

Syllabus for: US Government & Politics	
Semester & Year:	Spring 2013
Course ID and Section Number:	POLSC 10-E1597
Number of Credits/Units:	3
Day/Time:	T/Th 2:50-4:15 pm
Location:	FM 100
Instructor's Name:	Jessica Whatcott, MA in Social Sciences
Contact Information:	Office location and hours: T/Th 2-2:30 pm, FM 202 Phone: 826-3148 (voicemail at HSU) Email: jessica-whatcott@redwoods.edu
Course Description (catalog description as described in course outline): A course addressing both the philosophic roots and the contemporary operation of American national, state, and local government. Specific topics include constitutional development, federal-state relations, and the rights and obligations of citizens under both the federal and the California constitutions.	
Student Learning Outcomes (as described in course outline) : Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the history and philosophy of the Constitution, politics, and government in the United States. 2. Identify the major provisions of the California and US Constitution. 3. Compare the three branches of California and US Government, and related political institutions. 4. Outline the relationship between the states and national government (ie. federalism). 5. Analyze contemporary issues facing California and the US system of government. Students will also be able to demonstrate progress toward the college's general education learning outcomes	
Special accommodations: College of the Redwoods complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodations document to me as promptly as possible so that necessary arrangements can be made. If you have a disability or believe you might benefit from disability related services and may need accommodations, please see me or contact Disabled Students Programs and Services.	
Academic Misconduct: Cheating, plagiarism, collusion, abuse of resource materials, computer misuse, fabrication or falsification, multiple submissions, complicity in academic misconduct, and/ or bearing false witness will not be tolerated. Violations will be dealt with according to the procedures and sanctions proscribed by the College of the Redwoods. Students caught plagiarizing or cheating on exams will receive an "F" in the course. The student code of conduct is available on the College of the Redwoods website at: http://redwoods.edu/District/Board/New/Chapter5/AP%205500%20Conduct%20Code%20final%2002-07-2012.pdf Additional information about the rights and responsibilities of students, Board policies, and administrative procedures is located in the college catalog and on the College of the Redwoods homepage. College of the Redwoods is committed to equal opportunity in employment, admission to the college, and in the conduct of all of its programs and activities.	

Politics can be defined broadly as the study of power. This class focuses on the power dynamics between the United States government and the people who live and work in the US. Although the government may seem like a big, faraway institution that we can choose to avoid, many aspects of our daily lives are influenced by political institutions and political policies. Only when we become educated about how the system works and learn how to participate, can we advocate for ourselves, our communities, and our world. How is the US government structured? How does that structure affect citizens? How do citizens influence the government? We will pay special attention to the politics of gender, race, and class as influenced and affected by US and California government.

Instructor Expectations

This will not be a conventional lecture class. Class will be a mix of brief lectures, large group discussions, small group discussions, videos, student presentations, and hands-on activities. Because I encourage and solicit student discussion, this class will not be very interesting unless each of you take responsibility for being prepared and ready to participate when you come to class.

Being successful in this class will require you to:

- **Read the assigned material prior to class time.** Whether or not you personally agree with an author, you are required to demonstrate an accurate understanding of the issues, concepts, theories, and arguments discussed. You cannot expect to do well on exams and assignments without reading and understanding the assigned material. Reading for ideas requires you to think about what you read, identify key points and develop critical questions about what you read. I encourage you to take notes on the text, or on a separate piece of paper. I expect you to bring to class your copy of the text (either the book, a printout of the article, or your electronic reading device) we are reading that day, to refer to it during class discussion.
- **Check your e-mail and MyCR page regularly.** Any changes to reading assignments, instructions for completing assignments, and any other announcements will be sent via e-mail and posted to MyCR.
- **Regularly attend class.** You are expected to attend each scheduled class period and to arrive to class on time. Missing more than 2 class periods will begin to affect your grade (see below for details). If you miss a class, follow up with one of your classmates to find out what was discussed. *If you have an emergency or serious extenuating circumstance that requires you to miss class, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss your situation.* I will be much more understanding if you come talk to me than if I am unsure about what happened to you.
- **Actively participate during class time.** Active participation includes coming to class prepared to engage with your fellow students on the topic of discussion, and to meaningfully contribute to discussions and exercises while respecting the contributions of other students. Respect includes turning off all non-academic electronic devices, including iPods, cell phones, laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. before class starts. If you use an electronic device to take notes, please let me know beforehand. I expect you will shut off all non-academic software while you are taking notes. If you are using any electronic devices for non-class purposes, and do not stop after a warning, you will lose attendance points for that day of class.
- **Complete all assignments to the best of your ability and on time.** You are responsible for keeping track of your syllabus in order to know when assignments are due. Except in cases of emergency, I prefer to accept paper copies of assignments turned in class or to my box in FM 200. I accept assignments no later than one week late for partial credit. Again, please talk to me if you have an emergency or serious extenuating circumstances.

