

POLS 112/202: American (and California) Government

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This course introduces students to the study of government and politics in the United States and California. The theories and research we study focus on U.S. political culture and institutions: The U.S. Constitution, Federalism, Public Policy, Media and Public opinion, Parties, Interest Groups and Social Movements, Campaigns and Elections, Congress, The Executive and The Judiciary and Civil Rights and Liberties. (*Fulfills Cal Poly GE D1*).

Through completion of this course, students will achieve the following objectives:

1. Think critically and creatively.
  - a. Applying the theoretical frameworks and applications of political science, and the strengths and weaknesses of competing theories
  - b. Analyzing the roles of individuals, groups and institutions in political processes
  - c. *Assessment: Skillshares, Big Problem, Electoral Integrity, Midterm, Govt Performance, Final*
2. Communicate effectively.
  - a. Constructing logical arguments; collecting, analyzing, and interpreting evidence and data; formulating reasoned conclusions
  - b. Developing writing skills through research papers, essay exams, senior projects in political science topics
  - c. *Assessment: Big Problem, Electoral Integrity, Govt Performance*
3. Demonstrate expertise in a scholarly discipline and understand that discipline in relation to the larger world of the arts, sciences, and technology.
  - a. Understanding our history, philosophical, constitutional and legal foundations, leading political values and ideas, governing institutions, and policymaking processes.
  - b. Analyzing the leading policies, and the legal issues confronting contemporary political systems, particularly in the U.S.
  - c. *Assessment: Electoral Integrity, Midterm, Govt Performance, Final*
4. Work productively as individuals and in groups.
  - a. Recognizing the wide array of political experiences and perspectives.
  - b. Collaborative research/writing opportunities to develop practical responses to political issues/problems.
  - c. *Assessment: Electoral Integrity, Midterm, Govt Performance*
5. Using knowledge and skills to make a positive contribution to society.
  - a. Practicing citizenship skills and ethical values

- b. Understanding and appreciating human diversity
  - c. *Assessment: Big Problem, Electoral Integrity, Govt Performance*
6. Make reasoned decisions based on an understanding of ethics, a respect for diversity, and an awareness of issues related to sustainability.
- a. Analyzing the diversity of political systems around the world
  - b. Analyzing alternative moral and ethical frameworks for interpreting and evaluating contemporary political discourses
  - c. *Assessment: Big Problem, Electoral Integrity, Midterm, Govt Performance, Final*

Assessment of these objectives will be evaluated through the following assignments. All assignments are to be processed in 12pt font. See Assignment rubrics for details.

Assignment	Value
Assignment 1: The Big Problem (1000 words, double-spaced)	20%
Assignment 2: Electoral Integrity (2000 word newsletter, single-sp)	20%
Assignment 3: Government Performance (2000 word newsletter, single-sp)	20%
Midterm (In-class essay)	10%
Final (50 multiple choice questions)	20%
Skillshares/Participation	10%
	100%
<b>Extra credit music analysis – This Land is Your Land</b>	+2%

Required Materials: TopHat registration and courseware  
 NO TEXTBOOK, Required reading located in the syllabus and online

Skillshares: Each class period, you need to submit a brief (<500 words) set of answers to the day’s questions at an online forum. Skillshares will be graded as credit/no credit. You may address additional related questions during in-class exercises. These questions and your contribution to in-class discussion will constitute your participation grade.

Xtra Credit Music [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkGjDbKauVo&list=PL-T3\\_cLut1isHxLmr3Ezq4RZe0LYDf-Ex](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkGjDbKauVo&list=PL-T3_cLut1isHxLmr3Ezq4RZe0LYDf-Ex)

Each week, pick 3-4 songs to reflect on write up a commentary on how they reflect/express something relevant in American culture.

## Tentative Schedule (subject to change)

1. 1/9 Introduction: The Beautiful Problem of Collective Action
  - a. Reading/Watching:
    - i. The Collective Action Problem: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/geog030/node/342>
    - ii. Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" [http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles\\_pdf/tragedy\\_of\\_the\\_commons.pdf](http://www.garretthardinsociety.org/articles_pdf/tragedy_of_the_commons.pdf)
  - b. In Class:
    - i. In the introduction to the course we will discuss course objectives, expectations, and the beautiful problem of collective action.
    - ii. The Trust Game
    - iii. Skillshare:
      1. What is a "commons" and what examples of commons do you engage in on a regular basis?
      2. What is "tragic" about the Tragedy of the Commons?
      3. How do privatization and collectivization act as solutions?
      4. Why is this a moral problem, and what is moral about the "recognition of necessity"?
    - iv. Collectivize into study circles
  - c. After Class:
    - i. Do the next readings and submit your skillshare online
  
