



**SAN JOSÉ STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

## **POLS 15: Essentials of U.S. and California Government**

FALL 2022

San José State University Department of Political Science

### **POLS 15–5: Essentials of U.S. and California Government (FALL 2022)**

Instructor:	Marci Harris, J.D., LL.M
Office Location:	Clark Hall 404B
Telephone:	(731) 267-7545 (for emergency only)
Email:	<a href="mailto:marci.harris@sjsu.edu">marci.harris@sjsu.edu</a> (preferred)
Office Hours:	Monday & Wednesdays 10:00 – 11 AM Use this link to schedule a time to meet: <a href="https://calendly.com/marci-harris-sjsu">https://calendly.com/marci-harris-sjsu</a>
Class Days / Time:	Monday & Wednesdays 12:00 – 1:15 PM
Class Format	In-person lecture <sup>1</sup>
Classroom:	Hugh Gillis Hall 116
Canvas Link:	<a href="https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1490165">https://sjsu.instructure.com/courses/1490165</a>
Zoom Link (for any virtual meetings)	<a href="https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/89449247632?pwd=MXpaQ0JqdTFHYnN2d096VIU4eIIHUT09">https://sjsu.zoom.us/j/89449247632?pwd=MXpaQ0JqdTFHYnN2d096VIU4eIIHUT09</a>
Last Day of instruction	November 30, 2022
Optional exam review	December 5, 2022 (via Zoom)
Final Exam	December 14, 2022 @ 9:45 AM – 12:00 PM

---

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of Week 4 (Sept 12, 14), which will be virtual / asynchronous

*This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.  
Any changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.  
It is the student's responsibility to check Canvas regularly for announcements and updates.*

## Syllabus Contents

<a href="#"><u>Course Description</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Course Goals</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Learning Outcomes</u></a>	3
<a href="#"><u>Required Texts and Readings, Resources</u></a>	5
<a href="#"><u>Course Requirements and Assignments</u></a>	6
<a href="#"><u>Grading Policy</u></a>	7
<a href="#"><u>Class Protocol</u></a>	8
<a href="#"><u>University Policies</u></a>	9
<a href="#"><u>Course Schedule</u></a>	10

## Course Description

POLS-15 will introduce students to the history, principles and institutions of U.S. and California government, with emphasis on current issues and events.

## Course Format

### In-person lecture course\*

\*EXCEPT September 12th & 14th, which will be virtual/asynchronous. Video link will be posted in Canvas for you to view at a time that works best for you and you will not attend in-person class those days.

## Course Goals

Hello and welcome to POLS-15! My goal in this course is for you to truly understand the underlying history, principles, contradictions and ever-changing conditions of U.S. and California government — not just to pass a test but to contribute throughout your lives to making these systems work better! I want this course to prepare you to confidently participate in civic life — whether discussions, elections, advocacy or simply as an active community member — with a grounding in how we got to where we are and ideas about how we can do better in the future.

## MySJSU

Course materials such as syllabus, handouts, notes, assignment instructions, etc. can be found on Canvas. **You are responsible for regularly checking Canvas for any updates.** <<--(!!)

## Learning Outcomes

### General Education Learning Outcomes (GELO)

*Upon successful completion of this course, students should 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 and essay questions in two exams, Canvas writing activities, and group project.**
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 in two exams and the Canvas activities.**
3. GELO 3 (D3):  
Place contemporary developments in cultural, historical, environmental, and spatial contexts. **Assessed by group projects and Canvas activities.**

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 multiple-choice and essay questions in two exams and Canvas activities.**
5. GELO 5 (D3):  
Evaluate social science information, draw on different points of view, and formulate applications appropriate to contemporary social issues. **Assessed by group project and Canvas activities.**
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 essay questions in two exams and Canvas activities**

### Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

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

- Understand and describe the philosophical and historical foundations of the U.S. and California governing systems. This includes understanding the origin and describing ideas and key concepts that were incorporated into founding documents such as natural rights, rule of law, separation of powers, and federalism.
- Understand and analyze the evolution of government institutions, including the structure, powers, limitations and actions of the three branches of government and the relationship and jurisdictional boundaries between federal, state and local levels of government.
- Understand and describe the unique agreements, relationships and emerging issues among the U.S. and tribal governments and non-state districts and territories
- Understand, remember and describe key elements of the Bill of Rights and examples of historical denials and limitations on those rights. The student should also be able to identify people, events, movements, laws, court decisions and cultural changes that have led to expansion or new understandings of these rights and their applicability
- Understand the rights, duties and privileges of citizens in the U.S. and California governing system, including electoral activities such as joining a party, supporting candidates and voting; advocacy activities such as grassroots outreach, interest groups, lobbying and raising public awareness; civic engagement in nonpartisan activities such as public comment periods, participatory opportunities and community projects; legal requirements such as jury duty, selective service and emerging discussions of a potential national service requirement.
- Understand California's political, electoral, and institutional dynamics and California's influence and position — as the most populous state in the U.S., within the federal system.
- Understand and analyze current political topics in the context of evolving political institutions and standard

## Required Texts and Readings, Resources

### Textbook:

Glen Krutz and Sylvie Waskiewicz, **American Government 3e** @ OpenStax

ISBN-13: 978-1-711493-96-1

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e>\*

**\*THIS MATERIAL IS AVAILABLE FREE ONLINE. YOU DO NOT NEED TO PURCHASE A TEXTBOOK.**

### Other Readings<sup>2</sup>

Other readings will be posted in Canvas as assigned

### Technical Requirements

- Each student must have an @sjsu.edu email address that they check regularly.
- We will occasionally use online tools for interactive exercises in class that can be accessed through a smartphone, tablet or laptop.
- Updates will be **sent through Canvas**; it is your responsibility to stay up-to-date.

### Library Liaisons

- Liaison for Political Science: Paul Kauppila (Paul.Kauppila@sjsu.edu)
- University Librarian (Political Science Liaison) (408) 808-2042
- Political Science subject guide: <http://libguides.sjsu.edu/politicalscience>

### Political Science Departmental Writing Policy and SJSU Writing Center

Students of political science should develop the ability to write in clear, grammatical English. Spelling and grammar count! Students must take care that appropriate citations are used. Direct quotations must be so indicated with quotation marks and a specific reference to the page in the source from which it was taken. Failure to cite your sources constitutes academic misconduct which carries with it serious sanctions. A tutorial on citations is available at the library website at

[http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info\\_comp/citing.htm](http://www.sjlibrary.org/services/literacy/info_comp/citing.htm).

For assistance with writing, visit the SJSU Writing Center located in Clark Hall, Suite 126. In addition to one-on-one tutoring services, the Writing Center also offers workshops every semester on a variety of writing topics. To make an appointment, visit the Writing Center website at <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter>.

---

<sup>2</sup> Course material developed by the instructor is the intellectual property of the instructor and cannot be shared publicly without his/her approval. You may not publicly share or upload instructor generated material for this course such as exam questions, lecture notes, or homework solutions without instructor consent.

## Course Requirements and Assignments<sup>3</sup>

### Assignments

- 10 (SHORT) WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS (40 points each)  
**Due Sundays at midnight:** The prompt will be posted in Canvas on Monday. It may be a question, an article for discussion, or an assignment to watch a video or other content. The assignment will be to **write ~2 paragraphs (no more than 4) on the prompt.**
- CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT GROUP PROJECT (75 points)  
You and a partner will be assigned a congressional district at the beginning of the course. Your assignment is to research the district and its current office-holder and make a five-minute presentation to the class.
- MIDTERM EXAM (200 points)  
The midterm will consist of 30 multiple choice questions and two essays. **You may refer to your pocket Constitution during the exam. No other materials will be allowed.**
- FIXAMERICA GROUP PROJECT (75 points)  
As a class, we will discuss various proposals to reform, change or improve some element of American government. Your group will design your own proposed reform and present it to the class. A portion of the grade for this assignment will be determined by classmates' votes.
- FINAL EXAM (250 points)<sup>4</sup>  
The final will consist of 45 multiple choice questions and three essays. **You may refer to your pocket Constitution during the exam. No other materials will be allowed.**

---

<sup>3</sup> 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. (University Policy S16-9 <https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>)

<sup>4</sup> Faculty members are required to have a culminating activity for their courses, which can include a final examination, a final research paper or project, a final creative work or performance, a final portfolio of work, or other appropriate assignment. ( <http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S17-1.pdf>)

## Grading Policy

GRADING FORMULA		GRADING SCALE*	
ASSIGNMENT	POSSIBLE	RANGE	GRADE
10 Weekly Assignments	400	970–1000+	A+
Midterm Exam	200	930–969	A
Congressional District Project	75	900–929	A-
FixAmerica Project	75	870–899	B+
Final Exam	250	800–829	B-
Extra Credit	200	770–799	C+
		730–769	C
Possible Total points	1200	700–729	C-
		630–699	D
		600–629	D-
		Below 599	F

