POLITICAL SCIENCE 120 — AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Summer 2014 – W 12:30-3:35 p.m.; online
Building 2230, Room 2230
Instructor: Christopher Arns
E-mail: carns@napavalley.edu - Email days: M-F, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.
Office Hours: By Appointment
http://www.napavalley.edu/people/carns
http://www.coursesites.com/s/_POLI_120_NVC_summer

COURSE OVERVIEW

What is political science? What exactly is so scientific about studying politics? Glad you asked. Political science, as defined by Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, is “the description and analysis of political and especially governmental institutions and processes.” Political scientists study how governments operate, how people vote and why elected officials make certain choices. In short, political science is just what it sounds like: a thoughtful way to study government and politics.

This course will teach you how to examine and discuss the basics of American Government. You will learn about the institutions, ideas and interests that form the backbone of this country’s political system. Along the way, we will discuss issues and current events that apply to themes in our readings. Although we might discuss political parties and ideology during the course, I won’t try to pass off my personal views as fact. Instead of asking you to think differently, I will ask you to think critically about politics. I’ll challenge you to objectively analyze ideas and thoughtfully evaluate key terms about the political system. In summary, I’m not here to tell you what to think. Instead, my 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.

Therefore, after finishing this course you should be able to:
1. Understand and describe the foundations of the American political system, including the patterns of federal, state and local governments.
2. Demonstrate the ability to analyze and write effectively about the political process, along with evaluating political statements and ideas.
3. Recognize and evaluate the interests and institutions of the American political system.

Required Materials:
• Enrollment in our Blackboard online course site (free). The URL is listed at the top of this page. The access code to enroll is “poli120nvc” (no quote marks).
ASSIGNMENTS

Every class will consist of a lecture and discussions related to course reading assignments, which will include chapters from both the *American Government and Politics Today* and *California Politics: A Primer* textbooks, and articles posted on the course Blackboard site. Make sure to read the course schedule on a weekly basis, as sometimes I will make minor changes. Points will be given for the following:

I. Mock Legislation 150 points
You will write a 3-page bill that resembles a simplified version of real Congressional legislation. The bill must be at least three (3) full pages, 12-point type, Times Roman font, and 1-inch margins. You must also follow this format to receive credit. **While you may choose topics or legislation already introduced to Congress, your bill must be completely original.** Plagiarism will result in an F grade in the course and possible expulsion from the college.

II. Final Exam 100 points
The final exam will be based on the reading (textbook and weekly articles) and lectures. **If you only do the readings and skip most of the class sessions, you won't pass the final.** The exam will be 100 questions and will take two hours. **You will be timed and the exam will auto-submit after exactly 120 minutes.** The exam will be given online on the last Saturday of the session at the Blackboard site for this class.

III. Quizzes 100 points
Quizzes cover the current week’s reading, including chapters from the textbook and assigned articles. Each quiz will be worth 10 points. All quizzes will be given online at the Blackboard site for this class (URL at top of syllabus).

III. Weekly Journal 100 points
You will answer a weekly essay question posted at the class Blackboard site (URL at top of syllabus). I will post the question every Sunday, starting the second week of class, and you will be required to post a thoughtful, concise and well-researched answer in **no less than 150 words by Saturday at 8:59 p.m.** Each post will be worth five (5) points, and you will be graded on the completeness and accuracy of your answer. *The question posted during the last week of the semester will be worth 20 points.*

V. Discussions 50 points
Each week I will start a discussion thread on our Discussion Board with a question about a topic from our readings or something controversial in the news. You must post a **respectful, polite and thoughtful** response to both my original post and also one of your classmates’ responses to receive points for that week’s discussion. **Each response (both to my post and your classmates’ posts) must be at least 100 words to receive credit.** Participation in the discussions is worth five (5) points each week if completed each Saturday at 8:59 p.m.
Reading assignments and online lectures
I will assign textbook chapters and articles every week for you to read. You will find
these assignments on the right side of our course site. The course exams will include
material from the readings and lectures, so make sure to take notes while reading and
during class.

