

POLITICAL SCIENCE 001

Political Science 001: The Government of the United States 3.00 units (UC: CSU)

WHO: Professor Eva Nagler . Section 1748

WHEN: T Th 1:00 pm - 2:25 pm (office hours : 2:30pm - 3:30pm)

WHERE: Building GC 420

HOW: You can reach me by email or voice mail

naglerep@wfac.edu (310)287 -4200 x 8023

Course Description

This course studies the U.S. political system: the theory, structure and functions of our national and state (California) governments.

Meets U.S. Constitution requirement.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

Describe the basic institutions of American government.

Grasp the underlying political principles embedded in the U.S. Constitution .

Understand the political values that unite us and the ideologies that divide us as Americans.

Student Success Center and Disability Support Services

To further your success, reinforce concepts, and achieve the Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) for this course, I refer you to the Student Success Center in C building. There you will find free tutoring in reading, writing and exam taking.

Students with Disabilities who need assistance or accommodation should contact me and should be aware of our DSPS center located in SSB 320. The phone number is 310 287 - 4420.

Fall 2013 CLASS SCHEDULE: Section 1748

Part I: Founding Documents

Week 1: Aug. 27 Aug. 29	Topics	Welcome and Overview Key concepts and definitions Enduring Principles
	Homework	AG-Ch. 1
Week 2: Sept. 3 Sept. 5	Topics	<i>The Declaration of Independence</i> <i>The U.S. Constitution</i> <i>The Bill of Rights</i>
	Homework	AG-Ch. 2
Week 3: Sept. 10 Sept. 12	Topics	California's constitution The American System: "A republic, if you can keep it."
	Homework	AG-Ch. 3, CG Ch 1 & 2
Week 4: Sept. 17 Sept. 19	Topics	Review EXAM 1
	Homework	AG-Ch. 7 and CG – Ch. 4

Part II: Politics in Action

Week 5:
Sept. 24
Sept. 26

Topics Interest Groups
Political Parties

Homework AG-Ch. 8 and AG-Ch. 9

Week 6:
Oct. 1
Oct. 3

Topics Campaigns and Elections

Homework

Week 7
Oct. 8
Oct. 10

Topics Review

EXAM 2

Homework AG-Ch. 9

Part III: Government in Action: The Elected Branches

Week 8:
Oct. 15
Oct. 17

Topics Congress

Homework AG-Ch. 10 and CG-Ch. 8

Week 9: Oct. 22 Oct. 24	Topics	The Presidency
	Homework	AG-Ch. 11
Week 10: Oct. 29 Oct. 31	Topics	Bureaucratic Politics CA's "Plural Executive"
Week 11: Nov. 5 Nov. 7	Topics	Review EXAM 3
Part IV:	Civil Liberties, Civil Rights, The Courts	
		AG- Ch. 4
Week 12: Nov. 12 Nov. 14	Topics	Order and Civil Liberties

Week 13:

Nov. 19
Nov. 21

Topics Civil Liberties (con't.)

Week 14:

Nov. 26

Homework AG-Ch. 5

Topics Equality and Civil Rights

HAPPY
THANKSGIVING

Homework AG Ch. 12

Week 15

The Courts

Dec. 3
Dec. 5

Week 16
Dec. 10 no class

Dec.12
EXAM 4

1:45 - 3:45

Interview Guidelines

Congressional Representative Research Handout

*Use C-SPAN's Congressional Chronicle webpage to answer the following questions.

1. Tell me who you are, and give me some brief background information about you. What is your political experience?
2. What is your political ideology? (Strong Conservative/Liberal, or Moderate Conservative/Liberal)
3. What are the demographics of your district?
4. What Interest Groups support you?
5. Are you in a "safe" or marginal district? [Marginal=won w/ less than 55% of vote]
6. What is your position on immigration reform?
7. Do you support a pathway to citizenship for residents who are here illegally? Under what circumstances?
8. What should be done about border security and to prevent terrorists from entering our country?

