Course Overview: This course is designed to acquaint you with the fundamentals of American and California government and politics. We will examine our government's constitutional foundation and American political institutions including the Presidency, Congress, the Judiciary, interest groups and the media. In addition, we will learn about the policymaking process and how structural, economic and social factors influence political practices. Overall, we will consider if and how these influences bear on the United States' ability to truly be a "representative democracy." In so doing, we will attend to how differences among people based on race, class and gender mediate their relationships to American political institutions and democratic values.

Learning Outcomes and Goals: I have several goals for this class. The first is to help you gain an understanding and appreciation of American democracy and its institutions; as such I hope this course enables you to be a wise and astute consumer (and maybe producer) of political information and ideas. In addition, it is my goal that through this course you will see that politics can be interesting, exciting and, perhaps most importantly, relevant. As such, I expect you to keep up with current events and be prepared to discuss these in class sections.

On Attendance in lectures: Although this is a large class, I incorporate ways for you to participate. Thus, while attendance will not be taken in the large class lectures, **it is highly recommended that you not miss classes.** Exams cover material that is NOT in the text and you will be responsible for knowing this information. I do not provide class notes; if you miss a lecture you should ask someone in the class for her/his notes. Please note: attendance WILL be taken in your discussion sections. See the "participation" section below for details.

On consideration of others and your professor: Given that laptops, when used for purposes other than note taking, create “zones of distraction,” they will not be allowed in this class. **If you have a particular problem related to this policy, please see me during my office hours to explain.** In addition, talking during lectures to your neighbors, ringing cell phones and/or other disruptive behavior will not be tolerated in this class. You will be asked to leave the room if you do not comply with these rules.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**
The following books are available at the **SDSU Bookstore:**

- Morone, James and Rogan Kersh. *By The People.* Referred to on the syllabus as M & K
Fiber-Ostrow, Pamela. California; referred to on syllabus as Fiber-Ostrow. Available via Coursesmart online.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams
There will be TWO mid-terms and a final exam given in class. The exams will cover lectures, films and the readings and consist of multiple choice and short answers/essays. Please note that anything discussed in lectures, as well as anything mentioned in the texts and/or audio-visual materials are fair game for the exams. Exams must be taken on the scheduled date. No make-up exams will be given without a valid letter documenting an illness or some other emergency.

Writing Assignment
You will be required to write ONE short 3 page paper (typed and double-spaced -- no handwritten papers will be accepted). For this paper, you must find an article from a newspaper that relates to the topics that will be discussed the day your assignment is due as per the syllabus (articles should have been published in the past year – if you would like an exception please clear it with me or your TA ahead of time). Please do not use editorials (opinion pieces). YOU MUST DISCUSS and CITE THE COURSE READINGS IN YOUR PAPER and use them to analyze the newspaper article. You should start the paper with a thesis about the particular topic and analyze how material from the article helps to clarify, explain, illuminate and/or exemplify readings from the class. In addition, be prepared to talk about these papers in your discussion sections. In order to write these papers you must be following politics in the news. I have broken up these assignments by last name. For example, on a certain day, those whose last names start with A-E will be responsible for writing the papers. Please include the name of your TA and the number of your discussion section on the front page of the paper and attach the article to the paper when you turn it in.

These papers are designed to help you see the relationship between course material and current political events, to review the readings and lectures and to help you develop writing skills. Each paper will be assessed on the following criteria: reference to, and evidence of, understanding of course material, your ability to draw on examples from current political events and writing skills. Poor grammar, bad spelling and incoherence will result in the lowering of your paper grades. You must properly cite any readings used for your paper; failure to do will result in a 10 point deduction. I accept any form of in-text citations for the purposes of this paper. No late papers will be accepted without a valid letter documenting an illness or some other emergency.

Please note: papers are due on the day listed on the syllabus to be handed in at the beginning of my lecture class.

Some news links:
www.latimes.com (Los Angeles Times)

Participation
Participation and preparedness are integral to making this class interesting, provocative and fun. In your discussion sections you will, from time to time, break into smaller groups to, for example,
simulate a Congressional committee or debate a court case. Since participation is so important to those sections attendance will be taken. After the first week of classes, you will be granted one unexcused absence. After that, 10 points will be deducted from your participation grade for each unexcused absence that follows. If you were absent and believe it should be excused, you MUST discuss it with your TA during the next time you attend discussion section. We will not retroactively grant excused absences at the end of the semester.

