

The Government of the United States

Contact Information:

Fall Semester 2015
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Office Hours: Wednesday – 6:00 p.m.-
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Course Description:

Greetings and welcome to a new semester at West Los Angeles College!

This course is an introductory course designed to give you an overview of American government, its institutions, processes and core principles. Since this class is an introductory course, not all students come into it with the same level of knowledge; however *any* student that attends class regularly, completes the assignments in a timely manner, and makes an effort to engage the material will be successful in this course. We will evaluate popular conceptions/misconceptions about the government and make clear those aspects that are not well known or understood. We will look at the future of the American government and the challenges and issues it will face. The intent of the course is to enhance our understanding and illuminate important features of the United States political system.

Course Goal:

My number one goal is to provide students with a better understanding of the American political process and American politics. However, I also hope that you will become inspired and encouraged to become more involved in the American political process. In addition, my other primary goal of the course is to improve students' critical thinking and analytical skills. Critical thinking is essential in understanding the intricacies of the political framework of the United States. More importantly, analytical skills, coupled with effective writing skills, are crucial to our ability to articulate the factors impacting, either positively or negatively, our participation and role in the political system.

Course Student Learning Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- 1.) Critically analyze political institutions, systems, processes, events and constitutional principles in order to exercise one's rights and to defend civil liberties.
- 2.) Take an informed position on a political issue, candidate or situation and support your position with objective, logical, effective debate and discussion.
- 3.) Seek out and engage in civic opportunities that broaden perspectives and increase one's responsibility to family and community.
- 4.) Utilize a variety of media sources to research, organize, evaluate, and assimilate

information pertaining to a political issue, event, or person.

- 5.) In one’s family, community, and work settings, conduct activities in an ethical manner that reflects knowledge of the law and that adhere to common sense.

Course Student Learning Outcome:

The student will be able to know, demonstrate and assess the principles of federalism and representation; two of the five major components of American Constitutional Government.

Course Requirements (two textbooks):

Lawrence, D. G., & Cummings, J. (2015). *California: The politics of diversity, eighth edition*. United States: Cengage Learning.

Schmidt, S. W., Shelley, M. C., & Bardes, B. A. (2015). *American government and politics today: The essentials 2014-2015 brief edition*. United States: Cengage Learning.

~*Grading*~

Your grade will be based on your performance on five quizzes, an annotated bibliography assignment, a five to seven page research paper (described below), and class participation. The quizzes are multiple choice and will aim to test your mastery of the information presented in the course, as well as your ability to interpret and analyze that information. **It goes without saying that doing well on the quizzes will require that you show up to class and participate in “discussion.”** Likewise, written work will be graded on the *substance* of what you write (e.g., accuracy of information, inference, reasoning, etc.) and on the *skill* with which you write (e.g., organization, syntax, spelling, "grace," etc.). Specifically, you are expected to write a research paper that meets college-level standards. The scoring guidelines and criteria for this research paper are outlined in a rubric that you must read very carefully.

~*Participation*~

Periodically you will be given in-class assignments and collaborative projects. These assignments will count toward your class participation grade. But overall, you will be assessed on your ability to participate and speak effectively during class session. **Specifically, this means speaking with substance (as opposed to just frequency) and respecting the viewpoints and opinions of your peers.** *It goes without saying that missing class session will adversely affect your participation grade so please take your attendance seriously and be prepared to participate effectively once class begins.* **Keep in mind that exceeding more than three absences may leave you susceptible to being dropped from the class. Furthermore, three late arrivals or early departures will count as one absence so be on time and be prepared to stay the duration.**

• Please Note: There are no “make-up” exams provided in this course.
 • Therefore, please make sure that you maintain consistent attendance
 • throughout the semester term and are present on all test days. Please
 • note that the instructor reserves the sole right to make changes to the
 • scheduled reading and writing assignments as and when such changes
 • become necessary.

Our Class Work Schedule:

Week of	Topic	Chapter	Assignment
August 31 – Sept. 6	Introduction		<i>Welcome!</i>
September 7 – 13	The Democratic Republic	1	<i>Discussion</i>
September 14 – 20	Forging a New Government: The Constitution	2	<i>Discussion</i>
September 21 – 27	Civil Liberties/Federalism and the California State Political System	4; 3*	Discussion/Quiz #1: Chapters 1 & 2 on Wednesday, Sept. 23rd
September 28 – October 4	Civil Rights	5	<i>Discussion/Review Annotated Bibliography Assignment</i>
Oct. 5 – 11	Public Opinion, Political Socialization, and the Media	6	<i>Discussion</i>
Oct. 12 – 18	Interest Groups and Political Parties	7	Discussion/Quiz #2: Chapters 4, 5, & 6 on Wednesday, Oct. 14th
Oct. 19 – 25	Campaigns and Elections	8	<i>Discussion</i>
Oct. 26 – Nov. 1	The Congress	9	<i>Discussion/Annotated Bibliography Due on Wednesday, October 28th</i>
Nov. 2 – 8	The Presidency/The Bureaucracy	10-11	Discussion/Quiz #3: Chapters 7 & 8 on Wednesday, Nov. 4th
Nov. 9 – 15	No class session this Wednesday for Veterans Day	N/A	
Nov. 16 – 22	Lecture on California State Measures/The Judiciary	4-5*; 12	<i>Discussion/Group Formation this Wednesday for next week's in-class presentations</i>
Nov. 23 – 29	Groups Presentations on California State Measures/Domestic & Economic Policy	13...	<i>In-Class Group Presentations begin this Wednesday on California State Measures/Discussion</i>
Nov. 30 – Dec. 6	Domestic & Economic Policy/Extra Credit Power Point Presentations begin...	13	Discussion/Quiz #4: Chapters 9, 10, & 11 on Wednesday, Dec. 2nd
Dec. 7 – 13	Foreign Policy/Extra Credit Power Point Presentations conclude/DVD Film	14	<i>Discussion/Research Paper Due on Wednesday, December 9th!</i>
Dec. 14 – 20	Final Quiz Week!	N/A	Quiz #5: Chapters 12, 13, & 14 on Wednesday, December 16th, at regular class meeting time