Coalition Space

In this course we will be having conversations about topics that you may find challenging. Although I want all of us to feel safe to express our views, I do not promise that you will always be comfortable.

Sometimes for us to unlearn and learn we have to be pushed outside of our comfort zones. Rather than viewing our classroom as a “safe space” I encourage you to participate in our class as a “coalition space.”

Coalitions are successful when they work to affirm difference while discovering common ground and common goals. An ethic of coalition requires each of us to take responsibility for working together to foster an environment in which we are all inspired to learn and share our viewpoints. We can all learn something from each member of our coalition. Growing a coalition requires us to practice active listening, non-violent communication, compassion, empathy, and mutual respect (including respecting ourselves). We will talk more in class about this practice.

Course Readings and Resources

- Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir. 2011. *We The People: An Introduction to American Politics*. Eighth edition. New York: WW Norton & Company. Available used and new at the CR Bookstore or through online retailers. Referred to in the schedule as “WTP”. There is a new edition that came out after I ordered the book. If you want to buy the new edition, that should be okay, I don’t think the changes are too great that you will be totally lost.
- <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/polisci/we-the-people8/full/welcome.aspx>. This is the companion website for our textbook (link also available on MyCR). Occasionally I will ask you to go to this website and do one of the activities associated with the chapters.
- Other required readings will be available through MyCR. You are expected to print these out and bring them to class.

Grades

You may check the progress of your grade in MyCR gradebook. Your grade in this course is based on:

- **Attendance and Participation** (20%)

You earn 1 point (out of 30) for each day you attend class prepared (having read the assigned material and completed the homework). You will not receive a point for that day if you attend but are so unprepared that you can not participate in class. You can miss 2 classes and still receive an A for this component of the class. If you miss 3 classes, you will receive an A- for this requirement; 4 classes = B; 5 classes = B-; 6 classes = C+; 7 classes = C. **If you have more than 8 absences you will automatically be dropped and/or receive a failing grade in this class. HOWEVER**, if you have an emergency or unusual situation, and come discuss your situation with me as soon as possible, I will not fail you automatically but you may not receive attendance points.

- **2 Midterm Exams** (20% each, total 40%)

There are two midterm exams scheduled for this class. The first part of each midterm exam will be a take-home essay question that you will answer in 2 ½ to 3 pages. Each essay will be typed in standard college essay format (name and date at top, titled, 1 inch margins, 12 point font) turned in class on the due date. The second part of each exam will take place in class and consist of short answer, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and multiple choice questions.

- **Public Policy Issue Presentation** (20%)

After spring break, you will choose a group of 2-4 people to work with and select a topic from a list of public policy issues. You will read the assigned material and then work with your group to construct a 15

minute presentation for the class. The goal of this presentation is for you to identify at least two (and hopefully more) different points of view on how to solve a public policy issue. You will not necessarily have to share with us how you feel on the issue, but rather present to us some of the different perspectives that are weighing in on the topic. The presentation must include a visual aid such as a powerpoint or a handout. The presentations will take place on in the last weeks of the semester.

● **Citizenship Project and Paper** (20%)

This semester you will spend 4 hours outside of class engaged in an activity of democratic political participation. Near the beginning of the semester, I expect you to write a one page proposal describing your project. After completing your 4 hours, you will write a 3-4 page paper due at the end of semester, describing your project and analyzing it using the concepts and frameworks from class. You should also be prepared to briefly describe your project on the day our final exam is scheduled. You may choose one of the following projects (or see the “Get Involved” sections in the WTP book):

