Fall Semester, 2013

POLITICAL SCIENCE 102
CRN: 22467 GMCS 301
Monday 4PM-6:40PM
Introduction to American and California Politics

PROFESSOR: Dr. J.T. SMITH

Departmental Office is Located in Adams Humanities
EMAIL: jtsmith@mail.sdsu.edu
OFFICE HOURS: M 3:30-4, M 7-7:30 TTH 8am-9am by appointment
Note: Location of OH will be announced in class

Course Description
The principals of the U.S. Constitution, and a survey of political institutions and processes that developed under it, including the legislature, the executive, the courts, state and local government, federalism, and civil liberties.

Course Objectives: Students in this course will be provided opportunities to:
1. Develop an understanding of the political processes and institutions of U.S. and California government;
2. Develop an understanding of relationships between governmental institutions and Non-governmental actors such as political parties and interest groups as well as the effects of these relationships on political processes and outcomes.
3. Develop an understanding of constitutional rights, including landmark cases that address religious freedom and racial and gender equality as well as due process rights;
4. Develop strong writing, critical thinking, and oral communications skills.

REQUIREMENTS
There will be 4 exams. The first mid-term will be scheduled for approximately the 5th week of the semester and the second for the 8th week and so on. All exams take place during class time unless otherwise stated. Specific dates will be announced at least one week in advance. All examinations will follow the same format. That is, open book, open note, multiple choice and T/F. The first exam will account for 15% of your course grade. Each subsequent exam will account for 20%.

The remaining 25% of the course grade will be determined by performance in discussion section activities, including (but not limited to) discussions, quizzes, oral reports, various assignments, and general class participation. In addition to participation in classroom activities students will also turn in a Learning Portfolio at the end of the semester. This Learning Portfolio should be the equivalent of 10 typed pages of writing. It should include your personal reflections on the course material and your learning of the subject matter. You may include examples of work in this or any other class as long as it relates to the subject matter of this course. I will speak more about this assignment in class. The Learning Portfolio is worth 20% of the final course grade. The remaining 5% of your course grade will be determined by behavioral comportment including attendance. Attendance is calculated by calling names on a random basis. If the student is present they receive a 1. If not in attendance the student receives a 0. The final attendance score is a percentage of attendance during the classes in which the student’s name was randomly selected.

Grade Breakdown:
Exam I: 15%
Exam II 20%
Exam III 20%
Exam IV 20%
Student Learning Portfolio 20%
Participation/Attendance 5%
FORMAT AND STRUCTURE

This course can be thought of as having an integrated web-enhanced format. That is, several components such as exams, assignments, and materials will be available and completed online. In so far as the presentation of material goes, the structure of this course is fairly straight forward and will focus primarily on lecture. However, in each section time will be set aside for discussion and exchange. The amount of time dedicated to discussion and exchange will be determined by the pace and comprehension of the lectures. However there will be opportunity for student involvement and participation in the subject material. The discussion hour is the student’s opportunity to ask questions pertaining to the lectures, reading material, or topical issues related to American and state politics, governments, as well as current events. Free inquiry and debate is highly recommended, and students are exhorted to offer sincere and respectful opinions, questions, or observations. Comments across the spectrum and of a diverse origin posed intelligently and sincerely are always welcome. Remember, academic freedom requires academic credibility (the use of facts over opinion), integrity, responsibility, and respect.

REQUIRED READING

Bond, James R., and Kevin B. Smith, Promise and Performance of American Democracy 10th Edition. Available at the bookstore or several other venues. Students in the past have opted to purchase an earlier edition, rent, or purchase an electronic version. That is all fine. However, I want you to keep in mind that the exams are written from the current (10th) edition and exams are open book. I suggest that you have a physical copy of the 10th edition of this text.

SUGGESTED READING

An intellectually sound and high quality newspaper such as the New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Dallas Morning Sun, etc. I would prefer that you read the hard copy of the NYT where you can get a 50% college student discount. However, I do understand that a hard copy newspaper may not be the medium of choice for today’s student. If you are more comfortable getting a newspaper from an App or website, or, will simply not read a newspaper otherwise, then by all means get the app for that. However, I would really like for you to try reading the hardcopy of a good newspaper.

Students should be aware of current events, and understand how these events relate to themes and topics presented in American and California politics.

Course Website

This course has a website on Blackboard. Students will use this web based platform to access course materials and documents, post assignments, receive feedback from the professor, and take examinations. In addition, I will use Blackboard’s e-mail function to send announcements to the class. Make sure that the e-mail address you used to create your Blackboard account is still current.

Statement on Cheating and Plagiarism: “Cheating is the actual or attempted practice of fraudulent or deceptive acts for the purpose of improving one’s grade or obtaining course credit; such acts also include assisting another student to do so. Typically, such acts occur in relation to examinations. However, it is the intent of this definition that the term ‘cheating’ not be limited to examination situations only, but that it include any and all actions by a student that are intended to gain an uneearned academic advantage by fraudulent or deceptive means. Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which consists of the misuse of the published and/or unpublished works of others by misrepresenting the material (i.e., their intellectual property) so used as one’s own work. Penalties for cheating and plagiarism range from a 0 or F on a particular assignment, through an F for the course, to expulsion from the University. For more information
on the University’s policy regarding cheating and plagiarism, refer to the Schedule of Courses (‘Legal Notices on Cheating and Plagiarism’) or the University Catalog (‘Policies and Regulations’).”

