

Political Science 100 Introduction to American Politics

Spring 2026

Asynchronous Online

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The Game Plan

This course is introduction to political science and the topic of American Government. I assume you have no knowledge of government institutions, political science concepts, and research methods. Therefore, this course will be accessible to students from all academic majors.

This course has four learning objectives. We will focus on political science theories that help us understand: 1) collective action and coordination problems, 2) how government institutions solve these problems, 3) how elections shape political behavior, and 4) why individuals participate in politics.

This course will develop the following student skills:

The student will increase their ability to grapple with intellectual and political arguments about politics. The student will engage in political self-reflection, including their political orientation, ideology, socialization, and policy preferences. The student will understand and logically apply political concepts to ongoing contemporary events and policy debates. The student will enhance their ability to construct and convey intellectual and political arguments through both verbal and written means.

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. Really fruitful 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.

Major Course Assignments

The final course grade breaks down like this:

- Written Assignments (2) – 40%
- Quizzes (6) – 40%
- Canvas Discussion Posts (Roughly 8-10) – 20%

Said differently, there are three types of assignments: quizzes, longer typed papers (500+ words), and shorter discussion posts (<200 words). The sequence follows a pattern throughout the semester. Students read assigned readings and attend lectures, then students post a discussion at a roughly 10-day interval. Take a quiz once every three weeks to accumulate 6 quizzes. Submit a longer written paper once each seven weeks, to a maximum of two paper submissions. All dates and deadlines are assigned to students' canvas calendars by the instructor. The basis for assigning grades for submitted work follows a rubric posted in advance on the canvas assignment submission portal. Quizzes are graded according to whether (or not) the correct multiple-choice answer was selected.

Late Assignments. It is a student's responsibility to keep track of assignment due dates. Make-up quizzes and exams will be given only in cases of demonstrated medical emergencies, religious holidays, or university business, and must be arranged in advance. Written or other work submitted after the assigned due date without a university-approved absence will be marked down one grade daily. University excused absences include: 1. Illness or injury to the student; 2. Death, injury, or serious illness of an immediate family member or the like; 3. Religious reasons (California Education Code section 89320); 4. Jury duty or government obligation; 5. University sanctioned or approved activities (examples include: artistic performances, forensics presentations, participation in research conferences, intercollegiate athletic activities, student government, required class field trips).

Withdrawal Policy. Students hold the responsibility to withdraw from classes; instructors have no obligation to withdraw those who do not attend. Withdrawal after the first two weeks of instruction requires the signature of the instructor and department chair and is permissible only for serious and compelling reasons. During the final three weeks of instruction, withdrawals are not permitted except in cases such as accident or serious illness where the circumstances causing the withdrawal are clearly beyond the student's control and the assignment of an incomplete is not practical. Ordinarily, withdrawals in this category involve total withdrawal from the university. For deadlines, see: <http://www.csulb.edu/enrollment-services/key-dates-and-deadlines>

Overall Course Grading Standards

- A = (90-100%) - student demonstrates outstanding proficiency in relevant course objectives
- B = (80-89%) - student demonstrates advanced proficiency in relevant course objectives
- C = (70-79%) - student demonstrates proficiency in relevant course objectives
- D = (60-69%) - student demonstrates partial proficiency in relevant course objectives
- F = (0-59%) - student demonstrates little to no proficiency in relevant course objectives

AI Use. Writing is integral to thinking and should not be outsourced to AI. AI tools should assist but not replace your efforts. They are comparable to a tutor, offering guidance but not doing the work for you. Using AI content generators like ChatGPT without proper attribution violates academic integrity. By submitting assignments, you affirm they are your own work and attribute any tools and sources used. Responsible and ethical use of AI is crucial. Approved AI uses in this course include: Brainstorming and outlining ideas, checking grammar and style, rephrasing and reorganizing your drafted sentences or paragraphs. Inappropriate AI use in this course includes: Using AI-suggested sentences or paragraphs without citation, letting AI write any draft of your assignment. Disclosure and Citations: Generative AI tools like ChatGPT and DALL·E must be properly cited if used. These tools might contain outdated or plagiarized material, so ensure your work's accuracy and integrity. Misuse of AI will result in academic penalties, as specified on the course Canvas page and the CSULB catalog. Use of Artificial Intelligence to generate material submitted as if it were written by you is a violation of academic integrity and will be treated as plagiarism. Assignments with more than 25% potential AI chatbot use will be considered plagiarized and will receive a score of zero (0).

