

CUYAMACA COLLEGE
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

Political Science C1000 – American Government and Politics

3 hours lecture, 3 units

Catalog Description

This course is an introduction to government and politics in the United States and California. Students examine the constitutions, structure, and operation of governing institutions, civil liberties and civil rights, political behaviors, political issues, and public policy using political science theory and methodology.

Analysis of the evolution of the structures and functions of the U.S. and California political systems from the time of the nation's founding to the present day. Emphasis is on the dynamic nature of the American political experience and how that experience impacts the functioning of the U.S. political system. The course will also explore the larger cultural, economic, and sociological forces shaping the U.S. political system. In addition, the development and evolution of the U.S. Constitution and policy making role of traditional political institutions such as the presidency, the Congress, and the judiciary will be explored. Finally, the impact of other political forces such as mass movements, the media, the bureaucracy, interest groups, and ethnic and social groups will be examined. Topics will be illustrated through reference to current political events. *Formerly POSC 121. Not open to students with credit in POSC 121.*

Prerequisite

None

Course Content

Part 1:

1. The purpose of government and nature of democratic governance
 - a. Political philosophies that underlie democratic government
 - b. Comparison of representative and direct democracy
 - c. The value of, influences on, and consequences of participation and non- participation in democratic government
2. The U.S. and California Constitutions as frameworks for government
 - a. Political philosophies of the framers and critics of the U.S. Constitution
 - b. Processes for amending and interpreting the U.S. and California Constitutions
3. The theory and practice of federalism in the United States, focusing on California
 - a. The framework and operation of federal, state, and local relations
 - b. Interaction between the federal government and Native American tribes and entities
4. The structure and contemporary operations of federal, state, and local governing institutions in the United States and California including the
 - a. Executive branch
 - b. Legislative branch
 - c. Judicial branch
5. Civil liberties and civil rights of individuals and groups
 - a. Civil liberties and rights as articulated in the U.S. and California Constitutions and federal and state court decisions
 - b. Contemporary and historical interactions between government and marginalized populations within the United States based on factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender and gender expression, sexual orientation, class, ability status, age, citizenship status, language, religion,

- and/or other forms of identity
6. Individual and group behaviors within the context of the U.S. and California constitutions, including
 - a. Elections, campaigns, and voting
 - b. Political parties
 - c. Interest groups
 - d. Social movements
 7. Factors that shape politics and policymaking including
 - a. Political culture
 - b. Political socialization
 - c. Political ideologies
 - d. Public opinion
 - e. Media
 8. Political issues and public policies
 - a. Domestic
 - b. Economic
 - c. Foreign
 9. Introductory research methods used in political science including
 - a. qualitative tools and techniques
 - b. quantitative tools and techniques

Part 2:

10. Comprised of units to give perspectives on the structure and function of the U.S. and California governments, especially including:
 - a. Democratic political theory including different assessments of how political power is exercised in the U.S. and California
 - b. The evolution of the U.S. Constitution including the philosophies of the framers of the Constitution and the debate over its ratification
 - c. The development of civil liberties and civil rights in the U.S.
 - d. Ways, means and impact of political participation by individuals, ethnic groups and social groups
 - e. The role and impact of linkage institutions such as interest groups, the media and political parties
 - f. The structures, functions and processes of governmental and other political institutions and their impacts on the U.S. political system
 - g. The relations between different levels of government, especially focusing on U.S.-California relations
 - h. The evolution and contemporary status of economic, social and foreign policies

Course Objectives

Part 1: Objectives/Outcomes

At the conclusion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the founding and development of the U.S. and California Constitution.
2. Critique governing institutions and political processes within the United States and California.
3. Employ introductory political science research methods to contextualize contemporary political issues and operations in the United States and California
4. Assess civil liberties and civil rights of individuals and groups as articulated in the U.S. and California Constitutions and subsequent court decisions.
5. Investigate the role of identity and political ideology in shaping public opinion and public policy in the United States and California.
6. Analyze how to effectively participate in politics at the national, state, county, and/or city levels.

