



PS-120: CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT

Also listed as: PS-120H

Effective Term

Fall 2026

BOT Approval Date

12/11/2025

Discipline

PS - Political Science

Course Number

120

Course Title

California Government

Short Title

California Government

Credit Status (CB 04)

D - Credit - Degree applicable

Units

Lecture Units

3.00

Total Units

3.00

Hours

Lecture Contact Hours

48-54

Out of Class Hours Lecture

96-108

Total Contact Hours

48 - 54

Total Out of Class Hours

96 - 108

Total Student Learning Hours

144 - 162

Distance Education

Yes

Distance Education

Distance Education Type

Both Fully Online and Hybrid Online

Does the DE also apply to the Honors section?

No

**Fully Online Delivery Requirements:**

- a. Students must be notified via the college schedule of classes and the syllabus for the class if proctored tests are required for this course
- b. Any planned face-to-face meetings, such as an orientation or study session, must be optional
- c. The MSJC curriculum committee requires the use of accessible, asynchronous discussion as a component of every fully online course

Are you using publisher content?

No

Regular Substantive Interaction

Instructor-to-student, student-to-student, and student-to-content contact shall be distributed in a manner that will ensure regular substantive interaction (RSI) is maintained not only weekly but also for the duration of the course. Instructor interactions should be equivalent in time, quality and consistency to the engagement students would receive in a face-to-face course—for example, through announcements, discussion participation, personalized feedback, video messages, or other instructional communications. Instructors are expected to be responsive to student inquiries within a 24-72 hour time frame excluding holidays. RSI will be maintained through a variety of methods:

- Orientation - Students must be oriented to the online and face-to-face portions at the start of the course.
- Announcements - Announcements using the course management system must be posted at least weekly to keep students current on course events, due dates, materials, etc.
- Discussion Forums - Content-related discussion forums within the designated CMS will include appropriate instructor participation and will be initiated and maintained, with timely feedback provided. Instructors are required to monitor the discussions and related activities to provide guidance and direction. Open-ended discussion boards may be used to further learning and interaction.
- MSJC Communication – Instructor will use MSJC-administered communication tools (such as email or the designated CMS communication tools) to regularly communicate with and provide ease of access to students.
- Timely Feedback - Timely feedback on student work will be provided by the instructor, which may include comments and/or rubrics, within the Grades area of the designated CMS.
- Scheduled Meetings – Hybrid and synchronous courses will meet at regularly scheduled times.

ADA Compliance - All course interactions and content must be designed with accessibility in mind and meet ADA requirements.

Honors / Non-honors

PS-120H

C-ID (Admin Only)**CB 00**

CCC000518699

Course Title

Honors California Government

Approved Cal-GETC Area

AREA-4

Approved Second Cal-GETC Area**Approved Third Cal-GETC Area****Catalog Description**

This course is an introduction to the principles, theories, and practices of California politics and government. Special emphasis will be given to the impact of state and local government on the individual in public and private life, as well as the impact citizens may have on state and local governments through political activism, political parties, interest groups, campaigns, and elections.

Requisites**Prerequisite(s)****Prerequisite(s) (must be taken before)**

POLS-C1000 (with a grade of C or better).

**Recommended Preparation****Recommended Preparation (note that students can enroll in the class even if they haven't take the recommended course)**

HIST-120 and ENGL-C1000.

Codes**TOP Code (CB 03)**

2207.00 - Political Science

CIP Code

45.1001 - Political Science and Government, General.

Repeatability Code

No

Grading Option

Letter grade OR P/NP

Minimum Qualifications

Minimum Qualifications	And/Or
Political Science (Masters Required)	End

GE Information**Check GE Types Requested**

AA/AS B2 - Social & Behavioral Sciences

Cal-GETC Areas**Approved Cal-GETC Area**

AREA-4

Learning Objectives**Learning Objectives**

Learning Objective
1. Analyze the historical and philosophical foundations of the California Constitution
2. Analyze and evaluate the theory and practice of California's politics and government.
3. Evaluate the major institutions of California's government.
4. Analyze the role of direct democracy in California politics and evaluate its impact on state governance and civic life.
5. Analyze the behavior of political institutions, organizations, and key actors within California politics.
6. Evaluate the relationship and interaction between federal, state, and local governments, and assess the impact of these dynamics on political decision-making and governance.
7. Analyze the advantages and disadvantages of federalism as a system of government.
8. Evaluate the impact of federalism on contemporary political issues and events.
9. Analyze the decision-making process at the state and local levels of government.
10. Analyze the budgetary process in California, with a focus on the political dynamics of taxation and public spending.
11. Evaluate the history of issues related to diversity, social and economic inequities, and political power in California.
12. Analyze the current social, political, artistic, and/or economic lives of historically marginalized people in California.
13. Examine their own personal beliefs, attitudes, and biases about historically marginalized people and cultures in California.

