours will be conducted by Zoom without reservations. I will send the invite at least an hour in advance. Click on the Zoom link to enter. If there is another student already speaking with me you will be put into the waiting room until that student is finished. Please turn on your video and mic when you enter.

If you have a scheduling conflict with my designated office hour please send me a day and time from Mon to Fri before 6 pm in which you will call me. Your request should be sent at least 24 hours in advance.

Office hours for the Supplemental Instructor are listed above. You are encouraged to visit the SI for help

with questions about course content, writing assignments, studying for the exams, and using the library databases.

Course Requirements

The required assignments will test your knowledge and ability to apply and assess principles and concepts of US and California government as models of representative democracy.

Required Video Lectures

The video lectures for each of the seven topics of the course listed below in the Course Outline are found under Assignments on the class Canvas page. To organize the video lectures and other assignment in Canvas go to Assignments and click “Show By Type” on the top right.

Exams

There will be six exams and one final exam taken on Canvas. The exams are all multiple choice and based on the assigned readings and class lecture. Each exam is progressively comprehensive, incorporating all previous course content. The final exam is comprehensive.

The exams must be **taken and completed** by 11:59 pm of the last day of the week. Be sure not to miss the exams as **there are no make-up exams** without a **demonstrable excuse** (medical, religious, or university related activities only). No exams may be taken early. Once you start taking the exam it cannot be paused. The lowest Exam (**not** including the Final Exam) grade will be automatically dropped on Canvas.

Be sure to take the exams on a laptop with a stable internet connection and leave yourself sufficient time to **complete** the exam by 11:59 pm. **No additional time will be given** except for previously arranged university accommodations.

Before you leave the exam be sure to print out the exam or save it as a pdf so you can have the questions to review later. Corrected exams will be available for only one week after the exam closes.

The questions will address concepts, terminology, and important events covered in class and the readings. In order to prepare for the exams I strongly encourage you to form study groups, visit me during office hours, and use campus tutoring resources. Contact Peer Connections: https://peerconnections.sjsu.edu/resources/academic_resources/index.html

Students can make appointments with us through Spartan Connect at: <https://peerconnections.sjsu.edu/appointments/appointment/index.html>

Constitutional Amendment Paper

After studying the federal and state constitutional systems of government what is one thing you would change about the US constitution and what would it accomplish? For your concluding paper, write a maximum 1,000 words paper on what amendment of the US constitution you would propose and why. If you need examples about how other constitutions address your issue use: <https://www.constituteproject.org/search?lang=en>

Watch the short video about the **Constitutional Amendment Paper** in the window where the paper is turned in for further instructions. See the “Pols 15 Grading Rubric” under Files on Canvas to see how the paper will be graded.

What your paper should include:

- Explain which part of the US constitution you would amend and why. Be specific about where it is located in the constitution by including the article, section, and clause (if included) or amendment, section, and clause (if included).
- If your issue is not addressed by the constitution explain whether it is entirely new and unrelated or a renewed effort related to a previous related proposed amendment. Note, if you propose something that is related to the constitution and you say it is not you will have a significant point deduction. For the complete list of previous proposed amendments see <https://www.archives.gov/open/dataset-amendments.html#how>
- Include the proposed text of your amendment
- Explain what your amendment would do and how it would address and solve the problem
- Explain if your amendment has ever been proposed before and if it was what was the outcome
- Explain which amendment method you would use and how you would campaign to get it passed
- Avoid filler quotes. Explain the issue in your own words and include in text citations when you refer to the article.
- Use in text citations instead of footnotes. For example, Your text. (Ovetz, 2020, p. 1)
- You must include **at least 4** references with in text citations and complete APA style citations in the bibliography. You must use **at least 1 of each type** of citation below. See “About Sources and References” and “About In Text Citations” below. Put the citations in alphabetical order. Do not number your references.
- You must use the Lunsford APA Guide for all your complete APA references. The Lunsford APA Guide can be found in the Canvas Writing Guides folder under Files. Do not cut and paste your reference from any source because they are often incorrect.

