POLITICAL SCIENCE 120
INTRO TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Instructor: Christopher Arns
Spring 2017 – Online
Email: carns@napavalley.edu
Office Hours: By appointment
www.napavalley.edu/people/carns

COURSE OVERVIEW
This course is an introduction to the principles of United States and California government. Students will learn about the institutions, ideas and interests that form the backbone of the American political system. We will also spend time discussing contemporary issues and questions in national, state, and local politics. The course is divided into four parts. First, we will study the origins of U.S. democracy, including a closer look at early forms of limited government in the American colonies and how they influenced the Framers of the Constitution. We will also learn about federalism and California’s political system. Next, we will examine the nation’s governing structure and separate branches, with special attention given to state and federal bureaucracy. Third, we will examine the history of American political participation, including civil liberties and civil rights, political socialization, campaigns and the media, and party organization. Lastly, we'll dissect themes in American domestic and foreign policy.

This course will challenge you to objectively analyze ideas and thoughtfully evaluate key terms about the political system. The main objective is to show you, as freshly minted political scientists, how to learn about politics and why you should become empowered to think for yourselves. Note: weekly participation is mandatory in this online course. You must complete assignments each week to stay enrolled.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES
After finishing this course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and explain the foundations of government in the United States: the organization, powers, and procedures of the national government, and the patterns of state and local government;
2. Demonstrate the ability to analyze and write effectively about the political process;
3. Discuss and analyze contemporary political issues, interests, and behavior in the United States and California.

REQUIRED MATERIALS (textbook available in the NVC bookstore)
- Benjamin Ginsberg et al. We the People: Tenth Essentials Edition. (New York: W.W. Norton).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS (due online every Sunday at 9 p.m. PST)

I. Group Projects 100 points
Students will be divided into groups at the beginning of the semester. These groups will complete two online projects during the semester. Ex.: Let’s Split Up California, in which groups use an online interactive map to split California into new states. Each project or activity will be worth 50 points.

II. Midterm 100 points
The online midterm will include material from required weekly readings. The exam will include 50 questions, each worth two points each, including a few questions offered for extra credit from the weekly recommended readings. You will have 90 minutes to complete the midterm. A study guide will be posted a week before the exam.

III. Final Exam 200 points
The final exam will be based on the required readings (textbook and weekly articles), response paper topics, and lectures. The exam will include 100 questions, each worth 2 points each. You will have 2.5 hours to complete the final. A study guide will be posted a week before the exam.
IV. Response papers 100 points
There will be four (4) assigned paper topics posted during the semester. Students will be expected to write objective responses based on critical analysis. Response papers may ask students to display creativity or research a thought-provoking question. Please carefully read guidelines required for each paper. These assignments must be completed each week.

V. Group discussions 100 points
Students will engage in collaborative discussions each week within their assigned groups. A different student will be assigned each week to post and moderate a new discussion question that will require all group members to respond. Some discussions will require students to post video responses. Students will be graded on their participation and their turns as moderator. These assignments must be completed each week to stay enrolled.

Reading assignments and lectures
Textbook chapters and articles will be assigned every week for you to read. Course exams will include material from the readings, response papers, and lectures.

COURSE GRADING POLICIES
Point totals will be updated periodically throughout the semester on Blackboard. Your final point total will break down on the following point scale:

Total possible points: 600

A=600-537 points (89.5 percent and higher)
B=536-477 points (89.4-79.5 percent)
C=476-417 points (79.4-69.5 percent)
D=416-357 points (69.4-59.5 percent)
F=356 points and below (<59.5 percent)

All assignments must be submitted by posted course deadlines. Students will not receive any credit for late work submitted past those deadlines. Makeup work will not be offered or accepted for late assignments: no exceptions. Two extra credit assignments will be offered throughout the semester and must be completed by their respective due dates.

ACADEMIC HONESTY
Cheating will not be tolerated. You may receive an F on any assignment for any cases of academic dishonesty and be subject to further disciplinary measures. Please read the campus policy on academic honesty if you are confused.

EXPECTATIONS
This is a college course, which means I expect you to make this class a priority by logging into Blackboard on a regular basis and completing your assignments. Students who feel they are falling behind or have a family emergency should contact me immediately and before upcoming due dates to discuss strategies to stay current with the course schedule. Note: it may take me 24-48 hours to respond to email. Please wait at last that long before sending me another email.

Disability Statement - Students in need of accommodations in the college learning environment:
Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a learning disability should contact Learning Services in the Library and Learning Resource Center (LLRC), room 1766, phone (707) 256-7442. A Learning Disability Specialist will review your needs and determine appropriate accommodations.

If you need accommodations for physical or other types of disabilities, schedule an appointment with DSPS Counselor, Sheryl Fernandez, in the Counseling Department located on the top floor of the 800 building, phone (707) 253-3040 for appointment.