Honors Objectives

1. Develop critical thinking and analysis of California's state and local government, political institutions, and elections through in-depth case studies.

2. Analyze Californians' political behavior and attitudes through their diverse ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation, and other personal/political identities.
3. Develop independent learning and research skills on California's state and local political processes, behavior, and institutions in an effort to formulate sound theoretical arguments and identify alternative explanations.
4. Critically use the internet to identify academic and/or reputable sources to conduct research and develop well-informed theoretical arguments.
5. Develop research presentation skills on topics related to California's state and local political processes, attitudes, behaviors, and institutions in order to articulate well-informed arguments and counterarguments.

Learning Outcome Information

Course Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcome

1. Students will evaluate the historical and philosophical development of the California Constitution and its influence on current legal and political frameworks within the state.
2. Students will analyze the structure and function of California's major political institutions and examine how political actors and organizations shape policy and governance.
3. Students will evaluate the role of direct democracy in California, including initiatives, referenda, and recalls, and assess its impact on legislation, public policy, and citizen engagement.
4. Students will analyze the interactions between federal, state, and local governments through a comparative lens to assess how federalism influences political decision-making and policy implementation.
5. Students will evaluate the decision-making and budgetary processes in California's state and local governments, including how taxation, public spending, and political priorities affect governance and public service delivery.
6. Students will analyze how diverse racial, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual orientation groups participate in and influence California's political process.

Content

Course Lecture Content

1. Introduction to California's People, Economy, and Politics: Past, Present, and Future
 - a. California's road to statehood
 - b. The California constitution
 - c. Changes in California political demography (e.g., race, ethnic, and gender identities)
 - d. Shifts in political culture and geography (e.g., physical and cultural landscape)
 - e. Transformation of political economy (e.g., socioeconomic opportunities and structures and class identities)
2. Direct Democracy
 - a. The Progressive Movement
 - b. Direct democracy in California:
 - i. Initiative
 - ii. Recall
 - iii. Referendum
 - c. The politics of ballot propositions
 - d. California's hybrid democracy
3. Political Parties, Candidates, Campaigns, and the Media
 - a. Political party organization in California
 - b. Power of political parties in California
 - c. The role of money in campaigns
 - d. The role and influence of the media in campaigns and elections
4. Political Behavior and Engagement in California
 - a. Voters and candidates demographic characteristics (race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status)
 - b. Hyper-diversity in a modern state: who politically participates?
 - i. Direct (protest, attending meetings, and joining civic groups)
 - ii. System-focused (voting, running for office, etc.) actions
 - iii. California race, ethnic, gender, and class groups political participation
5. Political Attitudes and Public Opinion in California

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- a. Defining Public Opinion
 - b. What Does the California Public Think?
 - i. Issues (social, economic, and political issues)
 - ii. A monolithic or diverse California public?
 - c. Sources of California Public Opinion
 - i. Agents of political socialization: family, education, media, peers, etc.
 - ii. Intersectional Demographic Factors: Race, Gender, Class, and Sexual Orientation Identities
 - d. How is Public Opinion Measured
 - e. Impacts of Public Opinion in California Politics and Policies
 6. Interest Groups
 - a. Evolution of interest groups in California
 - b. Types of interest groups
 - c. Interest group techniques
 - d. Role of interest groups in politics and the initiative process
 - e. Interest group influence
 - f. Regulation of interest groups
 7. The California Legislature
 - a. Structure
 - b. Members and membership characteristics
 - c. Reapportionment and redistricting
 - d. Term limits
 - e. The legislative process
 8. The California Court System
 - a. Structure
 - b. Judicial election, selection, and appointment
 - c. Judicial process
 - d. Impact on politics
 9. The Executive Branch
 - a. Structure
 - b. Powers
 - c. The plural executive
 10. Taxing and Spending
 - a. The budgetary process
 - b. Revenue sources
 - c. Spending
 11. Local Government
 - a. Counties and cities
 - b. Special districts
 - c. Direct democracy at the local level
 - d. Taxing and spending
 - e. Limits on local power
 12. State-Federal Relations
 - a. Federalism: Federal, state, and concurrent powers
 - b. California's relationship with Congress and the President
 - c. Key state/federal issues:
 - i. Terrorism
 - ii. Immigration
 - iii. Climate change
 - iv. Water and shared resources
 - d. Balance of power between state and federal governments

Honors Content

1. The topics covered in Political Science 120H are the same as those covered in Political Science 120.
2. The honors component of Political Science 120 will encourage students to work above the survey level to explore California state and local government and political institutions, processes, behaviors, and attitudes with greater depth and complexity.

