

U.S. Government & Politics

Political Science 001

West Los Angeles College
Fall 2014
Mondays 6:45-10:00 pm in GC 420
September 08 – December 15, 2014
Section #4734
Instructor: M. Graham
Office Hours: Mondays 6-6:45 pm GC 420
E-mail: mgraham745@aol.com

Course Description: This course provides a broad overview of U.S. and California government and politics, with a basic introduction to political theory and the U.S. political system, including the structure, functions and powers of the national and California state governments. General topics to be addressed include the historical foundation and evolution of the U.S. political system, the U.S. Constitution, civil liberties, civil rights, the roles of political parties and interest groups, the electoral system, political institutions, and foreign and domestic policy.

Student Learning Objectives:

1. To define the key terms/concepts associated with U.S. and California government and politics
2. To compare and contrast different political theories as they apply to U.S. government and politics in order to determine how power and resources are distributed in American society
 1. To contrast the structure, functions and powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal and California state governments, as well as the relationship between the federal and state governments.
3. To examine the role of political parties, interest groups, public opinion and the media in influencing the political process and its domestic and foreign policy outcomes.
4. To raise the student's level of political literacy and critical thinking in order to enhance student interest in political participation.

Course Reading: Bardes, Shelley, Schmidt. American Government and Politics Today: The Essentials, 2012-2013 Edition. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012 ISBN: 0495571709
Korey, John. California Government, 5th ed. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2009.

Course Requirements:

1. Read chapters in the textbook as set forth in the course schedule. Students should highlight key information and terms while reading.
2. Participation in class discussions.
3. Prepare for quizzes (one per chapter), consisting of short-answer and/or multiple-choice questions. No make-up quizzes will be given.
4. Prepare for three exams. Exams will consist of multiple-choice and essay questions. Make-up exams will only be given with advanced notice of absence.
5. Write a political science research paper using the guidelines below.

Political Science 001
U.S. Government & Politics
Research Paper Assignment

Choose a research paper topic that interests you from the list provided or come up with your own topic and submit a typed, 1-page proposal addressing why you chose the topic, some initial ideas that you plan on including in your final paper, and listing at least three research sources pertinent to your topic that you have already read.

After instructor feedback and further research, prepare a typed, double-spaced, 6-8-page paper. You must use a minimum of six different research sources from books, magazines, newspapers, and scholarly journals. Your paper should be in APA format, including APA-style in-text citations, an APA bibliography, and an APA cover sheet.

SLO: Students will make use of course concepts, engage in critical thinking, and use their course knowledge to conduct a political analysis in the completion of a 6-8 page research paper concerning a U.S. public policy topic. Students will gain knowledge about a public policy topic of interest to the student through research. Students will also develop written communication skills as well as research and documentation skills.

Assessment Rubric:

Format (30%)

- Paper is turned in on time (5%)
- Within the target 6-8 page range (5%)
- Includes correct APA documentation in the body of the text (10%)
- Includes an APA works cited page (5%)
- Includes at least six different appropriate research sources (5%)

Content (70% - 10% for each of the following)

- Why should the public pay attention to your topic and who is directly affected?
- How does Laswell's framework apply to your topic?
- Discuss how elected officials, legislative bodies, or court decisions may influence future decisions in this area of public policy and how laws or rules pertaining to the topic are adopted and implemented.
- What are the major interest groups that stand to gain or lose depending on how laws or rules concerning your topic are adopted?
- Are there any constitutional matters that must be resolved connected to your topic? If so, what are they and how might they be resolved in the future?
- What policy alternatives exist and what is your evaluation of the other choices in terms of cost, feasibility, public and political support?
- Include statistics concerning your topic.

Grading Scale:

A = 90-100%, B = 80-89%, C = 70-79%, D = 60-69%, F = 0-59%

Course Assessment:

Chapter Quizzes – 20 points each

Exams – 100 points each

Research Paper – 100 points

Final Letter Grades:

A = 90-100% of total points possible

B = 80-89% of total points possible

C = 70-79% of total points possible

D = 60-69% of total points possible

F = 0-59% of total points possible