CABRILLO COLLEGE

Course Syllabus
COURSE: Political Science 001, American Government, Tuesday and Thursday 8-9:20 am
PREREQUISITES: None
INSTRUCTOR: Doctor Sondra L. Ricar
OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays 9:30-10:45 429C
PLEASE CONTACT ME VIA EMAIL: soricar@cabrillo.edu

TEXTS:

You will need the second edition of the book, not the outdated, first edition.

You should purchase the books online which will give you a paper copy sent with the disk. While these are digitally interactive texts, many students find it helpful to have the paper copy also. If you purchase them from the bookstore, you will be unable to obtain a paper copy. One of these titles is available at the bookstore and both are available online at [National Digital Book Company](http://www.ndbco.com). You will need the second edition of the book *Scenarios in American Government*, not the outdated, first edition.

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This is an introductory course in American political science. We will endeavor to learn about the Constitution and some of the founding principles of American government. One of the main concerns of this class will be the way in which the government is affecting our lives today, why, and what we can do about it. We will look at some of the mistakes made by our government in the past. Our job here is not to be judgmental; we are going to try to understand why our government has acted in such a manner, not condemn it for doing so. I ask only that you come to class with an open mind, prepared to learn, and willing to explore issues from many points of view. It is important to respect other’s opinions, particularly if you wish them to respect yours. This is not a class where there are right or wrong opinions and it is not my job to indoctrinate you. I hope to help you learn to evaluate the various issues facing the public today and make an educated decision on what you feel should be done about those issues.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

My educational philosophy is that I am not only teaching you about American government but I am teaching life skills, such as coming to class on time, prepared to do your work, paying attention during the class period, and turning your work in on time. These are skills you will need in the work world. You are responsible for reading the assigned readings for this course. The textbook is your main source. Although we may not discuss all the material covered in the textbook, you are responsible for reading it. You will also have a reader to read. The textbook and reader will be the basis for your assignments. There may also be handouts for you to read. I expect you to read a good newspaper regularly so that you are aware of current events. You can read the newspaper online or in paper form. Newspapers that are acceptable for this course are The New York Times, The LA Times, the Washington Post, The San Jose Mercury News, and the San Francisco Chronicle. The Santa Cruz Sentinel is good for local color but not adequate for the purposes of this course.

ATTENDANCE

Class attendance is required. Lectures contain the majority of information that you will need in order to do well (or, simply survive) in this course. In addition, in-class activities will reveal how you need to approach the vast amount of material in this course and how to prepare yourself for exams. Regardless of reasons, if you have an excessive number of absences (more than three weeks – nine hours) you should expect to be dropped from the class. If you think that you will miss more than a few classes during the semester, then you should consider dropping this class. I count two tardies or leaving early as one absence. If you decide to drop the class, then you are responsible for dropping it officially.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:
1. Demonstrate understanding of the structures, interactions, and functioning of the various levels of government in the United States.
2. Synthesize knowledge and analysis of political events and concepts to construct a personal political viewpoint.
3. Write critical, analytical essays that link theoretical arguments, empirical evidence and political events.
4. Analyze the dynamics of making public policy in the United States.

Expectations

My expectations for you:
- Come to class with a positive attitude and an open and questioning mind
- Come to class on time; stay for the entire class
- Bring a paper and pens to class
- Leave other work/reading out of sight and (mostly) out of mind. Please turn off cellphones.
- Treat other people with respect; be considerate

My commitment to you:
- All the stuff above
- To share my enthusiasm for studying political science
- To respect you as an adult who has made an important commitment toward trying to improve your life by attending community college
- To prepare and present thoughtful and engaging lessons and lectures
- To give challenging and clear assignments; and to return them to you with comments in a reasonable amount of time.
- To help you succeed in this class.

A Note on Academic Honesty:
While I encourage the formation of study groups for this class and want you to help each other to succeed, I also expect that each student will do his or her own work. It's great to talk with each other about the course content, but it is not O.K. for you to use your friend's outline as the basis for your work. Think and talk with each other; write by yourself. Instances of plagiarism on assignments (presenting the words or ideas of another author as your own - without citation) could also result in a referral to the college's Dean of Students and you not receiving credit for the class. All you have to do to avoid this is to write your own paper and when you DO use the words or ideas of another author, simply tell where you got that information in a footnote.

SPECIAL NEEDS
All students needing accommodations should inform me ASAP. Veterans may qualify for accommodations. Wounded warriors may have acquired injuries which through the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) entitles them the use of accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for students with verified disabilities. To determine if you qualify or need assistance with an accommodation, please contact Disabled Student Services, Room 810 479-6379, or the Learning Skills Program, Room 1073, 479-6220. Education should be open and available to everyone. Students with special needs due to either "visible" or "invisible" disabilities are encouraged to see me. I will need verification of your needs from the appropriate college facility and their recommendations for accommodating your needs. I believe physical problems should not hinder your education and would like to do whatever I can to make all students comfortable in my class.

