

San José State University
College of Social Sciences/Department of Political Science
POLS 120, U.S. Law & Society Section 80; Fall 2022

Course and Contact Information

Instructor:	James Brent
Office Location:	Clark Hall 457
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Email:	james.brent@sjsu.edu
Office Hours:	8:00 to 9:00 a.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays (both in-person and Zoom) 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Mondays (both in-person and via Zoom)
Class Days/Time:	N/A (online asynchronous course)
Classroom:	Canvas Learning Management System
Prerequisites:	Passage of the Writing Skills Test (WST) or ENGL 100A / LLD 100A with a C or better (C- not accepted), completion of Core General Education and upper division standing are prerequisites to all SJSU studies courses. Completion of, or co-registration in, 100W is strongly recommended.
GE/SJSU Studies Category:	SJSU Studies S: Self, Society & Equality in U.S.

Course Description

Social and philosophical foundations of law and legal systems and development of legal institutions in various cultures. Anglo-American law and administration of justice in the U.S. emphasized.

Course Format

This course is conducted entirely online and asynchronously, meaning that we will not meet at a specific time. All course materials and assignments will be distributed and collected via the Canvas Learning Management System. Course videos are hosted on Youtube. Other than internet access and word processing software, there are no special requirements or apps needed for this course.

GE Learning Outcomes (GELO)

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

- 1) Students will be able to describe how identities (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age) are shaped by cultural and societal influences within contexts of equality and inequality. (Assesed by the term paper, exam questions, and one or more activities)
- 2) Students will be able to describe historical, social, political, and economic processes producing diversity, equality, and structured inequalities in the U.S. (Assesed by the term paper, exam questions, and one or more activities)
- 3) Students will be able to describe social actions which have led to greater equality and social justice in the U.S. (i.e. religious, gender, ethnic, racial, class, sexual orientation, disability, and/or age). (Assesed by the term paper, exam questions, and one or more activities)
- 4 – Students will be able to recognize and appreciate constructive interactions between people from different cultural, racial, and ethnic groups within the U.S. (Assesed by exam questions, and one or more activities)

Required Texts/Readings

Anderson, Carol. (2017). *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. New York: Bloomsbury ISBN 978-1632864130

Other required readings will be made available through the course Canvas site.

Course Requirements and Assignments

This course is divided into 7 topics, or “modules.” Most modules last two weeks, except for the first module, which lasts 3 weeks. Each of the 7 modules contains the following elements. You must complete each element of each module:

1. Lectures – Each module has several lecture videos that you must view. You will be responsible for the content of these videos on the exam.
2. Assigned Readings – Each module has an assigned reading from Globalyceum that you will be responsible for on the exams.
3. Module Assignment – In each module, you will be asked to write a short paper on a particular issue related to that module. **Web-based activities are always due on Mondays at noon.**
4. 120 Gazette - Explained below

In addition, there is a midterm exam, a final exam, and a term paper. Extra credit will not be available.

The Assignments Explained

Module Assignments – Every module has a small assignment associated with it. Submissions should be 2 to 3 pages in length. Assignments are worth 5 points each, You should complete 5 of the 7 assignments. If you submit more than 5 assignments, I will count only your 5 highest scores.

120 Gazette – For each module, you will be asked to locate 2 web pages or news articles giving an example of the kind of discrimination that is the subject of that module. For example, the first module is about public racial discrimination, so you will be asked to find 2 web pages or news articles about examples of public racial discrimination. To earn full credit, you should provide 1) the URL (web link) for the source you have found, and 2) a 100-word summary of the article or incident. PLEASE NOTE that the examples you provide must be DIFFERENT than the examples provided by any other student in class. Therefore, you should read the other student’s entries before posting yours, and the earlier you do this assignment, the easier it will be. You will receive 1 point for each URL and summary, with a maximum of 10 points possible (so you should NOT submit more than 10 examples.)