How to *format* your Constitutional Amendment Paper

- Cut and paste your paper into the text box. Do not post a link. Check the text to make sure it is formatted correctly in Canvas before you submit it.
- Keep your paper to no more than maximum 1,000 words (it is ok to be within 10% of the limit)
- Include your name, date, and name of the assignment
- Write your paper as a research paper with an introductory paragraph including a clear declarative thesis and preview, logically organized subsections, and a conclusion
- Do not write in first person
- Use subtitles for the subsections
- Include a concise introductory paragraph with a clear thesis and be sure to have a concise conclusion
- Check the formatting to make sure your paper is organized into clear paragraphs and readable
- Proofread your paper for everything in these directions at least once before turning it in
- Avoid filler quotes that add nothing of substance to your analysis. Paraphrase and include an in text citation instead.
- Correct syntax including verb tenses, sentence structure, punctuation, and spelling
- Do not include header, title page or page numbers
- Include the word count
- Check the “Pols 15 Grading Rubric” under Files on Canvas

About Sources and References

There are 3 types of acceptable sources that may be obtained through the library print and database sources. The 3 types of sources are:

1. academic: books, encyclopedias (academic field specific, do not use Britannica, Funk and Wagnall, etc), journal articles. Do not cite an academic paper if it hasn't been published in a book, journal or encyclopedia. Just because it appears on a site ending in ".edu" doesn't mean it's been published.
2. trade: publications specific to an industry or non-profit sector, and governments/inter-governmental organization reports (no factsheets or press releases are acceptable)
3. popular: newspapers, newsmagazines, documentary films, TV/radio news

Types of unacceptable sources: commercial non-news sources, aggregators, personal websites, blogs, social media, press releases, editorials, open source wikis, or unpublished academic papers.

About In Text and Bibliographic Citations

When citing sources in your paper and in the bibliography:

- Use APA citation style only (use the Lunsford style guide on Canvas)
- Use in text citations **and** a list of references. **Do not** use footnotes.
- When using APA in text citations the cite should appear as follows: TEXT (last name, year, page number). If you cite the video lecture the in text citation should be: (Ovetz, name of video lecture, 2020, hour:minute:second).
- At the end of your paper include a section titled Bibliography
- List your references in alphabetical order by last name—**do not** number your sources
- All bibliographic references should be in APA citation style only. Use the Lunsford style guide on Canvas. Do not use a citation generator or just cut and paste the citation from the database.

Short Essays

Students will write six maximum 100 word Short Essays connecting a core concept from any of the readings (the two textbooks or the reading packet) or the video lectures for the current class topic to a news story about a current local, state or national issue concerning government or politics published during the same week. Short Essays must be turned in no later than the last day of that week by 11:59 pm.

The objective of the Short Essays is for you to practice identifying the key concepts from the readings and video lectures and learning to apply them to current issues of US and California government and politics. These key concepts will form the basis of a study guide for the exams. They will also help you identify a possible topic for your Constitutional Amendment Paper.

For further information about the Short Essays watch the video lecture "Instructions for Short Essay Assignment."

How to write the short essay:

- The essay should include a brief summary of the topic, identify the core concept and explain how it connects to the news issue, and include two in text citations (see below), and two full APA citations following the Lunsford APA citation guide under Files on Canvas
- Do not summarize the news issue. Rather, demonstrate your understanding of how the concept is illustrated by the issue
- Avoid filler quotes. Explain the issue in your own words and include in text citations when you refer to the article. For example: Sentence Text. (Ovetz, 2020, p. 1). If you cite the video lecture the in text citation should be: (Ovetz, name of video lecture, 2020, hour:minute:second).
- Provide a minimum of one APA citation for either textbook or video lecture and one more for the outside news source, book or scholarly report (such as from a think tank or government). Use the Lunsford APA

citation guide under Files on Canvas. There is no need to include an APA citation for the Declaration of Independence or the US and CA Constitutions.

- You may cite only a professional news print, electronic, or online news source, preferable obtained from the SJSU library news databases. Do not cite a blog, encyclopedia, social media, press release, or non-news website.
- Cut and paste the Short Essay into the Canvas Assignment text box. Do not post a link.
- Remove large white spaces, line breaks, and other formatting issues before submitting your essay
- Include a word count. Please do not exceed the word limit by more than 10%
- Do not include a title page, header, or page numbers
- Arrange your bibliography in alphabetical order

How the short essay will be graded:

- Maximum of 100 words not including the APA citations. Include word count.
- Each essay will be graded as follows:
 - 80 maximum points for the essay, identifying the reading concept and explaining how the concept connects to the issue
 - 10 maximum points for correct grammar, spelling and syntax. Write in complete sentences and proofread before submitting your work.
 - 10 maximum points each for the two APA citations. Be sure to use the Lunsford APA guide under Files. Do not use a citation generator or just cut and paste the citation from the database.

Grammar and Proofreading

You will be graded for grammar, punctuation and style to the extent that it reduces your ability to express your research and analysis clearly. While grammar, punctuation and style are not the most significant part of the grade you will receive, it does affect your ability to communicate your ideas and analysis clearly and effectively. If you have any issues concerning your language skills you wish to discuss with me please visit me during office hours.