Q. 1-5

General Questions

Q. 6-8

Specific Policy Questions

E. Piken - Nagler
Pol. Sci. 01

Policy Report Guidelines

Institutional SLO Student Learning Objectives

A. Critical Thinking:

Analyze problems by differentiating fact from opinions, using evidence, and using sound reasoning to specify multiple solutions and their consequences.

B. Communication:

Effectively communicate thought in a clear, well-organized manner to persuade, inform, and convey ideas in academic, work, family and community settings.

We live in an age of information overload. Hundreds of newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations, joined by internet blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube grant us 24/7 access to news from every corner of the globe. Accounts of the same story vary wildly from one source to another. How can we distinguish fact from fiction; reporting from opinion? How can we assess the credibility of one scholarly opinion over another?

Learning to analyze, evaluate and assess what you hear and read is what we mean by **critical thinking**. Along with good **communication skills**, these are two important SLO's-**Student Learning Objectives**-we will pursue this semester.

Political scientist Matthew Streb developed a five-step tool to critical thinking called CLUES. This is what CLUES stands for:

Consider the source and the audience.

Lay out the argument.

Uncover the evidence.

Evaluate the conclusion.

Sort out the political implications.

Consider the source and the audience

Who is writing the news item? Where did the item appear? Why was it written? What audience is it directed toward? What do the author or publisher need to do to attract and keep the audience? How might that affect content?

Knowing the source and the audience will go a long way to helping you understand where the author is coming from, what his or her intentions are. If the person is a mainstream journalist, he or she probably has a reputation as an objective reporter to preserve, and will at least make an honest attempt to provide unbiased information. Even so, knowing the actual news source will help you nail that down. Even in a reputable national paper like the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal*, if the item comes from the editorial pages, you can count on it having an ideological point of view—usually (but not exclusively) liberal in the case of the *Times*, conservative in the case of the *Wall Street Journal*. Opinion magazines will have even more blatant points of view. Readers go to those sources looking for a particular perspective, and that may affect the reliability of the information you find.

Lay out the argument and the underlying values and assumptions

What is the basic argument the author wants to make? What assumptions about the world does he or she make? What values does the author hold about what is important and what government should do? Are all the important terms clearly defined?

If these things aren't clear, the author may be unclear. There is a lot of substandard thinking out there, and being able to identify it and discard it is very valuable. Often we are intimidated by a smart sounding argument, only to discover on closer examination that it is just a piece of fuzzy thinking. A more insidious case occurs when the author is trying to obscure the point in order to get you to sign on to something you might not otherwise accept. If the argument, values, and assumptions are not perfectly clear and up front, there may be a hidden agenda you should know about. You don't want to be persuaded by someone who claims to be an advocate for democracy, only to find out that he or she means something completely different by democracy than you do.

Uncover the evidence

Has the author done basic research to back up his or her argument with facts and evidence?

Good arguments cannot be based on gut feelings, rumor, or wishful thinking. They should be based on hard evidence, either empirical, verifiable observations about the world or solid, logical reasoning. If the argument is worth being held, it should be able to stand up to rigorous examination and the author should be able to defend it on these grounds. If the evidence or logic is missing, the argument can usually be dismissed.

Evaluate the conclusion

Is the argument successful? Does it convince you? Why or why not? Does it change your mind about any beliefs you held previously? Does accepting this argument require you to rethink any of your other beliefs?

Conclusions should follow logically from the assumptions and values of an argument, if solid evidence and reasoning supports it. What is the conclusion here? What is the author asking you to accept as the product of his or her argument? Does it make sense to you? Do you "buy it"? If you do, does it fit with your other ideas or do you need to refine what you previously thought? Have you learned from this argument, or have you merely had your own beliefs reinforced?

Sort out the political implications

What is the political significance of this argument? What difference does this argument make to your understanding of the way the political world works? How does it affect who gets what scarce resources, and how they get them? How does it affect who wins in the political process and who loses?

Political news is valuable if it means something. If it doesn't, it may entertain you, but essentially it wastes your time if it claims to be something more than entertainment. Make the information you get prove its importance, and if it doesn't, find a different news source to rely on.