3. Students will engage in research that involves gathering data from academic and other reputable primary or secondary sources to develop well-informed theoretical arguments about California's political institutions and the diverse political attitudes and behaviors of its residents.
4. Students will engage in discussions with the instructor and other honors students about the discipline of political science through their robust research agenda and projects.
5. Honors students will analyze current research and historical trends in California's political institutions, such as (but not limited to): a) electoral processes and norms, b) the structure of government, and c) descriptive and substantive representation in the branches and levels of California government.
6. Honors students will examine and analyze current research and historical trends on the political behaviors and attitudes of Californians, focusing on (but not limited to): a) participation in system-focused and direct political activities, and b) explanations of Californians' diverse public opinions on salient sociopolitical issues.

Methods of Instruction

Method

Film/video Viewing and Discussion

Integration

Multi-media sources will be embedded in the course and its online course management system, such as accessible films, computer-assisted instruction, and podcasts (digital audio). These accessible multi-media sources reinforce understanding of concepts and issues relevant to California (CA) government, such as diverse voices in CA political and cultural landscape and patterns of civic participation in California.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Accessible films, podcasts (digital audio), and online videos may be uploaded to the course management system (CMS) for instructional use and discussed in the CMS discussion forum.

Method

Lecture

Integration

An accessible lecture, supported by visual aids such as presentation slides and incorporating the Socratic Method, will address the main theories, practices, and issues relevant to California politics. This approach facilitates student understanding of California's political institutions, the political implication of California's increasingly diverse demographic profile, and patterns of direct and system-focused political participation.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Accessible presentation slides, recorded lectures, and chapter summaries may be posted in the course management system (CMS). In addition, accessible video lectures and digital audio (podcasts) may also be uploaded to the CMS.

Method

Online Activity/Discussion

Integration

Class discussion, facilitated by the instructor, improves student understanding and analysis of theories, concepts, practices and issues relevant to California government and politics, such as the implications of California's increasingly diverse demographic profile on the state's political culture, political attitudes, and patterns of civic participation via system-focused or direct political activities. The internet will be used in and outside class to keep students informed on these topics. The instructor will facilitate discussion groups and forum via an accessible online Course Management System (CMS). The weekly discussion forum will be used to develop and share student opinion and knowledge on California government and politics.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Discussion forums will be posted weekly on the discussion board using an accessible online course management system (CMS). The instructor will review students' discussion board posts and give weekly feedback to students' discussion posts in the online CMS. All instructional materials and interactions must be accessible.

Method

Papers and Reports

Integration

Writing assignments foster student evaluation of concepts, practices and issues relevant to CA politics and policies, such as comparative analyses of diverse race and ethnic groups levels and modes of political participation in California. Research papers will also require students to examine a policy issue that disproportionately affects marginalized communities in California, such as homelessness, de facto racial and ethnic segregation in K–12 schools, inequities in public school funding, or barriers to accessing higher education.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Writing assignments may be completed outside an in-person classroom space using accessible online search engines and other online resources. These papers may be submitted via the online course management system.

Method

Reading

Integration

Required and supplemental readings will be assigned to foster student awareness of concepts, practices and issues relevant to CA politics, such as the ramifications of the progressive movements in contemporary California political institutions and processes and the politics of policies that impact Californians (i.e., homelessness, de facto racial and ethnic segregation in K–12 schools, inequities in public school funding, or barriers to accessing higher education).

DE Adaptations for MOI

Assigned and supplemental readings will be uploaded to the course management system.

Method

Visiting Lecturers

Integration

Guest speakers may be invited to discuss key topics in California government and politics, including the role of direct democracy, the political dynamics of current and historical ballot initiatives, and the formation of local governments in relation to the racial and ethnic composition of California communities.

DE Adaptations for MOI

Accessible video, live chat, or blogs of guest speakers may be used to discuss various topics relevant to CA politics and government through the online course management system (CMS). All instructional materials and interactions during a guest lecturer visit must be accessible.

Additional Methods of Instruction for Honors

1. Honors students are required to meet with the instructor a minimum of three times over the course of the semester. These meetings may be group, individual, or a combination of the two. Meetings may be used to discuss the course material in more depth, additional readings recommended by the instructor to Honors Students, or the Honors Project. In these meetings, honors students may be required to present and discuss aspects of the course readings to the other honors students via a Socratic dialogue/debate. These conversations will provide students an opportunity to improve their oral communication skills, their ability to synthesize and critically analyze information, and ask higher-level probing questions. Adapted for distance learning: students will meet virtually through video conferencing platforms for one-on-one meetings between the Instructor and individual Honors students and/or meetings between the Instructor and all Honors students enrolled in that Honors section.

