POLITICAL SCIENCE 1
Governments of the United States and California

Term: Spring 2015
Instructor: Austin Gordon, Ph. D.
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Class Meetings: M/W (3 units; 3 hours lecture)

Recommended Preparation: eligibility for English 1A
Credit, degree applicable Transfer CSU, UC*


Course Description:
This course is a survey of the concepts, theories, and functions of the American political system. The basic principles of the United States Constitution and the government of California will be examined. Emphasis will be placed on the formal and informal influences of federalism on national and state governments.

Course Objectives:
1. Identify the theoretical foundations and the applications of the American political system.
2. Analyze major political institutions: the presidency, bureaucracy, Congress, Judiciary, elections, political parties, and interest groups.
3. Examine and assess the implementation of democracy, including the different perspectives of elitism, pluralism, and majoritarianism.
4. Evaluate the role of the mass media in the political process.
5. Identify and discuss political culture and the function of political socialization.
6. Compare and contrast the relationship of federal and state governmental systems and processes with emphasis on California.
7. Evaluate and analyze the interdependence of economics and politics.
8. Distinguish between civil rights and civil liberties and their evolution in American society.
9. Assess the federal and state judicial systems and their impact on public policy.
10. Examine and discuss the process of public policy making in relation to international and domestic policy issues.
11. Assess the concept and implementation of citizenship.
12. Analyze issues of race, ethnicity, class, age, and gender as they relate to the distribution of power in the political process.

Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of the United States Constitution including its Articles and Amendments, as well as those for the government of California
2. Students will demonstrate an understanding of how political parties and interest groups serve as channels for popular participation, and compare/contrast the techniques they use to do so.
3. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the various roles played by the President and California Governor, the political resources available to them to meet the expectations associated with those roles, and how those resources are limited.
Grading:
The course grade is based on 200 possible points from all the tests plus the writing portfolio. To earn an “A” grade one must have 180 points; a “B” requires 160 points; a “C” requires 130 points.
* The four tests are 140 points total (35 points each).
* Writing Portfolio: 60 points possible. Due Monday 5/11. Includes all Assignment 1 papers. The writing portfolio is graded in its entirety, based on the content and quality of the writing.

Lecture Topics, Reading Assignments and Test Dates:

Section 1: The Constitution and the Presidency
Irony of Democracy: Chapters 1, 2 and 9
Test 1: Mon. 2/23

Section 2: Voting, Media, Political Advertising
Irony of Democracy: Chapters 4, 5 and 6
Test 2: Wed. 3/25

Section 3: Civil Liberties, Civil Rights and the Courts
Irony of Democracy: Chapters 10 and 13
Test 3: Monday 4/20

Section 4: Congress, Parties, Interest Groups
Irony of Democracy: Chapters 6, 7 and 8
Test 4: Wed. 5/13

Class Assignments:
All students are required to complete the Writing/Discussion Assignment, which consists of six short papers and class discussions on those papers. The written paper must be ready on the day of the discussion.

Periodically (see dates and topics below) we will hold in-class discussions on important political issues. To receive credit for this assignment, you must:
1) Complete 6 articles. A minimum of 2 articles must be selected from the first 5 on the list.
2) Read the article carefully and understand the author’s main theme or argument. In your 1-2 page paper find a point/argument/ aspect of the article that you find interesting, then explain why you focused on that point.
3) Participate in the class discussions covering the articles you have selected. Your short papers serve as the basis for your participation in the in-class discussions, and are due on the day of the discussion. I will sign your paper on the day of the discussion, and you will collect it for inclusion in your portfolio. You are responsible to collect your signed papers from me. Papers without signatures confirming attendance receive only 30% credit. All papers must simply be typed and double-spaced.

Extra Credit Assignment:
I will announce one extra credit assignment for students concerned with earning a B or C in the class. An A in the class can only be earned without help from extra credit assignment.

All articles are online at www.saddleback.edu/faculty/agordon
Discussion Articles and Dates:
1. Death Penalty 2/4 (No posted article. Find your own relevant article)
2. Leaders Should Not Follow Opinion Polls 2/9
3. Americans Are Right to Resist an Atheist President or Atheism in American Politics 2/11
4. Bowling Alone 2/18
5. The People Formerly Known as the Audience or Digital Democracy 3/9
6. Reasoning Voter or Have You Come a Long Way, Baby? 3/11
7. TV Ad Wars 3/23
8. Women in the Barracks 4/1
9. Defense of Prejudice or Protecting Hate Speech or Fighting for Free Speech in Schools 4/6
10. Right-to-Die 4/15
11. Meaning of Marriage or Gay Marriage and Conservatives 4/27
12. One Nation Slightly Divisible 4/29

ADA Statement:
El Camino College is committed to providing educational accommodations for students with disabilities upon the timely request by the student to the instructor. A student with a disability, who would like to request an academic accommodation, is responsible for identifying herself/himself to the instructor and to the Special Resource Center. To make arrangements for academic accommodations, contact the Special Resource Center.

Student Code of Conduct
http://www.elcamino.edu/administration/board/boarddocs/5500%20%20Academic%20Honesty.pdf

Student Rights and Grievances Procedure 5530
http://www.elcamino.edu/administration/board/policies.asp