2. 1/11 Institutions: Collective Action Solutions
  - a. Reading/Watching:
    - i. David Easton, "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems" [http://online.sfsu.edu/squo/Renmin/June2\\_system/Political%20System\\_Easton.pdf](http://online.sfsu.edu/squo/Renmin/June2_system/Political%20System_Easton.pdf).
    - ii. Steven A Frank, A New Theory of Cooperation <http://stevefrank.org/reprints-pdf/13RDA.pdf>
  - b. In Class:
    - i. Skillshare
      1. What are the basic mechanisms that constitute a "political system" in Easton's words?
      2. What is the process of "politicization" and what role does it play? Give an example.
      3. How does internal suppression of conflict contribute to group cohesion?
      4. How does group cohesion yield individual benefits?
  - c. After Class
    - i. Do the next readings and complete your skillshare

3. 1/16 MLK Day
4. 1/18 Conflict, Cooperation and Constitutional Design
  - a. Reading/Watching:
    - i. Articles of Confederation:  
[http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/artconf.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp)
    - ii. James Madison, Vices of the Political System of the United States  
<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch5s16.html>
    - iii. Constitution Summary:  
<http://depts.alverno.edu/dgp/GEC/Overview%20of%20Constitution.html>
    - iv. Anti-Federalist #3  
<http://www.thisnation.com/library/antifederalist/03.html>
    - v. James Madison: Federalist #10  
<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>
    - vi. James Madison: Equality <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch15s50.html>
  - b. In Class:
    - i. Skillshare:
      1. Summarize the design principles underlying the Articles of Confederation, what were the designers trying to accomplish and prevent?
      2. How do James Madison's criticisms of the Articles reflect concerns raised by the tragedy of the commons?
      3. How do his proposed solutions (reflected in the constitution) reflect a theory of cooperation?
      4. What potential defects in Madison's model are highlighted by the Anti-Federalists?
  - c. After Class:
    - i. Do the next readings and upload your skillshare
5. 1/23 A Federalist Solution
  - a. Reading/Watching:
    - i. Alberta Sbragia, "American Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations" (online)
  - b. In Class:
    - i. Skillshare
      1. What mechanisms of control does Madison rely on to restrain the federal government?
      2. What problems are identified with these mechanisms?

3. Summarize historical trends in the state-federal relationship, in terms of how policy is made.
  4. Identify advantages and disadvantages of the federalist solution using current examples
- c. After Class
- i. Do the next readings and submit your skillshare online
  - ii. Draft Assignment 1
6. 1/25 Public Policy: The Allocation of Values
- a. Reading/Watching:
- i. Public/Private Goods: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/geog432/node/277>
  - ii. EconStories, Fear the Boom and Bust: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0nERTFo-Sk>
  - iii. Federal Reserve “What is the difference between monetary policy and fiscal policy and how are they related?” [http://www.federalreserve.gov/faqs/money\\_12855.htm](http://www.federalreserve.gov/faqs/money_12855.htm)
  - iv. Anthony Bourdain talks guns: <http://www.cnn.com/video/shows/anthony-bourdain-parts-unknown/season-2/new-mexico/>
  - v. Fareed Zakaria, “The solution to gun violence is clear” [http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-the-solution-to-gun-violence-is-clear/2012/12/19/110a6f82-4a15-11e2-b6f0-e851e741d196\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-the-solution-to-gun-violence-is-clear/2012/12/19/110a6f82-4a15-11e2-b6f0-e851e741d196_story.html)
  - vi. A Reality Check on Renewables: [https://www.ted.com/talks/david\\_mackay\\_a\\_reality\\_check\\_on\\_renewables](https://www.ted.com/talks/david_mackay_a_reality_check_on_renewables)
  - vii. Mr. Y, A National Strategic Narrative <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/A%20National%20Strategic%20Narrative.pdf>
- b. In Class:
- i. Skillshare:
    1. Summarize the differences between types of goods allocated in society.
    2. Summarize the role of government in the allocation of private goods through economic policy, using examples.
    3. How is the allocation of private and public goods linked?
    4. How might we describe government budgets as moral documents?
- c. After Class:
- i. Finalize Assignment 1
7. 1/30 Assignment 1: The Big Problem
- a. Reading/Watching