The Midterm and Final Examinations -- In this course, you will be required to take a midterm exam and a final exam. These exams will be administered online and therefore will be open-book, open-note exams.. Each exam will be a combination of short-answer and essay questions. The final exam is NOT cumulative. The midterm covers modules 1-3 and the final exam covers modules 4-7. Each exam will be available online for a 48-hour period. You must begin the exam within that 24-hour period. You will have 90 minutes to complete each exam. Access to course lectures will be disabled once the exam period begins. Although these are open-note exams, researching your answers on the internet will be considered academic dishonesty.

The Term Paper/Outline and List of Sources – Your term paper will focus on a lawsuit involving some form of discrimination initiated since the year 2000. It will consist of three stages:

1. **Topic Selection** – You should use Google or other internet search strategies to locate a lawsuit involving some form of discrimination initiated since 2000. You are given broad freedom to choose your topic. It can be from any court in the United States, whether state or federal. However, you must submit your topic to me for approval before proceeding to the next step. Although this is required, there are no points given for this assignment.
2. **Outline and List of Sources** – After obtaining topic approval from me, you should submit both a proposed outline and list of sources. **The outline** should be at least two full pages long (although I welcome outlines that are longer). It should also be specific – a vague outline gives me nothing to give you feedback about. It should also make sure to address all of the elements listed in #3 below. **The list of sources** should consist of 15 sources that you might use in the paper. These sources should be credible, unbiased sources, and at least five (5) should be peer-reviewed articles, law review articles, or other academic sources. You should use proper bibliographic form, but I do not care whether you use MLA, APA, or another style. [Please note: By listing sources here, you are NOT committing yourself to using those exact sources in your final paper.]
3. **Final Draft** – Your final draft should be at least 12 double-spaced typed pages long. It should include the following elements:
 - a) An explanation of the facts of the case (this should be brief, no more than a page) (35%)
 - b) Historical & Social Background - The paper should explain the conditions that led to the adoption of the law or constitutional provisions involved in your case. It should provide historical, economic, political, and/or psychological other data about the extent and effects of the of the discrimination involved. It should also include information about other social actions (such as protest movements) that have attempted to combat the form of discrimination involved. (40%)
 - c) Legal Provisions Involved - The paper should explain the specific legal provisions involved. This should discuss what the law or constitutional provision contains, and should explain what the plaintiff would need to prove to win their case. It should also discuss any previous significant Supreme Court decisions related to the issue. (35%)
 - d) Your analysis of whether the case was decided correctly (if it’s been decided) or how it should be decided (if it hasn’t yet been decided). (10%)
 - e) The quality of your writing is also a factor (10%)

Grading Information

There are a maximum of 100 possible points, which are distributed accordingly:

Module Assignments (5 @ 5 points each)	25 points
Midterm Exam	15 points
Final Exam	20 points
Outline & List of Sources	5 points
Research Paper	25 points
120 Gazette (5 at 2 points each)	10 points

Final letter grades for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

A = 93 to 100%	A minus = 90 to 92%	B plus = 88 to 89%	B = 83 to 87%
B minus = 80 to 82%	C plus = 78 to 79%	C = 73 to 77%	C minus = 70 to 72%
D plus = 68 to 69%	D = 63 to 67%	D minus = 60 to 62%	F = 59% or less

My Late Policies

Module Assignments – I do NOT accept these assignments late, regardless of the excuse. There are no exceptions to this policy whatsoever. However, you are permitted to skip two (2) assignments without penalty. If you submit more than five (5) of these assignments, your two lowest grades will be dropped. In addition, to accommodate students who have technical difficulties, you do enjoy a 60-minute “grace period.” If you miss the submission deadline due to technical issues, you may email it to me instead at james.brent@sjsu.edu. However, I must receive the submission within 60 minutes of the original due date and time (in other words, no later than 1:00 p.m. on the due date). Under no circumstances will I accept assignments submitted after the grace period expires. According to university policy, I cannot make exceptions.

The Outline/List of Sources – You should make every effort to submit this assignment on time. However, since this represents your best opportunity to get feedback from me before writing your final draft, I will accept these assignments late with a 10% penalty if submitted at least 2 weeks before the first paper due date.