Total possible points: 500 points

Your final grade will break down on the following point scale:

A=450-500 points (90 percent and higher)
B=400-450 points (80-89 percent)
C=350-400 points (70-79 percent)
D=300-350 points (60-69 percent)
F=299 points and below (<60 percent)

The grades are pretty simple. If your point total falls in one of brackets above, that’s
your letter grade. Score 299 points or lower and you will fail the course; score anything
higher and you will pass. If you’d like to know your grade at any point in the course, just
add up your points and divide by the number of possible points. **I will update your
grades right before the final exam, so please do not ask me at other times during
the semester to add up your grade.**

IMPORTANT: Submitting assignments
You will submit almost all assignments through our Blackboard course page (URL
listed at top of syllabus). Even our quizzes and final exam will be given through that
site. Here’s how that will work:

- **Final exam and quizzes:** The final exam and all quizzes will take place online
  through the Blackboard site. The quizzes will be available for roughly three
days, so you’ll be able to complete them at any time during each half-week.
  Each assessment must be finished once you start them. Each quiz is timed.
  You will have 20 minutes to complete each quiz and two (2) hours to complete
  the final exam. **These assessments must be taken on your own — not in
collaboration with anyone else.** You must follow the same standards of
  academic honesty that I would expect from you in class.
- **Journal entries:** Each week you will need to complete one journal entry on
  our Blackboard page.

VERY IMPORTANT: A few more things....

- **Class participation** is a great way to score additional points. However, your
  contributions have to be meaningful. Emailing me articles and news clips
could count for participation points. Lack of participation, skipping
  assignments, and poor attendance can have the opposite effect on your grade.
- **Make-up assignments and extra credit will not be offered.** Unfortunately,
  there are no exceptions to this rule. Miss an assignment and you won’t receive
  any points.
- **Cheating will not be tolerated.** You will receive an F on any exam or quiz if I
  see you cheat, and you may be dropped from the class. Plagiarism (copying
another person’s work) on any written assignment is also forbidden. Click this link if you don’t understand the NVC Academic Honesty policy.

- **Attendance:** This is an accelerated college course, which means I expect you to make this class a priority by arriving on time and staying for the entire session. Do not come to me and tell me that you need to leave early to meet the cable repairman or take someone to a doctor’s appointment. **Leaving early or arriving late is the same as being absent when it comes to your grade for this class.** I will keep track of student absences and it will most definitely have an effect on your grade. **Any absences/tardy arrivals/early departures will result in losing one full grade in the course. Students with additional absences may be dropped from the class.**

  - If you need special accommodations for testing, taking notes, or anything else involving your academic performance in this course, please contact me immediately.

  - Don’t wait until you're falling behind before reaching out for help. I won’t be able to help much if weeks have passed after you missed several assignments because you didn’t understand the instructions.

  - One last thing: **cell phones, tablets, and laptops must be stashed and powered off at all times. No exceptions. I may ask you to leave class if you do not follow this policy.**

**Questions?**

- **Try posting a question on the course discussion board before emailing me for help.** Not only are your fellow students an excellent resource, but you may get a response more quickly than if you simply email me. I've posted the Discussions link on the Blackboard site’s left-hand column.

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**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.
You are taking an accelerated version of POLI 120. Over the next six weeks, we will cover the same amount of material that you would study in a full semester. For that reason, the summer session is actually more challenging for many students. To help keep you on task, I have spread the course schedule over eleven half-weeks. *Each half-week has a separate reading assignment and quiz.* Every other half-week, you will complete discussion board responses and a journal entry.