2. Honors students will provide additional online discussions of course topics via the district's course management system. These additional contributions will require honors students to draw on real-world examples, rather than personal anecdotes, in their responses to the weekly online discussion threads. These real-world examples (e.g., historical or current events) must come from reputable and credible sources beyond the assigned course materials.

3. Oral Presentations may be used to provide students an opportunity to present their research to other students. These presentations will provide students an opportunity to improve their oral communication skills, their ability to synthesize and critically analyze information, and ask higher-level probing questions.
Adapted for distance learning: students will meet virtually through video conferencing platforms to give presentations before the Instructor and/or to the Instructor and other students.

Methods of Evaluation

Method

Class Participation

Integration

In-class and online participation is required to ensure students' progress in mastering course content. The instructor will evaluate not only the quantity of participation but also its quality, including the relevance of contributions to the course material. Examples of meaningful participation include verbal and/or written engagement with the content, such as discussing how changes in California's increasingly diverse demographic profile impact the state's political culture, political attitudes, and patterns of civic participation.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Students will participate in the course discussion forum and interact with their peers through the online course management system to support their progress in mastering course content. Participation will be assessed through the discussion board and other tracking tools within the course management system. Students are required to contribute a minimum of two times per discussion forum.

Method

Exams/Tests

Integration

Exams and quizzes are designed to assess students' ability to recall, analyze, and apply key concepts (e.g., California political institutions, race and ethnic politics in California), as well as practices and issues relevant to the study of California government and politics (e.g., income inequality, homelessness, and de facto housing and school racial segregation). Exams may include multiple-choice, short-answer, essay questions, or a combination of these formats.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Quizzes and exams, designed to assess students' ability to recall, analyze, and apply key concepts in California politics, may be administered via the online course management system (CMS). Students will access these assessments through the CMS and submit them electronically upon completion, where they will be evaluated by the instructor.

Method

Oral Presentation

Integration

Oral reports/presentations are designed to demonstrate/assess student understanding of key concepts, practices and issues relevant to CA politics, such as the unique ways makes and enforces policies through direct democracy and its plural executive system. Students will demonstrate their knowledge of these concepts through oral presentations

DE Adaptations for MOE

For oral presentations, students may demonstrate their understanding of key concepts through either in-person or online presentations.

For online presentations, students may use a video conferencing program to deliver their presentation live or submit a pre-recorded version within the assigned timeframe.

The instructor will provide detailed instructions for completing and submitting presentations through the course management system (CMS) prior to the due date.

All presentations—whether live or pre-recorded—will be assessed using a rubric provided in the CMS.

All oral presentations will be relevant to California politics and government.

Method**Papers****Integration**

Written work other than research papers may be used to assess student understanding of course material presented in lecture and/or readings. These papers foster student evaluation of concepts, practices, and issues relevant to CA politics, such as comparative analyses of diverse race and ethnic groups level and mode of political participation in California.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Writing assignments may be completed outside an in-person classroom space using accessible online search engines and other online resources. These papers may be submitted via the online course management system. The instructor will provide detailed instructions for completing and submitting papers through the course management system (CMS) prior to the due date. All papers will be assessed using a rubric provided in the CMS, and they must be relevant to California politics and government.

Method**Research Projects****Integration**

Written research papers are designed to demonstrate students' understanding of course content by engaging them in research on concepts, practices, and issues relevant to California politics.

For example, research projects may require students to examine a policy issue that disproportionately affects marginalized communities in California, such as homelessness, de facto racial and ethnic segregation in K–12 schools, inequities in public school funding, or barriers to accessing higher education.

To complete this project, students should draw on library resources, scholarly works, and credible Internet sources. The assignment is intended to help students strengthen their critical thinking, reading, writing, and research skills.

DE Adaptations for MOE

Students will access the research project guidelines and prompt through the online course management system (CMS). A significant portion of their research should be conducted online, using accessible research resources and tools.

Students will first submit a draft of their research project to both their peers and the instructor via the CMS for feedback. They will then provide peer feedback through the CMS, which will be graded by the instructor.

After completing the peer-review process, students will submit a final version of their research project to the instructor through the CMS. The instructor will assess the final submission using a rubric provided in the CMS.