- i. Prepare your paper and upload to forum
  - b. In Class
    - i. Bring one copy of your paper to discuss
  - c. After Class
    - i. Do the next readings and complete your skillshare
  
- 8. 2/01 Political Socialization, Ideology, and Mobilization
  - a. Reading/Watching
    - i. J. Haidt, The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan\\_haidt\\_on\\_the\\_moral\\_mind?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind?language=en)
    - ii. Political Socialization  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm5POLFpZGo>
    - iii. Verba, et. al., Family Ties (online)
    - iv. Russell Dalton, "Citizenship and the Transformation of American Society" <http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~rdalton/archive/cid2.pdf>
  - b. In Class:
    - i. Political Ideology and Personality Tests
    - ii. Skillshare:
      1. Where do your political values come from?
      2. How is cultural evolution like biological evolution?
      3. Identify some issues where you have difficulty taking a position. How do you resolve internal conflicts over political issues? What role does ideology play in this?
      4. Do you have experiences/evidence that supports or questions research on cultural evolution?
  - c. After Class:
    - i. Do the next readings and write a paragraph for skillshare
  
- 9. 2/6 Mass Media and Political Communication
  - a. Reading/Watching:
    - i. Pew Research, "Political Polarization and Media Habits"  
<http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/>
    - ii. Media Bias, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media\\_bias](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_bias)
    - iii. John Stewart v Fox News:  
<http://video.foxnews.com/v/1007046245001/exclusive-jon-stewart-on-fox-news-sunday/?#sp=show-clips>
    - iv. Scott Althaus: Free Falls, High Dives and the Future of Democratic Accountability  
<https://www.princeton.edu/csdp/events/ChangingMedia1107/AlthausCM.pdf>
  - b. In Class:

- i. Skillshare
  1. What roles do media play in democracy, and how are these roles reflected in the Constitution?
  2. How has media fragmentation impacted the consumption of information?
  3. Is the media biased? Illustrate with examples.
  4. How do media regulate demands and support in the context of the U.S. political system?
- c. After Class:
  - i. Do the next readings and write a paragraph for the skillshare

## 10. 2/8 Political Parties and Interest Groups

- a. Reading/Watching:
  - i. Dalton et.al., “Parties and Representative Government”  
<http://www.socsci.uci.edu/~rdalton/archive/partygovt2012.pdf>
  - ii. Michael Barber and Nolan McCarty “Causes and Consequences of Polarization”  
<http://www.apsanet.org/Files/Task%20Force%20Reports/Chapter%20Mansbridge.pdf>
  - iii. Schlozman, et al., “Louder Chorus, Same Accent”  
[http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/01/24%20pressure%20politics/schlozman%20et%20al\\_interests%20in%20pressure%20politics\\_15.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2014/01/24%20pressure%20politics/schlozman%20et%20al_interests%20in%20pressure%20politics_15.pdf)
- b. In Class:
  - i. Skillshare
    1. What function do political parties play in our political system?
    2. What are the individual benefits and costs of supporting a political party?
    3. Why have the major parties become so polarized?
    4. How do political organizations affect the representation of collective voter preferences? Use examples.
- c. After Class
  - i. Do the next readings and write a paragraph for the skillshare

## 11. 2/13 Voting Rights and Representation

- a. Reading/Watching:
  - i. The Right to an Equally Weighted Vote (online)
  - ii. Voting Rights timeline  
<http://www.infoplease.com/timelines/voting.html>
  - iii. Voting Problems Present in 2016  
<https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/voting-problems-present-2016-further-study-needed-determine-impact>

- iv. Electoral Integrity <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/10/10/electoral-integrity/>
- v. The Electoral College Meets Monday, Here's What to Expect [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/18/us/politics/the-electoral-college-meets-monday-heres-what-to-expect.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/18/us/politics/the-electoral-college-meets-monday-heres-what-to-expect.html?_r=0)

b. In Class

- i. Skillshare
  1. How are voting rights protected by the Constitution?
  2. What is vote dilution and why is it important?
  3. How does the administration of elections impact the representation of collective preferences?
  4. Should we retain the Electoral College, why or why not?

c. After Class

- i. Complete the readings and write a paragraph for the next skillshare

12. 2/15 The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws

a. Reading/Watching:

- i. Electoral System Design Ch3, paragraphs 75-79, 95-99, 100-105, 147-165 (online)
- ii. Gerrymandering: <http://on.aol.com/video/gerrymandering-film-5549f07fe4b00e36bc15208f>
- iii. Bradley Smith, "Why should electoral integrity exclude freedom of speech?" <http://www.libertylawsite.org/2015/03/03/why-should-electoral-integrity-exclude-freedom-of-speech/>
- iv. Lawrence Lessig, "We the People, and the Republic We Must Reclaim" [http://www.ted.com/talks/lawrence\\_lessig\\_we\\_the\\_people\\_and\\_the\\_republic\\_we\\_must\\_reclaim?language=en](http://www.ted.com/talks/lawrence_lessig_we_the_people_and_the_republic_we_must_reclaim?language=en)

b. In Class:

- i. The Election Game
- ii. Skillshare
  1. How do FPTP single-member district elections differ from proportional systems in their representation of collective preferences?
  2. How does gerrymandering affect the representation of collective preferences?
  3. What rights are in tension with regard to how we finance campaigns in the U.S.?
  4. How does our campaign finance system shape the representation of collective preferences?

c. After Class:

- i. Finalize Assignment 2

13. 2/20 PREZ DAY

14. 2/21 Assignment 2: Electoral Integrity

- a. Reading/Watching
  - i. Prepare newsletters and upload a copy to website
- b. In Class
  - i. Bring one copy of newsletter for each student to present
  - ii. MIDTERM (1 hour essay)
- c. After Class
- d. Do your skillshare for tomorrow

15. 2/22 The Architecture of Congress

- a. Reading/Watching:
  - i. Bicameralism: <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch12l.html>
  - ii. John Uhr, "Bicameralism" (online)
  - iii. If you're from California you should hate the Senate: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/03/11/if-youre-from-california-you-should-hate-the-senate/>
  - iv. Updating the Constitution: <http://globalpublicsquare.blogs.cnn.com/2011/06/27/fareed-zakaria-and-jeffrey-toobin-on-updating-the-u-s-constitution/>
- b. In Class:
  - i. Skillshare:
    - 1. What are the defining features of "strong" bicameralism?
    - 2. Would you define California as a strong or weak bicameral system? Explain.
    - 3. How does the architecture of Congress affect the representation of collective preferences?
    - 4. In the midst of a global economic recession, how might you expect a unitary system to react differently than a strong bicameral system?
- c. After Class:
  - i. Do the next readings and write a paragraph for the skillshare

16. 2/27 The Legislative Lifecycle

- a. Reading/Watching:
  - i. Matt McCubbins, "Legislative Process" [http://mccubbins.us/mccubbins\\_files/ARTC6.PDF](http://mccubbins.us/mccubbins_files/ARTC6.PDF)
  - ii. U.S. Senate, "Filibuster and Cloture" [http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Filibuster\\_Clature.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/Filibuster_Clature.htm)
  - iii. Is the filibuster unconstitutional?

[http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/is-the-filibuster-unconstitutional/2012/05/15/gIQAYLp7QU\\_blog.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/ezra-klein/post/is-the-filibuster-unconstitutional/2012/05/15/gIQAYLp7QU_blog.html)

iv. History of the Filibuster:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a94cm4Fv\\_34](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a94cm4Fv_34)

v. The Filibuster:

<http://thedailyshow.cc.com/videos/301sct/filibusters>

b. In Class:

i. The Legislative Game

ii. Skillshare

1. How do party leaders control the legislative agenda to shape public policy?
2. How do party leaders control legislative procedures to shape public policy?
3. What is the importance of the committee system in the productivity of Congress?
4. What is the main impact of the filibuster on legislative performance?

c. After Class:

i. Do the next readings and write a paragraph for the skillshare

## 17. 3/1 Executive Leadership

a. Reading/Watching:

i. WhiteHouse.gov "The Executive Branch"

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government/executive-branch>

ii. Shugart and Samuels: Presidents, Prime Ministers and Parties

<http://www.polisci.umn.edu/~dsamuels/Samuels%20and%20Shugart%20APSA%202006a.pdf>

iii. Frontline, "Obama's Deal"

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/obamasdeal/>

iv. Power and the Presidency:

<http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/power-and-the-presidency-from-kennedy-to-obama-75335897/?all>

b. In Class:

i. Skillshare:

1. What features distinguish presidential systems from parliamentary systems?
2. What is the impact of presidentialism on the legislative process and the representation of collective preferences?
3. How is California's Executive Branch different than our federal system?
4. Is the American Executive too powerful or not powerful enough? Explain.

c. After Class:

i. Do the next readings and write a paragraph for the skillshare

18. 3/6 Public Administration and Bureaucracy

a. Reading/Watching:

- i. Donald Kettl, "Public Bureaucracies" (online)
- ii. Philip K Howard on The Daily Show  
<http://thedailyshow.cc.com/extended-interviews/vxssol/philip-k-howard-extended-interview>
- iii. Christian Bason, "Design-Led Innovation in Government"  
[http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/design\\_led\\_innovation\\_in\\_government](http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/design_led_innovation_in_government)
- iv. Jennifer Pahlka, "Coding a Better Government"  
[http://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer\\_pahlka\\_coding\\_a\\_better\\_government](http://www.ted.com/talks/jennifer_pahlka_coding_a_better_government)

b. In Class:

i. Skillshare:

1. How are public bureaucracies different than private bureaucracies?
2. Why are the goals of performance and accountability in tension in public administration?
3. What are the pathologies linked to public administration?
4. How can technology improve the performance of bureaucracies?

c. After Class:

- i. Do the next readings and write a paragraph for the skillshare
- ii. Complete a draft of Assignment 3

19. 3/8 Judicial Oversight and Policymaking

a. Reading/Watching:

- i. U.S. Courts "Federal Courts" <http://www.uscourts.gov/about-federal-courts/court-role-and-structure>
- ii. Kevin McGuire "The Judicial Process and Policymaking" (online)
- iii. Originalist Sin <https://newrepublic.com/article/74152/originalist-sin>
- iv. David Kuhn, "The Incredible Polarization and Politicization of the Supreme Court"  
<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/06/the-incredible-polarization-and-politicization-of-the-supreme-court/259155/>

b. In Class:

i. Skillshare

1. What is the primary function of a judicial system in a democracy?

2. How do the judicial philosophies of “originalism” and “contextualism” differ? How do they impact policy?
  3. What is strong judicial review, and how does it shape the representation of collective preferences in public policy?
  4. What is the difference between judicial activism and judicial restraint, and which do you prefer?
- c. After Class:
    - i. Finalize Assignment 3
20. 3/13 Assignment 3: Government Performance
- a. Reading/Watching
    - i. Prepare newsletters and upload a copy to website
  - b. In Class
    - i. Bring one copy of newsletter for each student to present
  - c. After Class
    - i. Prepare your portfolios for course review
21. 3/15 Course Review
22. 3/20 7:10-10pm FINAL

### **Plagiarism & Cheating**

Please remember that Cal Poly does not tolerate academic cheating or plagiarism in any form. Please review the formal policy on cheating and plagiarism (including definitions, sanctions, and appeal procedures) found in the Campus Administrative Manual, Section 684, available at:

<http://www.academicprograms.calpoly.edu/academicpolicies/Cheating.htm>.

According to Cal Poly policies, “Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following: the submission of a work, either in part or in whole, completed by another; failure to give credit for ideas, statements, facts or conclusions which rightfully belong to another; failure to use quotation marks when quoting directly from another, whether it be a paragraph, a sentence, or even a part thereof; **close and lengthy paraphrasing of another’s writing without credit or originality**; use of another’s project or program or part thereof without giving credit.”

The instructor takes any evidence of academic dishonesty very seriously. You must document **all** outside sources, including web sites, using MLA or APA guidelines. Failure to do so constitutes a violation of Cal Poly policy. Please note

that cases of plagiarism will be dealt with as 'cheating' and that, according to Cal Poly policies, **“Cheating requires, at a minimum, an F assigned to the assignment, exam, or task, and this F must be reflected in the course grade. The instructor may assign an F course grade for an incidence of cheating. Irrespective of whether the student appeals the finding of cheating, the instructor is obligated to submit to the OSRR director a Confidential Faculty Report of Academic Dishonesty.”**

**Please also note that submitting work for which you have already received credit in another course also counts as cheating, according to the Cal Poly Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities.**

#### **Disability Accommodations**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have a documented disability. Please notify the instructor during the first week of class if accommodations are needed. To receive accommodation, you must show the instructor a *visa* from the Disability Resource Center. For more information, see: <http://www.drc.calpoly.edu/>. If you will need special assistance in the event of an on---campus emergency, please also alert the instructor.