A NOTE ON YOUR PARTICIPATION GRADE: Your participation grade will be assigned by your TA and will be based on BOTH your attendance and your participation in the discussion sections. Perfect attendance, while necessary, will only earn 70 of 100 points for your participation grade. To get more points, you must interact during the discussion section, and do so in ways that show you have read the material and thought through the course work. If you speak regularly, but on issues unrelated to class, that does not count for participation in this class. Laptops cannot be used in discussion sections unless they are necessary for class-related projects.

GRADING
Midterm Exam #1 – 15%
Midterm Exam #2 – 25%
Final Exam – 30%
Paper – 15%
Attendance and Participation – 15%

Letter grade equations:
A = 93 or above
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
F = 62 or below

A NOTE ABOUT CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM
All sources of reference from which students take quotations, theories or concepts or papers must be properly cited. This includes anything that you have cut and pasted from the Internet. Plagiarism (or other forms of cheating) will not be tolerated. Such action will result in your failing the class and referral to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for possible suspension or expulsion. To be clear, if you use any outside sources for ideas, themes, text, analyses etc., you must cite them. In addition, using another student's work upon which to base yours is not allowed. Finally, if you are found to be cheating during an exam (e.g. by using notes or chatting with another student) you will fail the class. All cell phones must be turned off during exams. If you are seen using one, we
will assume you are cheating. For more on the University's policy on academic dishonest please see: http://csrr.sdsu.edu/. See also http://csrr.sdsu.edu/conduct1.html for "standards for student conduct."

BLACKBOARD
You will have 2 Blackboard sites for this class. The “combined sections” one is run by me and will host the syllabus, Powerpoint slides and other postings I chose to share throughout the semester. Each discussion section also has a BB site and is run by your TA. S/he will post your grades on that site as well as other postings s/he chooses to share. **When your TA has indicated that s/he has posted your grades for a paper or exam it is YOUR obligation to make sure your grade is recorded on BB. If you come to us at the end of the semester claiming to have turned in a paper or taken an exam and there is no grade, you are responsible. We will not retroactively grant you a grade.**

CLASS MEETINGS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM
8/27 Introduction to the Class and Syllabus Review
8/29 Class cancelled; read Chapter One in M&K
9/3 Ideas That Shape America: Chapter Two in M&K
9/5 The Constitution: Chapter Three in M&K
9/10 Federalism and Nationalism: Chapter Four in M&K

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT
9/12 Introduction to California Politics and the California Constitution; Chapters 1 & 2 in Fiber-Ostrow.
9/17 Local Government, Political Participation and Interest Groups: Chapters 3, 4, & 5 in Fiber-Ostrow.
9/19 The Legislative, Executive Branch and Judicial Branch: Chapters 6,7, & 8 in Fiber-Ostrow.

9/24 MIDTERM EXAM #1

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
9/26 Congress: Chapter Thirteen in M&K
10/1 Congress: Chapter Thirteen in M&K
10/3 Congress: Chapter Thirteen in M&K
** last names beginning with A-E must turn in papers on Congress related topic**

10/8 The Presidency: Chapter Fourteen in M&K
10/10 The Presidency: Chapter Fourteen in M&K
10/15 The Presidency; Bureaucracy: Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen in M&K
** last names beginning with F-J must turn in papers on Presidency or Bureaucracy related topic**

10/17 The Judiciary: Chapter Sixteen in M&K
10/22 *The Judiciary*: Chapter Sixteen in M&K
*** last names beginning with K-O must turn in papers on Judiciary related topic

10/24 *The Media* Chapter Nine in M&K

10/29 **MIDTERM #2**

10/31 VIDEO: TBA

**POWER TO THE PEOPLE?**

11/5 *Civil Liberties*: Chapter Five in M&K
11/7 *Civil Liberties*: Chapter Five in M&K
*** last names beginning with P-T must turn in papers on Civil Liberties related topic

11/12 *Civil Rights*: Chapter Six in M&K
11/14 *Civil Rights*: Chapter Six in M&K
*** last names beginning with U-Z must turn in papers on Civil Rights related topic

11/19 Class Cancelled

11/21 *Interest Groups*: Chapter Twelve in M&K

11/26 *Public Opinion and Political Socialization*: Chapter Eight in M&K

11/28 No class (Thanksgiving)

12/3 *Political Parties; Political Participation*: Chapters Eleven and Seven in M&K

12/5 *Campaigns and Elections*: Chapter Ten in M&K
12/10 *Campaigns and Elections*: Chapter Ten in M&K

**12/17 FINAL EXAM: 10:30-12:30**