Evaluation of Honors assignments

1. Honors students will be evaluated first according to the requirements of the course. The honors assignment must be completed to receive honors credit for the course. The grading of the Honors Course Assignments should be based on the coverage of aspects of the topic agreed to by the student and instructor. For instance

2. Research papers will be evaluated on the following criteria:

a. Stated thesis and research question: Provision of a original and arguably thesis that answers a clearly stated research question related to significant issues in California government and politics (i.e., public policy, representation, race, ethnic, class, and gender diversity in governance, or federal-state relations).

b. Use of reputable and credible sources: Incorporating and citing a robust range of scholarly, governmental, and primary sources (e.g., state reports, legislative data, court cases, and academic articles). Integrating evidence thoughtfully to support claims.

c. Analysis and application: Demonstrates deep analytical engagement with California political institutions, actors, or policy processes by connecting empirical findings to theoretical or conceptual frameworks in political science.

d. Relevance of research: Provision of a broader impact section that connects the argument(s) of the research paper to contemporary or historical California policy issues. Here, students will identify the implications of their research for governance, policy, equity, or democracy in California.

e. Organization and structure: Finally, the research paper will be assessed based on whether it follows a logical, well-organized structure (i.e., introduction, literature review, data/empirical evidence, analysis, and conclusion). Transitions must be clear and effective.

3. Oral presentations will be evaluated on the following criteria:

a. Content and argument: Presents a clear, well-developed thesis and demonstrates strong understanding of the issues relevant in California politics.

b. Research and evidence: Draws on diverse and credible source with the effective use of evidence to support claims. Integrates findings smoothly into the presentation.

c. Analysis and insight: Demonstrates strong analytical thinking by connecting broader political theories and policy debates to original arguments and findings.

d. Visual Aids and Presentation Material: Uses slides or visual aids effectively and provides clear and well-designed slides and visuals to enhance understanding.

e. Delivery and Communication: Speaks clearly, confidently, and with appropriate pacing and tone; maintains strong audience engagement. Minimal reliance on notes.

4. Service learning reflection papers will be evaluated based on the thoughtful reflection on the service learning experience, the effective incorporation of academic sources material into the reflection, and the integration of course themes. Papers will be assessed for proper use of grammar, spelling, and logical flow and structure.

5. Local legislative visit response paper will be based on the quality of the analysis of your visit and experience at the local legislative session, incorporation of class themes, and effective use of proper spelling, syntax, and grammar.

Assignments

Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

In-class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Prompt: Compare the major political institutions of the California and United States governments. What are the key similarities and differences among each institution? In your analysis, consider how these structural differences may shape the political process, particularly regarding racial, ethnic, gender, and class representation in decision-making. Finally, explain how these institutional variations influence politics and policy outcomes for different race-gendered groups and/or ethnic communities in both California and the United States.

Instructions

Length: 4-5 pages

Format: Double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins on all sides

Citations: Include proper in-text citations and a reference page (APA, MLA, or Chicago style—be consistent)

Submission: Upload your paper to the course management system (CMS) by the deadline provided, and submit a hard copy in class for students enrolled in the hybrid course.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

For fully online courses, the instructor will provide the paper prompt and instructions through the course management system (CMS). Students will submit their papers via the CMS, where the instructor will grade the assignment using a rubric and provide feedback online.

For hybrid courses, the instructor will provide the paper prompt and instructions both through the CMS and in class. Students enrolled in a hybrid course will submit their paper electronically via the CMS and also provide a hard copy in class. The instructor will grade the paper using a rubric and provide feedback online. In hybrid courses, the instructor may return the graded hard copy with feedback during class.



Assignment Type

Writing

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Outline and Peer- Review Assignment

Prompt: Compare the major political institutions of the California and United States governments. What are the key similarities and differences among each institution? In your analysis, consider how these structural differences may shape the political process, particularly regarding racial, ethnic, gender, and class representation in decision-making. Finally, explain how these institutional variations influence politics and policy outcomes for different race-gendered groups and/or ethnic communities in both California and the United States. Topic may be discussed in class or online.

Instructions:

Length: A 2-page outline

Format: Single-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins on all sides

Citations: Include proper in-text citations and a reference page (APA, MLA, or Chicago style—be consistent)

Submission: Upload your paper to the course management system (CMS) by the deadline provided, and bring your outline to class for the peer-review exercise if you are enrolled in the hybrid course

Evaluation: Participate in a peer-review exercise in your groups by reading each group member's outline and provide meaningful feedback. Evaluate each paper using the standardized rubric provided. Your peer feedback will contribute to your overall grade.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

The instructor may provide students with the assignment prompt and instructions either in class or through the online course management system (CMS).