Assignments with chatbot use of 1%-25% must acknowledge chatbot use in an "Acknowledgements" section after the last paragraph of the submission. The Acknowledgement must explain what chatbot tool was used and how and why it was used. For example, "I used ChatGPT to check my grammar in this assignment." Or "I used ChatGPT to help me organize my ideas. I did so by inputting my ideas and asking it to organize my ideas." Assignments showing 1%-25% AI use that do not include such an explanatory acknowledgement will receive a score of zero (0). Cheating and plagiarism will be the subject of serious disciplinary action, possibly including a failing grade in the course, or expulsion from the university.

For Those with Disabilities

The Bob Murphy ACCESS Center (BMAC) provides support services for students with deaf or hearing impairments, communication disabilities, learning disabilities, visual limitations, mobility limitations and other functional disabilities. Prior to a student receiving assistance, documentation from a qualified professional source must be submitted to BMAC: (562) 985-5401, BMAC@csulb.edu; <http://web.csulb.edu/divisions/students/dss/> Any student who has a need for specific accommodations because of a disability should contact BMAC and the instructor promptly to make necessary arrangements.

Texts

Ken Kollman, *The American Political System*. (1st, 2nd, or 3rd edition)

Ken Kollman, *Readings in American Politics*. (4th or 5th edition)

Course Themes and Schedule

Importance of Ideological Foundations and the Constitution

Week 1: January 20 Collective Action Problems

- Chapter 1 (Textbook)
- Jane Mansbridge (1.1 Reader)

- Paul Musgrave (1.4 Reader)
- Optional: Garrett Hardin (Canvas)

Week 2: January 27 The Constitution and Founding of America

- Chapter 2 (Textbook)
- Federalist No. 10 (Canvas or anywhere online—its free)

Week 3: February 3 Principal Agent Theory and Linkages

- Kiewiet and McCubbins (Canvas)

Information and Opinions

Week 4: February 10 Media

- Chapter 14 (Textbook)
- Abrajano (Reader 14.1)

Week 5: February 17 Public Opinion

- Chapter 9 (Textbook)
- Zaller (9.1 Reader)

Week 6: February 24 Public Opinion

- Kam and Kinder (9.2 Reader)
- Jardina (9.5 Reader)

The Development and Function of Major Institutions

Week 7: March 3 Elections

- Chapter 13 (Textbook)
- Fox and Lawless (Reader 13.3)

- Stephans-Dougan (Reader 13.5)
- Carey et. al (Reader 13.7)

Week 8 March 10 Political Parties

- Chapter 12 (Textbook)
- Drutman (Reader 12.4)
- Kollman and Jackson (Reader 12.5)

Week 9 March 17 Congress

- Chapter 5 (Textbook)
- Bernard and Sulkin (Reader 5.3)
- Anderson et. al (Reader 5.5)

Week 10 March 24 Bureaucracy

- Chapter 7 (Textbook)
- Napolio (Reader 7.4)

Week 11 March 31 Spring Break

Week 12 April 7 Political Participation

- Chapter 10 (Textbook)
- Holbein and Hillygus (Reader 10.4)
- Dell et. al (Reader 10.5)

Interest Groups, Elections and Social Movements

Week 13 April 14 Interest Groups

- Chapter 11 (Textbook)
- Page and Gilens (Reader 11.2)

Week 14 April 21 California Politics

- Selected readings

Week 15 April 28 California Politics

- Selected readings