Grading:
A=90-100
B= 80-89
C=70-79
D= 60-69
F= 59 and below

Quizzes (5): 50%
Annotated Bibliography: 10%
Research Paper: 25%
Class Participation: 15%

Some Important Dates To Remember:

Add/Audit traditional classes online.....Sunday, August 30, 2015
Add/Audit traditional classes in-person.....Friday, September 11, 2015
Drop classes with a refund/no fee owedFriday, September 11, 2015
Drop classes without a “W”Friday, September 11, 2015
Drop classes with a “W”Friday, November 20, 2015
File for Pass/No Pass.....Friday, September 11, 2015
Labor Day.....Monday, September 7, 2015
Thanksgiving Holiday.....November 26-29, 2015
Veterans Day.....Wednesday, November 11, 2015

It is your responsibility to make sure that you have dropped the class properly and filled out and submitted the correct papers to admissions.

It is your responsibility to drop the course if you decide to do so. Any student who is still enrolled in the course after the deadline date will receive a grade!

TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS CLASS

1. Read the **assigned chapters** each week. Outline and summarize the information.
2. Use a **Dictionary** to look up any unfamiliar words. You may want to put dictionary.com on your phone or personal wireless device.
3. Form a **study group** with some of your peers. Practice teaching each other what you have learned.
4. Be sure that **study time** is in your daily schedule.
5. Pay attention to **due dates** and complete work at least a couple of weeks before it is due. Give yourself enough time to proofread and rewrite your work.
6. See the **instructor** to discuss any concerns or for additional information. My student office hours are every Wednesday from 6:00 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.

Disabled Students Programs & Services:

West Los Angeles College recognizes and welcomes its responsibility to provide an equal educational opportunity to all disabled individuals. The Office of Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSP&S) has been established to provide support services for all verified disabled students pursuing a college education. DSP&S students may qualify for: priority registration, registration assistance, special parking permits, sign language interpreters and assistive technology (WLAC College Catalog). For any questions please contact the Office of Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSP&S) at the Heldman Learning Resources Center (HLRC), Room 119, (310) 287-4450.

Academic Dishonesty Policy: The syllabi should reference the LACCD student code of conduct as it relates to student dishonesty (Board Rule 9803.28) as follows: “Violations of academic integrity of any type by a student provides grounds for disciplinary action by the instructor or college. Violations of Academic Integrity include, but are not limited to, the following actions: cheating on an exam, plagiarism, working together on an assignment, paper or project when the instructor has specifically stated students should not do so, submitting the same term paper to more than one instructor, or allowing another individual to assume one’s identity for the purpose of enhancing one’s grade. For more information on the Standards of Student Conduct refer to the college catalog available in the hardcopy and online at www.wlac.edu.”

Controversial Content Statement: This course includes discussions of a frank nature concerning particular subject areas, including race, religion, and sexual orientation, which are protected by the college’s academic freedom statutes. Accordingly, the nature of such discussions may be considered offensive and controversial to some. When such topics may arise during the course of this semester and a student wishes to be excused, please notify the instructor that you wish to be excluded from class discussion on the ground that it is personally offensive and the instructor will excuse you until such discussion has concluded.

Cell Phone Policy

1. Students may not use their cell phones to accept or make calls while in class.
2. If cell phones and pagers are brought to class, they must be turned to “silent” or vibration mode.
3. Instructors must review this policy with students at the beginning of the first class period and include it as part of their syllabi.
4. Students who do not adhere to this policy will be asked to leave the class. If it happens a second time, the student will be referred to the Vice President of Student Services, and will return to class only after the Vice President has cleared him/her to return.

Political Science 1: Research Paper Instructions

1. Briefly define democracy and evaluate one to three items from the list below that you feel has the greatest impact on advancing democracy in the United States.

Civil War Amendments	due process protections	Limited government
Gender Equality	interest groups	Civil War
Right of Privacy	voting & elections	1 st Amendment rights
Civil Rights Cases	Bill of Rights	role of media and political socialization
Civil Liberties Cases	Ideology	Three branches of government
Bicameral Legislature	Federalism	Political formation (domestic/foreign)
Political Parties	Bureaucracy	Constitution

2. In the conclusion of this paper, please explain what role any individual person could play in society to ensure an effective democracy?

The Final Paper consists of:

5-7 pages

APA citation style

Double spaced

Cover page & bibliography included