All information and documentation is confidential. Please feel encouraged to make an appointment with me privately to discuss your specific learning needs in my class.
COURSE SCHEDULE: POLI 120
(subject to minor changes with adequate notice)

Section 1: The Origins of Democracy

Week 0: Course Introduction
January 16 to January 22

Required tasks:
1. Read the course syllabus
2. Watch the course video
3. Read the course FAQ (left side of this page)
4. Buy your books
5. Work on your first assignments (see below)

Week 1: Introduction to American Government
January 23 to January 29

Required tasks:
1. Find your group, post a one-minute video introduction on the group discussion board, and reply to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)
2. Read We the People, Chapter 1: The Citizen and Government
3. Read Governing California, Chapter 1: Promise and Practice
4. Read “The Pattern of Modern California Politics” (academic journal)

Week 2: The U.S. Constitution, Part I
January 30 to February 5

Required tasks:
1. Read We the People, Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution
2. Read Federalist No. 10
3. Read following sections of The U.S. Constitution: Preamble; Article I, Sections 1, 2, 7-10; Article II (all)
4. Review moderator’s question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)
5. Consider posting extra credit assignment: Write and post video of your original 200-word rap/spoken-word poem (a la “Hamilton”) in class discussion board, along with responses to other students who post poems (mandatory to stay in course)

Week 3: The U.S. Constitution, Part II
February 6 to February 12

Required tasks:
1. Read The Enduring Debate, Chapter 2: “The Federalist, No. 15”
2. Read “A Republic of Men: Chapter 2”
3. Submit response paper: your idea for a 28th Amendment (mandatory to stay in course)
4. Review moderator’s question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

Week 4: California’s Government and Constitution
February 13 to February 19

Required tasks:
1. Read Governing California, Chapter 2: The Constitution and the Progressive Legacy
2. Read California Constitution, Article II (Voting, Initiative and Referendum, and Recall)
3. Read “One State, Two Economies” (article)
4. Submit response paper: your proposal for a new Hollywood film about California (mandatory to stay in course)
5. Review moderator’s question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

Week 5: The Bill of Rights
February 20 to February 26

Required tasks:
1. Read We the People, Chapter 4: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights, pp. 93-117
2. Watch “The Bill of Rights: Amendments”
3. Read The Bill of Rights: Amendments 14 and 19
4. Read *The Enduring Debate*, Chapter 4: “The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions”
5. Review moderator's question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

**Week 6: Federalism**  
February 27 to March 5

**Required tasks:**
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 3: Federalism
2. Read *Governing California*, Chapter 9: Local Government, pp. 203-222
4. Complete Group Project 1: Let’s Split Up California (mandatory to stay in course)
5. Review moderator's question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

**Section 2: The Structure of American Government**

**Week 7: The Legislative Branch, Part I**  
March 6 to March 12

**Required tasks:**
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 9: Congress
2. Read *Governing California*, Chapter 5: The California Legislature, pp. 107-122
3. Write 400-word response paper about California lawmaker of your choice (mandatory to stay in course)
4. Review moderator's question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

**Week 8: The Legislative Branch, Part II**  
March 13 to March 19

**Required tasks:**
1. Read *The Enduring Debate*, Chapter 5: Debating the Issues (pp. 199-211)
2. Review midterm study guide
3. Watch "I’m Just a Bill" (video)
4. Complete Group Project 2: Writing a Bill (mandatory to stay in course)
5. Review moderator's question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

**Week 9: The Executive Branch**  
March 20 to March 26

**Required tasks:**
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 10: The Presidency
2. Read *Governing California*, Chapter 6: The Governor and the Executive Branch
4. Complete midterm (mandatory to stay in course)

**Week 10: The Bureaucracy**  
March 27 to April 2

**Required tasks:**
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 11: Bureaucracy
2. Read *Governing California*, Chapter 8: The State Budget and Budgetary Limitations
3. Read “Sinkhole of Bureaucracy” (article)
4. Review moderator's question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

**Week 11: The Court System**  
April 3 to April 9

**Required tasks:**
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 12: The Federal Courts
2. Read *Governing California*, Chapter 7: The California Judiciary
3. Play FantasySCOTUS and post reaction to moderator's question in group discussion board, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)
Spring Break: April 10 to April 16

Section 3: We the People

Week 12: Civil Rights, Part I
April 17 to April 23

Required tasks:
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 4: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights, pp. 118-134
2. Read *The Enduring Debate*, Chapter 4: “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
3. Submit response paper: You Have a Dream (mandatory to stay in course)
4. Review moderator’s question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)
5. Consider completing extra credit response paper: "Straight Outta Compton"

Week 13: Civil Rights, Part II
April 24 to April 30

Required tasks:
1. Read "Rare Maps Reveal Fresno’s Overlooked History of Segregation" (article)
2. Read "Before Brown V. Board, Mendez Fought California’s Segregated Schools" (article)
3. Read "Why Gender Equality Has Stalled" (article)
4. Listen to the Billie Holiday rendition of "Strange Fruit," watch Jesse Williams’ speech from the BET awards, and post reaction to moderator’s question in group discussion board, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)
5. Consider completing extra credit response paper: "Baltimore's Anguish"

Week 14: Political Parties, Elections, and Money in Politics
May 1 to May 7

Required tasks:
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 7: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections
2. Read *Governing California*, Chap. 3: Interest Groups and the Media in California, pp. 45-60
3. Read "Who Wants to Buy a Politician?" (article)
4. Read “15 groups spent more than $1 billion on California political efforts” (article)
5. Review moderator’s question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

Week 15: Domestic Politics
May 8 to May 14

Required tasks:
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 13: Domestic Policy
2. Read *Governing California*, Chapter 10: Public Policy in California
4. Review moderator’s question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)

Week 16: Foreign Policy
May 15 to May 21

Required tasks:
1. Read *We the People*, Chapter 14: Foreign Policy
2. Read *The Enduring Debate*, Chapter 15: Debating the Issues, pp. 570-588
3. Read “Century of Regime Change” (short radio interview)
4. Review moderator’s question in group discussion and post response, along with responses to at least four other group members (mandatory to stay in course)
5. Review final exam study guide

Week 17: Finals
May 22 to May 27

• Final exam: TBA