Students may submit a draft of their outline via the CMS. They may also be assigned to groups within the CMS, where the instructor will share each student's outline with their respective group members.

Students can access their group members' outlines on the group page in the CMS or share their outline via email. Using the provided assignment rubric, students will give feedback to their peers.

The instructor will assign credit to students who submit their outline and provide meaningful feedback to their group members.

Assignment Type

Other

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Summative

Assignment

Other: Local Legislative Visit Reflection

Prompt: Evaluate, summarize, and reflect on your visit to a local legislative body general meeting (i.e., city council, county board of supervisor, school board etc.) in the state of California.

Instructions:

- 1) In-Class Presentation: Present your reflections in class through an open-ended discussion. During the discussion, ask your classmates questions about their experiences at their respective local legislative visits.
- 2) Reflection Paper: Length: 3–4 pages; Format: Double-spaced, 12-point Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins all around. The reflection paper should summarize your visit, evaluate what you observed, and provide thoughtful analysis of the legislative process and your personal insights.
- 3) Grading: Students' presentations, discussion participation, and reflection papers will be assessed using a standardized rubric provided by the instructor.
- 4) Submit your reflection paper through the online course management system (CMS).
- 5) If enrolled in the fully online course, share your experiences from your local legislative visit via the online CMS discussion forum and respond to your classmates' posts in the same forum.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

Students may choose to attend their local legislative body virtually, although in-person attendance is encouraged.

All students, whether enrolled in in-person or online courses, will submit their reflection paper through the online course management system (CMS).

Students in the online course will share their experiences from their local legislative visit via the online CMS discussion forum and respond to their classmates' posts in the same forum.

The instructor will provide feedback and assign grades for reflection papers, discussion posts, and responses using the CMS.

Assignment Type

Reading

In-class and/or outside of class

Outside of class

Formative or Summative

Formative

Assignment

Group discussion question post and responses on the reading(s) below:

Group 1: Citrin, Jack, and Benjamin Highton. 2002. How Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Shape the California Electorate. San Francisco: Public Policy Institute of California.

Group 2: DiCamillo, Mark J. 2014. The Growing Political Might of Ethnic Voters in California and Its Impact. California Journal of Politics and Policy 6(3).

Instructions:

1. Formulate ONE discussion question about the readings assigned in each week with your group members. Please note the reading or podcast assigned to your group.
2. Each week, your group must select a quote from the assigned text or podcast episode and then formulate a discussion question related to the quote from your group's assigned text or podcast.

The following steps will guide you:

- a. Formulate a question relevant to the quote you selected in your group
- b. The discussion question should be thought-provoking and a higher-level question.
- c. Do not ask the "what" questions. Ask "why," "how," or "explain" questions.

How assignment will be adapted in online format

1. A representative from each group will post discussion questions in the online course management system (CMS).
2. You then have a week to respond. You are required to INDIVIDUALLY respond to each group's questions in the online CMS.
3. The instructor will assess each groups' discussion question and their responses using a rubric in the online CMS.

Honors Assignments

Assignment

Honors students are expected to complete all of the regularly assigned work for PS 120, and in addition must complete one of A-B and one of C or D. These assignments will be determined in collaboration between student and instructor.

With A-B being one of the following two options and C or D being the smaller assignments listed below:

Assignment

A. Write a paper analyzing the major institutions of CA government and/or the organizations/events that impact and influence those institutions. An example honors research topic includes, but is not limited to:

* Compare and contrast the legislative process in CA with the process of CA's direct democracy.

- a. What roles do interest groups and political parties play in shaping each process?
- b. What impact does this have on policy making in CA?
- c. In the broader impact section of this paper, identify the policy implications of both policymaking processes in California and how it impacts diverse race, ethnic, gender, class, sexual, and (dis)abled communities in California.
- d. Focus on one, well-researched policy area in your analysis (i.e., education, housing and homelessness, healthcare access (i.e., reproductive rights and sexual health), taxation and spending, etc.).

The written option must meet the following criteria: 1. Minimum of 12 typed pages. 2. Minimum of 8 reference sources. Must be cited using acceptable methods of citation. 3. A bibliography must be included. Only sources used in the paper should be listed in the bibliography. Internet and library-based sources can be used. The course text should not be counted as a source. Papers should be 12-15 pages, typed, and double spaced.

Adapted for distance learning: students will access and conduct current research through MSJC online library collections or a university that allows access to library holdings. They will also explore government websites to gather data and evidence for their research. Students will submit their research paper through the Assignment Pages within the course management system (CMS). Feedback will be given as instructor comments and/or through the use of rubrics within the CMS.

