

**Syllabus: POLS 155H. Honors American Government: National/State/Local.  
Tuesday and Thursday: 12:30 to 1:45. O'Connell 237**

Instructor: Mr. Crosby

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday: 2:00-4:00 and by appointment.

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**“The essence of Government is power; and power, lodged as it must be in human hands, will ever be liable to abuse.” James Madison, 1829**

### **Course content**

An investigation of who gets what, when, and how in national, state, and local politics. We will cover principles of American governmental institutions, federal systems, congress, president, and courts. Emphasis is on the Constitution, development of institutions and the nature of American society. While there are no formal prerequisites for this course, the instructor assumes that all students have a basic grounding in American history.

**Required texts** (available in campus bookstore as a bundled package)

*We the People: An introduction to American Politics*, 6th Edition, Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir (hereafter referred to as the “text”.)

*Governing California in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Anagnoson, et al. (hereafter referred to as “California”)

Current events will be related to the readings and integrated into class discussions and from there possibly into exams. Since part of your grade derives from your participation in discussions and correctly linking current events/trends to past events is a significant objective of this course it will behoove you to keep abreast of the news. A free electronic copy of the New York Times delivered to your inbox is one way of keeping current as is a regular subscription to the Times delivered to your hovel.

### **Course Objectives**

1. To gain a greater understanding of the historical background and the current political processes that drive politics in America.
2. To critically apply this knowledge by analyzing current issues in American Government and provide a framework to make intelligent political choices.
3. To participate in lively discussions.

### **General Course Information:**

1. **Tests:** There are two multiple choice exams and each of these exams are worth one hundred points. The material covered in the exams will come from the lectures and the readings. 200 points total.
2. **Quizzes.** There will be three pop quizzes at various times throughout the semester consisting of either multiple choice, short answer or thought question regarding the reading for the week. Each quiz is worth 20 points. 60 total points possible
3. **Readings/discussion papers:** At the end of each part, beginning 17 September you will hand in a two to three page paper responding or analyzing a key issue raised in the readings and/or lectures. These papers will be used as a base for an extended discussion on the topic. Papers are graded on a thirty point scale. Papers must be double-spaced with a font of ten or higher.  
Integration and proper linkage of a current event is strongly encouraged. Paper topic will be posted on Web CT Vista at least one week before assignment is due. 90 points possible total.
4. **Policy Paper:** An eight to twelve page paper, typewritten, double spaced, 10 to 12 font size, reviewing the current direction in a specific topic in American policy. Research and discuss the policy from a pro and con perspective and provide a detailed recommendation for a future policy direction in 2010. This paper will require outside research and sources must be properly cited. This paper is due December 10<sup>th</sup> and is worth 100 points. Policy paper presentation consists of a five to seven minute overview of your issue, with recommendations, presented to the class. This presentation is worth 20 points.
5. **Political Compass:** This is your first and last assignment. Go to the web site, read the material, answer the questions and print out your results. In less than a page please provide some reasons/analysis on why you think you scored how you did and why you answered the way you did on some of the questions. Address how valid or off you believe the results are. 10 points.
6. **Attendance:** It will be in your best interest to do so.
7. **Attitude and participation:** Being on time, appearing conscious, occasionally contributing to the discussion or presentation, all will be noted and will reflect slightly on your overall grade. Stay awake, stay alive. I will call on students at various times during class so be prepared. If this action will cause you to become unhinged please advise me during an office call.
8. **Extra Credit:** Correctly answered random questions that are related to the readings can result in extra points.
9. **Grading.** Based upon percentage listed below of your total number of points.  
A = 100-94, A- = 93-90, B+ = 89-87, B = 86-84; B- = 83-80,  
C+ = 79-77, C = 76-74, C- = 73-70, D+ = 69-67, D = 66-60, F = 59-0.
10. **Absences:** If you are not going to make it to class because of illness, sleep deprivation, hormone imbalance, total organ failure, carjacking, being dragged by a bus or any other plausible reason, please email me or call and leave a message. With the advent of swine flu, bird flu, cow pox, hanta virus, beriberi, etc. the general advice is if you are involuntarily leaking fluids out of your orifices please do not come to school. Infect the staff at the clinic and then send me a message via email. My email is ALWAYS open and phones work. Not informing me, either before or the day of a missed class implies you do not care what grade you receive in the class. You know when the

papers are due, when the exams are and the furlough days, so plan your illnesses and near death experiences accordingly. Email me!