BASIS FOR GRADE
Your work will be evaluated on a straight point system, with the following breakdown:

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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
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<td>70-79%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>60-69%</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-59%</td>
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Quizzes:
There will be regularly scheduled quizzes at the end of class every Tuesday. These quizzes will be short essay answers, taking approximately 5 to 10 minutes. The quizzes will be based on the information from that day's reading and lecture. You will not be marked down for poor grammar but must use either a blue or black pen. Each quiz will be worth 10 points. The questions will reflect the information covered in class that day and be of an information-dump nature. This is an opportunity for you to show me you did the assigned reading and paid attention in class. You will receive a one letter grade penalty for not using either a blue or black pen.
Presentations or Papers:
Each chapter in the textbook starts with a link to a debate topic. Students can choose to present one side of the debate, explaining why their side is correct. You will have five minutes to present your argument, with supporting evidence, and field questions from your classmates. You will be graded by your peers, according to the matrix posted on Blackboard. I will allow no more than 15 presentations due to time constraints. If you prefer, you may opt to write a paper on a topic from the chapter links instead of making oral presentation described above. The paper must be a minimum of 2000 words of college-level prose, presented according to the guidelines I give you. Your grade will be based on the strength of your argument, your understanding of the issues, and your ability to present your ideas clearly. You will be graded according to the matrix posted on Blackboard. You may only do one of the options, not both a paper and presentation. This assignment is worth 150 points. We will have the presentations on Thursday April 23rd and that will also be the date the papers are due. Papers received after that date will be subject to a cumulative penalty of a 1/3 letter grade for each day they are late. In other words, a paper that is three calendar days late will receive a full letter grade penalty. There is no way to make up for a late or missed presentation. If you have signed up for a presentation and do not show up for class on that day you cannot reschedule the exercise. I will open the signups for papers or presentations on Tuesday March 10th. I will limit the papers to no more than 5 papers per topic, so on March 10th I will also begin taking signups for paper topics. While I will do my best to ensure everyone is able to complete a paper or presentation on their first choice of topic, you may have to use your second choice of topic.

Group Discussions:
Prior to class on Thursdays you will have read the assigned reader chapter for that week. You will fill out the worksheet for the chapter in the reader and hand it in at the beginning of class. The worksheet will be available on Blackboard for you to download. It will consist of some of the points from the assigned chapter in the reader. We will then break into small groups to discuss the issues from the reader chapter. You will assess each other’s contributions to the discussion and hand in the assessment as part of your grade. The assessment form is posted on Blackboard. The small group discussions will last 30-45 minutes after which time we will engage in a full class discussion. You will also fill out a worksheet for the chapter showing how the discussion affected your opinions on the issues raised in the chapter. Each part of this assignment is worth ten points. You will receive a one letter grade penalty for not using either a blue or black pen.

Exams
You will have three exams during the semester and a final exam. These exams will consist of 100 multiple choice, true-false questions based on the assigned reading for the course. The three exams during the semester will be administered on Blackboard and will only be available to you for a one week time period. You will only be able to access the exam once. I will drop the lowest score of the three exams. Your final exam will be in the classroom during the assigned time in finals week and will consist of a short in-class exercise, worth 50 points.

Make Up Work
I will only allow for make-up of a missed final exam with a written documentation from the hospital indicating your admittance to the hospital or that of a first degree relative (parent, spouse, sibling, or child). Any make-up of a missed exam is at my convenience. Other missed work cannot be made up.
There will be no make up for the exams that are administered during the semester as you will have a week to access them and I am also dropping the lowest grade.

By staying in this class you are agreeing to undertake all of the work outlined in this syllabus. Be sure you are aware of the workload and adjust your schedule accordingly.

**READING AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE**

You should plan on doing each day’s readings before coming to class. Then you will better understand the lectures and discussions that day and have any questions answered. In general, each week you will have a chapter from the reader and a chapter from the textbook to read.

The calendar is as follows:

- **Week One January 26**
  - **Tuesday** Review syllabus and class policies: *Thursday Checks and Balances (C&B)* Introduction and *Scenarios in American Government (SIAG)* Introduction
  - **Thursday** Checks and Balances (C&B) Chapter Two (Constitution)

- **Week Two February 2**
  - **C&B** Constitution and SIAG Chapter Two (Constitution)

- **Week Three February 16**
  - **C&B** Federalism and SIAG Chapter Three

- **Week Four February 23**
  - **C&B** Civil Liberties and SIAG Chapter Four

- **Week Five March 2**
  - **C&B** Civil Rights and SIAG Chapter Five

  *Exam One opens Sunday March 1 at midnight and closes Sunday March 8 at midnight.*

- **Week Six March 9**
  - **C&B** Public Opinion, Socialization, Participation, SIAG Chapters Six and Seven

- **Tuesday March 10**
  - *Signup for presentation or paper and topics*

- **Week Seven March 16**
  - **C&B** Interest groups and Political Parties, SIAG Chapters Eight and Nine

- **Week Eight March 23**
  - **C&B** Campaigns and elections, Media, SIAG Chapters Ten and Eleven

  *Exam Two Opens Sunday, March 22, at midnight and closes Sunday March 29 at midnight.*

**Points Breakdown and Total Points**

- Monday quizzes 10 points each - 150 points (15% of your Grade)
- Presentation or paper - 150 points (15% of your Grade)
- Group discussions assignments 30 points each 15 weeks - 450 points (45% of your Grade)
- Two exams 100 points each - 200 points (20% of your Grade)
- Final exam 50 points – 50 (5% of your Grade)

900-1000 points A
800-899 B
700-799 C
600-699 D
0-599 F