**Half-Week 1: Introduction to American and Californian Government**
June 16 to June 21
- *American Government and Politics Today,* Chapter 1: The Democratic Republic
- *California Politics: A Primer,* Chapters 1 and 2 (Introduction and California’s Political History in Brief)
- “*American Political Culture*” (article)
- “*The California Dream is fizzling out*” (article)
- Weekly discussion and journal entries
- **Quiz 1**

**Half-Week 2: The Constitution and Federalism**
June 22 to June 25
- “*We the People’ Loses Appeal With People Around the World*” (article)
- “*The True Meaning of the 2nd Amendment*” (article)
- “*Separation of Powers*” (video)
- “*Obama’s War on Pot*” (article)
- **Quiz 2**

**Half-Week 3: Federalism and California Politics**
June 26 to June 28
- *American Government and Politics Today,* Chapter 3: Federalism, pp. 95-110
- *California Politics: A Primer,* Chapter 7: Other Governments
- “*One State, Two Economies*” (article)
- “*Breaking Up is Hard to Do*” (article)
- “*Why a Secessionist Movement is Brewing*” (article)
- Weekly discussion and journal entries
- **Quiz 3**
Half-Week 4: Fixing California?
June 29 to July 2
- *California Politics: A Primer*, Chapter 3: Direct Democracy
- “Amending California’s direct democracy”
- “American Aqueduct: The Great California Water Saga” (article)
- “California’s Great Wall of Debt” (article)
- “California Companies Fleeing the Golden State” (article)
- Quiz 4

Half-Week 5: Political Parties
July 3 to July 5
- *American Government and Politics Today*, Chapter 8: Political Parties
- *California Politics: A Primer*, Chapter 9: Political Parties, Elections, and Campaigns
- “Partisan Psychology: Why Do People Choose Political Loyalties Over Facts?” (article)
- “The Big Flip” (article)
- “California voters reject curb on union political power” (article)
- *Congressional Report Cards* (interactive site)
- Weekly discussion and journal entries
- Quiz 5

Half-Week 6: The Legislative Branch
July 6 to July 9
- *California Politics: A Primer*, Chapter 4: The State Legislature
- “The Withering Branch” (article)
- “Unpopular Congress was also very unproductive in 2013” (article)
- “How the Godfather Explains GOP Leadership Politics”
- “I’m Just a Bill” (video)
- Quiz 6

Half-Week 7: The Executive Branch
July 10 to July 12
- *California Politics: A Primer*, Chapter 4: The executive branch
- “Imperial presidency threatening democracy?” (video)
- “The not-so-imperial presidency of Barack Obama” (opinion article)
- “Secret ‘Kill List’ Proves a Test of Obama’s Principles and Will” (article)
- Weekly discussion and journal entries
- Quiz 7
Half-Week 8: The Judicial Branch  
July 13 to July 16  
- *California Politics: A Primer*, Chapter 5: The court system  
- “The Polarized Court” (article)  
- “So Who Are the Activists?” (article)  
- Legislation assignment due  
- Quiz 8

Half-Week 9: Civil Rights  
July 17 to July 19  
- *American Government and Politics Today*, Chapter 5: Civil Rights  
- “History of Racism and Immigration Timeline”  
- “Watsonville Riots” (article)  
- “Geography of Hate” (chart)  
- “Will the Department of Justice Find Zimmerman Guilty?” (more on next page)  
- “Lawmakers Reintroduce ERA in Wake of Supreme Court’s Wal-Mart Decision”  
- “Why Gender Equality Has Stalled” (article)  
- “Racism Lives On Under the Cover of “Religious Freedom”” (article)  
- Weekly discussion and journal entries  
- Quiz 9

Half-Week 10: Civil Liberties  
July 20 to July 23  
- *American Government and Politics Today*, Chapter 4: Civil Liberties  
- “We the People’ Loses Appeal With People Around the World”  
- “U.S. Uses Terror Law to Pursue Crimes From Drugs to Swindling”  
- “Top Secret America” (video)  
- Quiz 10

Half-Week 11: Public Opinion, Elections, and the Media  
July 24 to July 26  
- *California Politics: A Primer*, Chapter 10: Political Engagement  
- “How Biased Are the Media, Really?” (article)  
- “Everything You’ve Ever Wanted to Know About Voter ID Laws” (article)  
- “Toss Up or Tilt GOP?” (article)  
- “Hillary Clinton’s Gay Marriage Problem” (article)  
- Weekly discussion and journal entries  
- Final Exam (Saturday, July 26, can be taken online at any time during the day before 9 p.m.)