Required or Optional

Required

Honors Core Values

Academic Rigor and Research

Justify how the assignment reflects the Academic Rigor and Research Core Value

The paper should incorporate academic research and advance the academic conversation in an effective manner. Honors students will be finding and using appropriate academic sources and integrating them into a coherent argument.

Assignment**B. Service Learning Project:**

1. The student will engage in a service learning project. The student and instructor will identify a local problem or issue (i.e., housing insecurity, inadequate access to sexual or reproductive health, youth hunger and/or obesity, low reading or math aptitude among the youth).
2. Then, the student and instructor will identify a local non-profit or government organization where the student can volunteer to assist in the delivery of public services and goods to Californians, especially those at the intersection of multiple, marginalized identities. For example, students may volunteer at food banks, homeless service providers, housing authority, after school programs, and/or public health clinic).
3. The student will be expected to volunteer a minimum of 10 hours with this organization over the course of the semester. The student will be expected to keep track of their volunteer hours, which will be signed by an employee of the institution where they volunteer.
4. Finally, the student will prepare a 4-7 page reflection on the experience incorporating a minimum of three academic sources beyond those assigned in the course. The student will also be encouraged to share any reflection or findings with the organization. In this reflection, students must analyze the role public policy and politics in California plays in addressing (or exacerbating) the problem identified in their local community.

Adapted for distance learning: Students will complete their volunteering in a distance format that is approved by the organization and meets the needs of the organization, and preferably through methods that the organization already facilitates. Feedback will be given as instructor comments and/or through the use of rubrics within the Course Management System (CMS).

Required or Optional

Required

Honors Core Values

Engagement

Justify how the assignment reflects the Engagement Core Value

As part of this project, the student will be involved in the community. They will also observe how the public interact with the chosen organization and how public policy and California politics impacts the organizations' (in)ability to provide these services. The student will also be expected to engage with an awareness and understanding of the role of the organization in the policymaking and implementation process.

Assignment**C. An oral presentation of the research paper or service learning project.**

Students will complete a 10-12 minute oral presentation using the material and conclusion generated through the research constructed through option A and B. The presentation will be done either to the class as a whole or in another venue (such as the college wide research symposium, or to the organization where the student performed the Service Learning volunteering).

Adapted for distance learning, students will meet virtually through video conferencing platforms to give presentations before the Instructor and/or to the Instructor and other students. Feedback will be given as instructor comments and/or through the use of rubrics within the course management system (CMS).

Required or Optional

Optional

Honors Core Values

Engagement

Justify how the assignment reflects the Engagement Core Value

Through the presentation of their research or service learning project, students will be able to interact in an academic and professional manner with others while helping to gain skills that will help them as they continue on their educational and future career path.

Assignment

D. Students will participate in a Socratic-style dialogue that explores some of the major and contentious debates in the existing literature on California politics and government—particularly those related (but not limited) to their research projects. The dialogue may take place with the class as a whole or in smaller groups among honors students.

For distance learning, the dialogue will be conducted virtually through a video conferencing platform, where students will present their arguments and reflections before the instructor and/or their peers. Feedback will be provided through instructor comments and/or rubrics available in the course management system (CMS).

Required or Optional

Optional

Honors Core Values

Positive Transgressive Behavior (as evidenced by creativity, innovation, risk taking, challenging norms and standard narratives)

Justify how the assignment reflects the Positive Transgressive Behavior Core Value

The goal of this Socratic dialogue is to encourage students to critically engage with existing knowledge presented in the course literature or in topics related to their research projects. Students will do so by asking well-informed questions and proposing alternative explanations for a given political or policy phenomenon. The purpose of the dialogue is not to “win” an argument, but rather to foster critical thinking about politics and public policy in California. In this way, the exercise embodies a form of positive transgressive behavior—challenging assumptions and expanding the boundaries of understanding.

Course Materials**Textbooks**

Field, M. (2021). California Government and Politics Today: 15th Edition Pearson. ISBN: 9780137518654
Van Vechten, Renee B. (2023). California Politics: A Primer, 7th edition Sage. ISBN: 9781071875445

No newer text available.

Other Resources

Accessible and Educational Digital Audio Podcasts:

- 1) Political Breakdown
- 2) California Underground Podcast
- 3) Capitol Weekly Podcast

Open Educational Resources

Libre Texts California Politics Text: Introduction to California Government and Politics (Reti) - Social Sci LibreTexts

Accessible and Educational Digital Audio Podcasts:

- 1) Political Breakdown
- 2) California Underground Podcast
- 3) Capitol Weekly Podcast

Class Size Information**Class Size**

40

Class Size Category

A - Lecture/discussion 40

Diversity and Inclusion

Course Design and Materials: Course will incorporate diverse perspectives, authors, and examples that reflect a variety of cultures, identities, and lived experiences. Instructional materials will be reviewed regularly to ensure representation, inclusivity, and alignment with equity-minded practices across disciplines.