**Americans with Disabilities Act (DA) Accommodation:** The University is committed to providing reasonable academic accommodation to students with disabilities. The Student Disability Services Office provides university academic support services and specialized assistance to students with disabilities. Individuals with physical, perceptual, or learning disabilities as addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act should contact Student Disability Services for information regarding accommodations. Please notify your instructor so that reasonable efforts can be made to accommodate you. If you expect accommodation through the Act, contact the Student Disability Services Office (http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/dss/dss_home.html) at (619) 594-6473.”

**Religious Observances:** “University Policy on Absence for Religious Observances includes the following statements: “By the end of the second week of classes, students should notify the instructors of affected courses of planned absences for religious observances. Instructors shall reasonably accommodate students who notify them in advance of planned absences for religious observances.” Please notify the instructor in a timely manner and a reasonable accommodation will be reached.

**Syllabus is Subject to Change:** This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were absent.

**PROFESSOR’S POLICIES:**

**Assignments:** All requirements and assignments must be fulfilled to pass the class.

**Late Papers and Assignments:** Papers and other assignments are due the beginning of class and in my hand or properly uploaded. Late papers and assignments are subject to grade reductions, with a 10% grade reduction per day with the first reduction occurring after the class is over.

**Grades Appeal Policy:** All grades are final, non-negotiable, and will not be changed unless in the event of a mathematical error. I put great effort into fair and equitable grading. Should a student feel they have a correct answer on an exam or assignment and that it was graded incorrectly then the student must make the case in writing. Please do not request more points on an exam, assignment, or final grade. Should a student be one or two points away from a higher grade and need additional points I would, to be fair, have to give every student in the course one or two additional points. Then, there would be an entire new set of students that are one or two points away from a higher grade. Please view the official grading system used at SDSU at: http://arweb.sdsu.edu/es/registrar/grading.html

**Assignments, Exam Times and Dates:** All exam times and dates, including the final, are to be taken as scheduled. Exams will be taken online. Blackboard does not allow a professor to override exam parameters for individual students. Please take this fact of life into consideration. In addition, as convenient and necessary as technologies are they do and will fail you from time to time. Please take technology considerations into account when you make the arrangements to take your exams. If your domicile lacks a credible internet connection then use a campus computer facility. Technology failures of any sort are not accepted as a reason to not complete an exam during the allotted exam time or to turn in an assignment on Blackboard.

**Use of Electronic Devices:** Throughout this semester there may be an occasion or two to use your smartphone, tablet, or laptop in class. However, unless I say otherwise the rule is that **I do not allow** the use of electronics including but not limited to MP3 players, cell phones, laptops, tablets and recording devices. I offer a course that is designed to be intellectually challenging, engaging, and one that should bolster your
analytical abilities. To accomplish this I need your focus and attention to be on me as well as your fellow scholars. I wholeheartedly appreciate your cooperation.

Electronic Communication Protocol:
Electronic correspondence is a part of your professional interactions. If you need to contact me, e-mail is often the easiest way to do so. Please put SDSU, PolS102, M 4-6:40 in the subject line. It is my intention to respond to all received e-mails within 24 business day hours. Please be reminded that e-mail and on-line discussions are a very specific form of communication, with their own nuances and etiquette. For instance, electronic messages sent in all upper case (or lower case) letters, major typos, or slang, often communicate more than the sender originally intended. With that said, please be mindful of all e-mail and on-line discussion messages you send to your peers, to faculty members, or to persons within the greater academic community. All electronic messages should be crafted with professionalism and care.

Things to consider:
- Would I say in person what this electronic message specifically says?
- How could this message be misconstrued?
- Does this message represent my highest self?
- Am I sending this electronic message to avoid a face-to-face conversation?

In addition, if there is ever a concern with an electronic message sent to you, please talk with the author in person in order to correct any confusion.
COURSE SCHEDULE
Political Science 102: Introduction to American and California Politics

Part I:
Introduction to the Course, The Constitutional Framework
Week 1 (August 26): Introduction: Introduction to the course/Requirements/etc…
Discussion: Why People Hate Politics/Government
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch.1

Week 2 (September 2)
NO CLASS
Week 3 (September 9):
Hand out Portfolio assignment and guidelines
Constitutionalism
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch.2

Week 4: (September 16)
Federalism
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch. 3
Civil Liberties/Civil Rights

Week 5 (September 23)
Civil Liberties/Civil Rights Cont.
Film: “The People vs. Larry Flint”
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch 4&5

Exam I TBA

Part II:
Connecting Citizens to Government
Week 6 (September 30)
Interest Groups/Political Parties
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch 6 &7

Week7 (October 7)
The Mass Media and Politics
Discussion
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch. 8

Exam II TBA

Week 8 (October 8):
Public Opinion and Political Socialization
Discussion (group activity on polling)
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch. 9 &10

Week 9 (October 21):
Elections
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch 11

Week 10 (October 28)
Voting Behavior and Political Participation
Exam III TBA
Part III: Official Decision Making

Week 11 (November 4)
Congress
Discussion
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch 12

Week 12 (November 11)
NO CLASS

Week 13 (November 18):
The Presidency
Discussion of the Election
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch13

Week 14 (November 25):
The Bureaucracy
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch. 14

Week 15 (December 2):
Film: “Gideon’s Trumpet”
Discussion

Week 16 (December 9):
The Federal Judiciary
Marbury v. Madison: A play by James T. Smith
Readings: Bond and Smith Ch. 15