

# Political Science 166 California Politics

**Instructor:** Matt Lesenyie  
**Office:** Vari Hall 239  
**Office Hours:** Wednesday & Friday 10:30-11:45  
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## The Game Plan

This course is an upper division political science course on the topic of California Politics. I assume general knowledge of government institutions, political science concepts, and research methods. However, this course will be accessible to students from all academic majors.

This course has four objectives. We will focus on political science theories that help us understand: 1) the major problems facing California and its communities, 2) the economic, social, and political forces that have shaped California's development, 3) the structure and role of government in addressing the state's problems, and 4) the major participants and stakes in California politics.

## How to Succeed in this Course

**Bring an open mind.** Enlightenment. It's the greatest gift you can give yourself. It's also why you came to sit in this room to the exclusion of other classrooms and activities. Don't deny yourself the opportunity to change your mind about strongly held beliefs.

**Prepare.** Read the assigned readings before each class. I have coordinated readings and lectures so that if you are on schedule, the lecture and reading will synergize. Useful discussions depend on students who have read and thought about the assigned material. Because I will be asking students about the week's readings and concepts, it is integral that you have some familiarity with the assigned readings before we meet.

**Participate** Political science is about social problems, not solitary ones. Therefore, your participation and that of your classmates will help to enrich your understanding of these problems. Everyone in this course has something to contribute to this learning environment. I expect you will respectfully share your thoughts and ideas with each other. By participation, I mean engaging in conversation, not simply answering questions. My hope is that you will appreciate my Socratic style...it is time worn, old school.

## Making the Grade

The final course grade breaks down like this:

**Midterm Exam (20%)**  
**Final Exam (20%)**  
**Essays (50%)**  
**Participation (10%)**

Midterm exam date subject to change with advance notice. There are no extensions for any assignment without written medical excuse or prior approval from me. No make-up examinations without prior approval or without a written medical excuse. Late assignments are penalized at 20% per day.

## Texts

Ethan Rarick. 2013. *Governing California: Politics, Government and Public Policy in the Golden State*. Berkeley Public Policy Press

Frederick Douzet. 2008. *The New Political Geography of California*. Berkeley Public Policy Press

## Course Schedule

### **Week 1 Introduction and Overview of CA politics**

September 18<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>

Burd-Sharps and Lewis, Well-being in the Golden State: The Five Californias of the Human Health Index in *Governing CA*

### **Week 2 Pre-Reform California and the Reform Era**

September 25, 27 (class cancelled), 29

Frederick Miller, Direct Democracy: The Initiative, Referenda, and Recall in *Governing CA*

### **Week 3 Reform Era: Initiatives Professionalizing the Legislature, Term Limits**

Oct 2

Oct 4 Chandler and Kousser, Governors, Geography, and Direct Democracy: The Case of Arnold Schwarzenegger, in *The New Political Geography of CA*

Oct 6 Kogan and McGhee, Redistricting: Did Radical Reform Produce Different Results? in *Governing CA*

**Essay #1 Due Friday, Oct 6th**

### **Week 4 Campaigns, Elections, and Political Parties**

October 9

Cain et. al, Sorting or Self-Sorting: Competition and Redistricting in CA, in *New Political Geography*

October 11

Kousser et. al, The Legislature: Life Under Term Limits, in *Governing CA*

October 13

Douzet and Miller, California's Political Geography: Coast vs. Inland and Increasingly Blue, *in The New Political Geography of California*

## **Week 5 Midterm and Party Polarization**

October 15

### **Midterm**

October 18

October 20

Masket, Polarization Interrupted? California's Experiment w/the Top-Two Primary, *in Governing CA*  
Partisan Polarization and Policy Gridlock: Does One Lead to the Other?, *in Governing CA*

## **Week 6 Local Government and Minority Incorporation**

October 23

Neiman, Local Government: Designing & Financing the Cities and Counties of CA, *in Governing CA*

October 25

October 27

Douzet, The Geopolitical Transition of Oakland, *in The Political Geography of California*

## **Week 7 Immigration and Race as a Political Issue**

October 30,

Citrin et. al, State of Change: Immigration Politics and the New Demography of CA, *in Governing CA*

Nov 1, 3

Sonenshein and Drayse, The Political Geography of Coalitions in an Age of Immigration: The Case of Los Angeles, *in The New Political Geography of California*

**Essay #2 Due Friday, Nov. 3**

## **Week 8 Criminal Justice**

November 6

November 8

November 10

Carillo, The California Judiciary, *in Governing California*

Legislative Analyst's Office, The Impact of the "Three Strikes and You're Out Law" on California's Justice System, [http://lao.ca.gov/handouts/pre\\_1999/ho022096\\_3\\_strikes\\_impact.html](http://lao.ca.gov/handouts/pre_1999/ho022096_3_strikes_impact.html)

## **Week 9 Water & Environment**

November 13

Nov 15

Mullin, Water: A Case Study in Federalism, *in The New Political Geography of CA*

Nov 17

Mazmanian et. al, Climate Change Policy: A Race to the Top, *in Governing California*

## **Week 10**

November 20

**Essay #3 Due Monday, Nov. 20**

## **Week 11 Review**

November 27, 29, Dec 1

Final Exam

**Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Final Exam @ 1:30-4:30pm**