- Spend 15-20 minutes each week reading or listening to news about US or California government, such as the *The New York Times* “Politics” section or the “The California Report” radio magazine
- Attend an open meeting of local government or a committee of local government, such as the Board of Supervisors, the Arcata City Council, or the Planning Commission
- Research an issue that you care about and write a letter to the President, your state representatives, or congressional representatives
- Research an issue that you care about and write a letter to the editor of a local paper, encouraging members of the public to take political action (be specific about what action people should take)
- Host a documentary film screening on a public policy topic for your family and friends and discuss what you viewed
- Design your own creative project that demonstrates your active participation in a democracy

Grade Weight

Attendance and Participation	20%
Midterm Exam 1	20%
Midterm Exam 2	20%
Public Policy Issue Presentation	20%
<u>Citizenship Project and Paper</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total	100%

Grading Scale

A = 93-100 %	A- = 90-92	B+ = 87-89	B = 83-86	B- = 80-82	C+ = 77-79
C= 73-76	C- = 70-72	D+ = 67-69	D = 63-66	D- 60-62	F = 0-59

Course Schedule

Course outline, readings, and due dates subject to change with fair notice. Changes will be announced in class and/or on MyCR.

Week	Date	Readings and Topics to be Discussed	Assignments Due
1	Jan 15	Introductions, Overview of the course	
	Jan 17	WTP Ch. 1 American Political Culture	Visit the textbook website (see link above and on MyCR). Go to Chapter 1 and click "Get Involved Exercise." There are links to two polls you can take to see where you fit in American Political Culture. Complete these two polls and write down your results.
2	Jan 22	Democracy and the US Constitution WTP Ch. 2 The Founding and the Constitution Liberalism handout (MyCR) <i>Optional:</i> US Constitution (WTP Appendix)	
	Jan 24	More on democracy	
3	Jan 29	WTP Ch. 3 Federalism <i>Optional:</i> Federalist papers (WTP Appendix) and Anti-federalist papers (MyCR)	Citizenship Project proposal due
	Jan 31	More on federalism	
4	Feb 5	US Political Institutions WTP Ch. 12 Congress	
	Feb 7	More on Congress	Take home essay for mid-term & study guide passed out in class
5	Feb 12	WTP Ch. 13 Presidency	
	Feb 14	<i>In class Mid-term</i>	Take home essay due
6	Feb 19	WTP Ch. 15 Courts	
	Feb 21	<i>Read one of the following: (MyCR)</i> Roe v. Wade Nelson v Knight (Iowa Supreme Court) Bowers v. Hardwick (this case discusses sex) Lawrence v. Texas (this case discusses sex) Brown v. Board of Education US v. Thind	
7	Feb 26	Constructing Citizens WTP Ch. 4 Civil Liberties	
	Feb 28	Brief on prison overcrowding case (MyCR)	

8	Mar 5	WTP Ch. 5 Civil Rights	
	Mar 7	Focus on WTP p. 184-192 Read also Karen Brodtkin "How Jews Became White Folks" (MyCR)	
	March 11-15	Spring Break- No classes	
9	Mar 19	California Govt. & the Initiative Process Visit www.ca.gov and answer questions on the worksheet posted in MyCR Read: "The California Initiative Process: Background and Perspective" pgs. 1-20 only (MyCR)	CA Gov Worksheet
	Mar 21	CA Proposition 209 (MyCR) CA Proposition 8 (MyCR)	Break into presentation groups in class
10	Mar 26	Groups work on presentations in class (read your assigned chapter by this date)	
	Mar 28	More on Constructing Citizens WTP Ch. 6 p. 196-216 Public Opinion	
11	Apr 2	WTP Ch 7 p. 247-264 The Media	Media scavenger hunt due
	Apr 4	Political Participation WTP Ch. 8 p. 271-278 and 291-302 Voting and WTP Ch. 10 p. 347-355 and 372-375 Elections	Take home essay for mid-term and study guide passed out in class
12	Apr 9	C. Wright Mills "The Power Elite" (MyCR) Capitalism 101 in class	
	Apr 11	In class Mid-term	Take home essay due
13	Apr 16	WTP Ch. 11 Interest Groups (and Social Movements)	
	Apr 18	Htun and Weldon "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change" (myCR) <i>read the introduction and conclusion, skim the rest</i>	
14	Apr 23	Group Presentations	
	Apr 25	Group Presentations	
15	Apr 30	Group Presentations	Citizenship Project should be completed (paper due next week)
	May 2	Group Presentations	
Finals Week		Citizenship Project Panels	Citizenship Project paper due in class