11. **Furloughs:** The people of the State of California, in their infinite wisdom, have decided to give you and me the glorious opportunity of not attending class. For this high honor they are charging you 30% more and paying me about 10% less. The University will have a campus wide furlough day on 8 September, 15 October and class will be cancelled on those days. If these dates change I will notify you in class.

12. **Cheating/plagiarizing and lying to me:** Cheating and/or plagiarizing is highly frowned upon. Dire consequences await those who choose that dark path. I will report significant instances of suspected academic dishonesty to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. I will impose appropriate academic sanctions for violations, which may range from assigning a zero or “F” grade on an assignment to an “F” in the course. Other administrative sanctions maybe imposed by the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. The students, faculty, administrators, and staff of CSU, Chico are committed to a culture of honesty in which members of the community accept responsibility to uphold academic integrity in all they say, write, and create. Do not lie. Trust broken can not be easily mended.

13. **Students with disabilities:** I will provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you have a documented disability that may require reasonable accommodation, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for coordination of your academic accommodations. DSS is located at the University Center, behind Kendall Hall. I strongly encourage you to meet with me during my office hours or set up an appointment during the first two weeks of class. If, during the course of the semester you are diagnosed with a disability, please contact me as soon as practicable.

14. **Lecture/class:** Class will, more or less, cover the topic mentioned in the course schedule for that day. Lecture consists of “death by powerpoint” with directed discussion/questions during class.

15. **WebCT Vista:** I will usually place the lectures on Vista before class. I do not use Vista daily so if you want to contact me quickly use the “jcroby5” email address. Using the Vista class email to reach me is NOT advisable if you want a fast response. You are responsible for the assignments posted. If you cannot access them, contact me.

**Finally:** If you have any questions or concerns about the course please either email me, see me during my office hours or set up an appointment. I am reasonably sure I have neither rabies nor the bubonic plague.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

#### **Part I: Foundations of Government**

AUG 25: INTRODUCTION, Political Compass <http://www.politicalcompass.org/>

AUG 27: “Tragedy of the Commons” posted on WEB CT, Political Compass paper due

SEP 1: read Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of text, pages 3-70.

SEP 3: Federalist Papers 10 and 51, pages A20-A24 in the text. Chapter 3 of text, Federalism, pages 75-106 and Chapters 1 and 2 of California

SEP 8: Furlough day

SEP 10: Chapter 4, Civil Liberties, pages 111-146

SEP 15: Chapter 5, Civil Rights, pages 151-191

**Part II: Politics**

SEP 17: Chapter 6, Public Opinion, pages 197-232. **1<sup>st</sup> Paper due.**

SEP 22: Chapter 7, The Media, pages 237-264

SEP 24: Chapter 8, Political participation and Voting, pages 269-301

SEP 29: Chapter 9, Political Parties, pages 305-346, and chapter 4 of California

OCT 1: Chapter 10, Campaign and Elections, pages 351-395

OCT 6: Chapter 11, Groups and Interests, pages 399-431, and chapter 3 of California

OCT 13: 1st Exam, covering chapters 1-11 of text, chapters 1-4 of California and lecture notes to date.

OCT 15: Furlough day

**Part III: Institutions**

OCT 20: Chapter 12, Congress, pages 437-480. **2<sup>nd</sup> Paper due**

OCT 22: California chapter 5

OCT 27: Chapter 13, The Presidency, pages 485-522

OCT 29: California chapter 6

NOV 3: Chapter 14, Bureaucracy in a Democracy, pages 527-565.

NOV 5: Chapter 15, The Federal Courts, pages 571-608.

NOV 10: California chapters 7 and 9.

NOV 12: **3<sup>rd</sup> Paper due.** Review of material to date.

**PART IV: Public Policy and State/Local Politics**

NOV 17: Chapter 16, Government and the Economy, pages 615-657 and California chapter 8.

NOV 19: Chapter 17, Social Policy, pages 661 to 694 and California chapter 10

NOV 23-NOV 29: Thanksgiving week. No School

DEC 1: Chapter 18, Foreign Policy and Democracy, pages 699-736

DEC 3: Review. Policy Paper due.

DEC 8: 2nd Exam: chapters 11-18, chapters 5-10 of California and lecture notes from 21 Oct.

DEC 10: Policy Paper presentation. Take the Political Compass test again and explain any differences from the first test.

**FINALS WEEK: DEC 14 – 18. \*\*FINAL EXAM\*\* Tuesday 15 DEC: 2-3:50. Policy Paper presentation.**

**Paper topics are addressed on Web CT.**