Part 2:

After this course, the student should be able to:

7. Identify and analyze the ideals, goals, and processes of government and politics in the United States, including those found in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Federalist papers.

8. Define democracy and compare and contrast the differences between the democratic theory and reality of the democratic experience in the United States.
9. Identify and critically analyze the historical origins and continuing evolution of the U.S. and California Constitutions with a special focus on citizen's rights, liberties, and responsibilities.
10. Use various theories of political power to define and critically analyze the institutions and functions of the United States government.
11. Describe and analyze how changes in public opinion, interest group pressures, and the media have influenced citizen's relationship to the political system.
12. Describe and evaluate the U.S. federal system including the evolution of the relation of states and regions of the United States to each other and to the federal government, with a special focus on California.
13. Identify and describe the structures and functions of political parties, elections and voting in shaping the outcomes of the political process.
14. Identify key economic, social, and foreign policy issues and analyze how the political system resolves the competing tensions that such policy issues raise.

Method of Evaluation

Part 1:

Examples of potential methods of evaluation used to observe or measure students' achievement of course outcomes and objectives could include but are not limited to quizzes, exams, essays, field journals, projects, critical analysis papers, service learning, simulations, research demonstrations, etc. Methods of evaluation and appropriate representative assignments will be determined at the discretion of local faculty.

Part 2:

- 1) Participation in class conversations, role playing, simulations, or debates about students' engagement with course content and course assessments.
- 2) Formative and summative writing prompts, quizzes, and exams that prepare students to confidently engage in course content.
- 3) Written assignments, such as students' reflections on course content.
- 4) Analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles.
- 5) Research papers or projects that are scaffolded over the course, so students have time to engage with challenging course content.
- 6) Oral presentations to give students the opportunity to practice their communication skills and share their research papers or projects with peers.

Special Materials Required of Student

None

Minimum Instructional Facilities

- 1) Smart classroom with maps (primarily U.S. topographical and political)
- 2) Preferred: Technology Enabled Active Learning classroom

Method of Instruction

- 1) Lecture
- 2) Small and large group discussions
- 3) Individual and group projects
- 4) Individual, small, and large-scale simulations
- 5) Guest speakers
- 6) Learning management systems for:
 - a. Individual and group assignments
 - b. Class discussions
 - c. Formative and summative quizzes
 - d. Individual reflections

Out-of-Class Assignments

- 1) Individual and group assignments can include:
 - a. Analysis and interpretation of chapters in assigned text
 - b. Analysis of current events
 - c. Analysis of diversity, equity, and inclusion and its relation to course content
 - d. Analysis of peer-review journal articles
 - e. Public policy-related project

Representative Texts, Manuals, and/or OER that is equivalent, Other Support Materials**Part 1:**

Any college-level introduction to American government and politics textbook including, but not limited to:

Patterson. 2024. *We the People*. 15th ed.

Krutz and Waskiewicz. 2024. *American Government* 3e. OpenStax (OER)

Sidlow and Henschen. *GOVT 12: Principles of American Government*. 2025

Reti. 2023. *Introduction to California Government and Politics*. (OER)

Van Vechten. 2021. *California Politics: A Primer*.

May also include supplementary materials such as, but not limited to, primary sources (e.g. The Federalist Papers), readers, etc.

Part 2:

McClain, Paula D., and Steven C. Tauber. 2023. *American Government in Black and White: Diversity and Democracy*. 6th edition. Oxford University Press.

Supplemental: Franco, Josue. 2024. *Congress in Action*. <https://www.opolisci.com/catalog/congress-in-action-workbook-and-canvas-module/>

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- 1) Identify the principles, governmental structures, and civil societal elements of American government and politics.
- 2) Summarize the historical roots and contemporary evolution of American government and politics.
- 3) Apply normative and positive approaches to the study of American government and politics.
- 4) Analyze existing applications of political science to topics such as American civil liberties, civil rights, governmental structure, and civil society.
- 5) Evaluate the similarities, differences, and relationships between the Senate, House of Representatives, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, Judiciary, the Media, and the Public.