The Final Draft of the Paper -- There are two alternative due dates for the final draft. If you submit the paper by noon on Monday, November 28, you will receive written feedback from me along with your grade (although you will not receive the opportunity to revise the paper – merely feedback that explains how your grade was arrived at). If you want extra time to work on your paper, you may submit it by noon on Monday, December 12 and it will be considered “on time,” but it will not receive any written feedback from me. Papers submitted after noon on December 12 will be considered late (they will be accepted, but you will likely receive an “incomplete” in the course until I can grade them, and they will be assessed a 10% penalty).

Exams -- Makeup exams will be permitted with documentation of an acceptable excuse (i.e. illness or an unplanned situation).

Contacting Me

I am happy to receive your questions and feedback. I would ask that you contact me in one of two ways:

- 1) via email at james.brent@sjsu.edu
- 2) From Canvas -- click “Inbox” and then the “new message” icon at the top to send me a message

Although I will leave “comments” for you, please do NOT use the “comment” feature to send me messages, as I do not receive all of them.

In addition, I will occasionally post “announcements” in Canvas. It is very important that you make sure to read all of these announcements.

I also will hold office hours simultaneously in-person on campus, and via Zoom. The office hours are listed at the beginning of this syllabus, and the Zoom invitation can be found on the course Canvas site.

Required University Statements

[University Policy S16-9](#), requires the following language to be included in the syllabus:

“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.”

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), relevant university policy concerning 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](#) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

POLS 120 Fall 2022 Course Schedule (subject to change with notice)

Week/Lesson /Module	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines	Learning Outcomes
1	8/19-9/12	Public Racial Discrimination Reading: <i>White Rage</i> , prologue & Chapters 1, 2 and 3 <i>The Diversity Delusion</i> , Chapter 2 & 3 POLS 120 Gazette Due on 9/12 at 12:00 noon PST Module 1 Assignment Due on 9/12 at 12:00 noon PST	1, 2, 3
2	9/12-9/26	Gender & Other Forms of Public Discrimination Reading: <i>Bathroom Battlegrounds</i> , Chapter 3 Paper Topic Proposal Due on 9/19 at 12:00 PST POLS 120 Gazette Due on 9/26 at 12:00 noon PST Module 2 Assignment Due on 9/26 at 12:00 noon PST	1, 2, 3
3	9/26-10/10	Private Discrimination Reading: TBD POLS 120 Gazette Due on 10/10 at 12:00 noon PST Module 3 Assignment Due on 10/10 at 12:00 noon PST	1, 2, 3
MIDTERM EXAM HELD OCTOBER 13 AND 14			
4	10/10-10/24	LGTBQ Discrimination Reading: <i>The Cost of My Faith</i> , Chaps. 12, 13 and 14 <i>Journal of the American Medical Association</i> POLS 120 Gazette Due on 10/24 at 12:00 noon PST Module 4 Assignment Due on 10/24 at 12:00 noon PST Paper Outline Due on 10/31 at 12:00 noon PST	1, 2, 3
5	10/24-11/7	Race & the Criminal Justice System Reading: <i>White Rage</i> , Chapter 4 POLS 120 Gazette Due on 11/7 at 12:00 noon PST Module 5 Assignment Due on 11/7 at 12:00 noon PST	2, 3
6	11/7-11/21	Voting Rights Reading: <i>White Rage</i> , Chapter 5 POLS 120 Gazette Due on 11/21 at 12:00 noon PST Module 6 Assignment Due on 11/21 at 12:00 noon PST	2, 3
7	11/21-12/5	Race, Poverty, and Social Policy Reading: <i>Poor People's Movements</i> Chapters 1 and 4 POLS 120 Gazette Due on 12/5 at 12:00 noon PST Module 6 Assignment Due on 12/5 at 12:00 noon PST	3, 4
PAPER DUE ON NOVEMBER 28 OR DECEMBER 12 FINAL EXAM HELD ON DECEMBER 8 AND 9			