**\*\*This course must be passed with a C- or better as a CSU graduation requirement.**

EXTRA CREDIT (possible 200 points)<sup>5</sup>

EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY	DUE DATE	POSSIBLE POINTS
Recite the first two paragraphs of the Declaration of Independence	Before Nov. 30, 2022	50
Attend and write about a town hall meeting or political debate (500-words)	Before Nov. 30, 2022	50
Watch a Congressional hearing and write about it (500-words)	Before Nov. 30, 2022	50
Turn in a substantive, organized, thorough class outline (digital or photocopy)	End of course	50

<sup>5</sup> Per Academic Senate policy, 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. (<https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S09-7.pdf>)

## CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Attendance will not be taken.<sup>6</sup>

## MISSED EXAMS AND MISSED WORK

Assignments turned in past the due date/time will be eligible for **half credit**. Exceptions will be made for a documented medical emergency if the professor is notified in writing (via email) before the assignment is due.

**No make-up, early, or late exams will be administered.** If you miss an exam, 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 course provides generous extra credit opportunities!** Take advantage of them!

## Class 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 come prepared to class discussions and conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner, especially to fellow students.

## Course Rules

1. Always maintain **professional and respectful language** — in class, in emails and in your coursework.
2. **You are responsible for staying up-to-date on all information and announcements.** Check Canvas regularly for updates, changes, or new information and be sure to enable Canvas notifications. Course rules, schedule, and day-to-day are subject to change, please pay close attention to course announcements. If you miss class, ask classmates for notes or any announcements.
3. **Late assignments are eligible for half credit;** no make-up, early or late exams will be administered.

---

<sup>6</sup> “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. In some cases, attendance is fundamental to course objectives; for example, students may be required to interact with others in the class. Attendance is the responsibility of the student.” <https://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/F15-12.pdf>



## University Policies

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.

## Disability Access

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor ASAP. The Accessible Education Center (AEC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The AEC is located at One Washington Square in ADM 110 and can be reached by telephone (voice/408-924-6000, or by email at: [aec-info@sjsu.edu](mailto:aec-info@sjsu.edu) or [aec-exams@sjsu.edu](mailto:aec-exams@sjsu.edu)).

## Student disclosures of sexual violence

San Jose State University requires all incoming students to complete **Sexual Assault Prevention for Undergraduates** or **Sexual Assault Prevention for Graduate Students**, mandatory online sexual assault prevention trainings. Title IX requires higher education institutions to take necessary precautions to prevent sexual assault on their campuses, and to respond promptly and effectively when an assault is reported. To fully comply with Title IX, the CSU Chancellor's Office issued [Executive Order 1095](#) which mandates educational training programs to help prevent sexual violence. For more information and resources, go to: <http://notalone.sjsu.edu>  
For more information go to: <http://www.sjsu.edu/wellness/onlinetraining/>

POLS–15-12: Essentials of U.S. and California Government, Spring 2022

**Course Schedule**

*This schedule is subject to change with fair notice. All changes will be posted in Canvas.*

WEEK	Assignment / Activity	Due Date
WEEK 1	Assignment #1	AUG 28 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 2	Assignment #2	SEP 5 @ 11:59 PM PT (Monday due date since Labor Day weekend)
WEEK 3	Assignment #3	SEP 11 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 4	Congressional District Project	Present in class SEP 19 & 21
WEEK 5	Assignment #4	SEP 25 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 6	Assignment #5	OCT 2 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 7	Assignment #6	OCT 9 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 8	Assignment #7	OCT 16 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 9	MidTerm review	OCT 24 IN CLASS
	MidTerm exam	OCT 26 IN CLASS
WEEK 10	No assignment	
WEEK 11	Assignment #8	NOV 6 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 12	Thanksgiving Break	
WEEK 13	Assignment #9	NOV 13 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 14	Assignment #10	NOV 20 @ 11:59 PM PT
WEEK 15	FixAmerica Group Project	Present in class NOV 21 & 23
WEEK 16	Last day of instruction	NOV 30
	Optional exam review	DEC 5 VIA ZOOM
WEEK 17	Final exam	DEC 14 @ 9:45 AM–12:00 PM