Inclusive Learning Environment: Instructors will establish classroom norms and policies that promote respect, civil discourse, and belonging in both online and face-to-face classes. Clear expectations for communication and engagement will support a learning space where all students feel valued and heard.

Accessible Instruction: Course content will be delivered using accessible design. Materials will follow accessibility guidelines within the CMS, including captioned media, readable document formats, and multiple means of engagement to support diverse learning.

Equitable Teaching Practices: Instructors will use transparent and grading criteria, varied assessment methods, and timely feedback to promote fairness and student success. Opportunities for revision, reflection, and multiple demonstrations of learning may be incorporated when appropriate to the discipline.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogies: Instructional strategies will encourage critical thinking about diverse perspectives and systems of power relevant to the course content. Faculty will foster opportunities for students to connect course material to real-world contexts.

Ongoing Reflection and Improvement: Faculty will engage in continuous professional development related to IDEAA principles and reflect on course practices using metacognition to identify opportunities for increased equity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Explain how diversity and inclusion(e.g., gender, culture/race, sexuality, etc.) is infused into the course.

Diversity and inclusion are integral to the study of California government and politics. This course examines how race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, immigration status, and cultural background shape political representation, policy outcomes, and civic engagement in the state. Through case studies, historical analysis, and contemporary issues, students explore how marginalized communities have influenced California's political development and how structures of power affect access and participation

Describe how assignments, instruction, evaluation, course content, and interactions are contextualized for diverse learners promoting an equitable course.

This course is designed with a commitment to equity and inclusivity, ensuring that students from all backgrounds feel seen, supported, and empowered to succeed. Assignments are varied and allow students to engage through multiple formats—written reflections, discussions, presentations, and creative projects—providing options that accommodate diverse learning styles and lived experiences. Instruction includes culturally responsive teaching strategies, incorporating examples and case studies that highlight the political experiences of historically marginalized groups in California, including Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Asian American, immigrant, LGBTQ+, and low-income communities. Evaluation criteria are transparent and based on clearly defined rubrics to ensure fair and consistent assessment, with opportunities for feedback and revision. Course content critically examines how identity, systemic inequality, and power shape California politics, while classroom interactions prioritize respectful dialogue, collaborative learning, and inclusive participation.

Interactions

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-student interaction.

In in-person classes, students will regularly engage in structured discussions, small group activities, and collaborative simulations, such as mock legislative sessions or campaign strategy teams, to promote critical thinking and peer learning. These interactive elements allow students to apply course concepts in real-world contexts while developing communication and teamwork skills. In online and hybrid formats, student interaction will be facilitated through weekly discussion boards, peer responses, and group assignments.

Explain how the course will incorporate instructor-to-student interaction.

Instructor-to-student interaction will occur through lectures, guided discussions, timely feedback on assignments, and individual or group consultations. The instructor will facilitate student understanding by clarifying theoretical concepts, posing critical questions, moderating debates, and connecting course content and theory to current events. Interaction will also include regular check-ins, both in-person and/or online, to support student progress, provide academic guidance, and promote critical engagement with course materials. Feedback on written work and participation will be detailed and constructive, encouraging deeper analysis and improvement. The instructor will foster an inclusive, respectful environment where students feel supported in expressing and developing their political thinking.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-content interaction.

This course is designed to engage students actively with the content through a variety of learning strategies that promote critical thinking, analysis, and application. Students will interact with core course materials—including the California Constitution, legislative documents, scholarly readings, multimedia resources, and case studies—through guided reading questions, written reflections, analytical essays, and problem-based learning activities. In both in-person and online formats, students will be challenged to apply what they learn to real-world scenarios, such as evaluating ballot propositions, analyzing current legislation, or simulating political decision-making processes. Content is scaffolded to build on foundational knowledge while encouraging deeper exploration of

complex political issues in California. Regular formative assessments, such as quizzes, discussion prompts, and mastery exercises, help reinforce key concepts and provide opportunities for self-assessment. By engaging with content across multiple formats and contexts, students are empowered to make meaningful connections between course materials and the political environment around them.

Explain how the course will incorporate student-to-self interaction (metacognitive).

This course encourages students to reflect on their own political beliefs, values, and attitudes. Through reflective writing assignments, personal response prompts, and class discussions, students will be asked to examine how their identities, experiences, and prior assumptions influence their understanding of California government and politics.

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