Where to Get Help with Your Writing

Although I do not proofread student papers before they are turned in I am happy to help you with limited specific selections of text. For help I encourage you to **first** go to the campus writing center for help with your writing and the campus reference librarians for help with research and citations.

I strongly encourage you to use the SJSU Writing Center's Homegrown Handouts on many aspects of the writing process here: <https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/handouts/>

The Writing Center, <https://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/>, also offers up to two 45 minutes sessions per week by emailing them a request at writingcenter@sjsu.edu. It is also partnered with MLK Library to offer live chat services for students who have quick writing-related questions that can be addressed in 10-15 minutes. Live chat is available during select hours and no appointment is necessary.

You may also use the Lib Guide cited above and the short guides to writing research papers at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/sitemap/>

Pols 15 Course Outline

Note: The schedule is subject to change with fair notice by email or on Canvas.

Note: Complete the readings at the beginning of each new class topic.

Week	Dates	Topic	Katznelson Book	Field Book	Other Readings (in Canvas Reading Packet)
Week 1	Wed 1/27	Introductions & Overview of the Course; class meets from 10:30-11:30 am			
Week 2	Tues 2/2	Democracy	ch. 1, 2 & 5		
Week 2	Thurs 2/4	Democracy			
Week 3	Tues 2/9	Declaration of Independence			Declaration of Independence
Week 3	Wed 2/10	Democracy & Declaration of Independence Short Essay due			
Week 3	Thurs 2/11	Take and complete the Democracy & Declaration of Independence Exam by 11:59 pm			
Week 4	Tues 2/16	US & CA Constitutions			1. Madison , "Federalist Paper #10" 2. US Constitution
Week 4	Thurs 2/18	CA Constitution		ch. 1 & 2	
Week 5	Tues 2/23	US Constitution			
Week 5	Thurs 2/25	US & CA Constitution Short Essay due			
Week 6	Tues 3/2	Federalism	ch. 3		Federal-State Relations , 4/27/2018: Is partisanship putting governance at risk? by Alan Greenblatt in the CQ Researcher library database
Week 6	Thurs 3/4	Federalism Short Essay due			

Week 6	Wed 3/5	Take and complete the US & CA Constitutions and Federalism Exam by 11:59 pm			
Week 7	Tues 3/9	Congress & CA Legislature	ch. 7, 9 & 10		ProPublica/Washington Post , “How Congress Stopped Working,” https://www.propublica.org/article/how-congress-stopped-working?utm_source=pardot&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=dailynewsletter
Week 7	Thurs 3/11	CA Legislature		ch. 8 & 13	
Week 8	Tues 3/16	Congress			
Week 8	Thurs 3/18	Congress			
Week 9	Tues 3/23	Congress			
Week 9	Thurs 3/25	Congress			
	Tues 3/30 & Thurs 4/1	No class, Spring Break			
Week 10	Tues 4/6	Congress & CA Legislature Short Essay due			
Week 10	Wed 4/7	Take and complete Congress & CA Legislative Branch Exam by 11:59 pm			
Week 10	Thurs 4/8	US & CA Executive Branch	ch. 6 & 11		
Week 11	Tues 4/13	CA Executive Branch		ch. 9	
Week 11	Thurs 4/15	US Executive Branch			

Week 12	Tues 4/20	US & CA Executive Branch Short Essay due			
Week 12	Wed 4/21	Take and complete the US & CA Executive Branch Exam by 11:59 pm			
Week 12	Thurs 4/22	US & CA Judicial Branch	ch. 8		1. Brennan , “Judicial Interpretation” 2. Watch “ Soul of Justice ” in the library Kanopy database at https://sjsu.kanopy.com/ (access through the library webpage)
Week 13	Tues 4/27	CA Judicial Branch		ch. 11	
Week 13	Thurs 4/29	US Judicial Branch			
Week 14	Tues 5/4	US & CA Judicial Branch Short Essay due			
Week 14	Wed 5/5	Take and complete US & CA Judicial Branch Exam by 11:59 pm			
Week 14	Thurs 5/6	Elections & Money in Politics	ch. 4	ch. 5	
Week 15	Tues 5/11	Elections & Money in Politics			
Week 15	Wed 5/12	Elections & Money in Politics; Short Essay due			
Week 15	Thurs 5/13; last day of class	Take and complete Elections & Money in Politics Exam by 11:59 pm			

Week 15	Thurs 5/20	Constitutional Amendment Paper due by 11:59 pm			
Week 16	Tuesday 5/25	Final exam (comprehensive, complete by 11:59 pm)			