"Nobody believes a rumor here in Washington until it's officially denied"
-Edward Cheyfitz

"Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys"
-George Jean Nathan

"George Washington is the only president who didn't blame the previous administration for his troubles"
-Author Unknown

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course is an introduction to American politics at the national level. As such, background in the subject is not necessary. The primary goal of this class is to enable you to evaluate the U.S. political system by examining its evolution, the participants, the major institutions, and some important public policy outcomes. You will learn to carefully define political terms, think clearly about what you are saying, set out your thinking in building blocks and argue with data. As a result, you will expand your understanding of the world of American national politics as well as sharpen your ability to argue with empirical evidence and facts and NOT just with your emotions and/or opinions. This is obviously a class about American politics but, more than that, it is class that centers on learning to use facts, reason, and logic to analyze American national politics.

Primary Course Learning Objectives:
• Students will recognize political science as a "science" that systematically studies observable behavior and actions within the political arena
• Students will define basic political science terms, concepts and theories
• Students will describe, evaluate and assess what politics is and how “the game” of politics is played at the national level
• Students will describe, evaluate and assess how the US government “really” functions
• Students will describe, evaluate and assess how well/effectively the US government manages conflict
• Students will describe, evaluate and assess the challenges (domestic and international) currently facing the American political system
• Students will demonstrate academic integrity, appropriateness and discipline in class conduct and assignments

Major Content Topics
1) What is politics? 5) Civil Liberties & Rights 9) Presidency
2) What is democracy? 6) Campaigns & Elections 10) Courts
3) Ideology 7) The Mass Media 11) Public Policy
4) The Constitution/federalism 8) Congress 12) Foreign Policy

To maximize your grade in this class, make sure to:
• not miss class
• read ALL the assigned chapters in the course texts
• read ALL the online lectures
• complete ALL assigned course work, especially the exams and research paper
• not procrastinate/wait until the last second to do your work (the surest path to doing very poorly in any demanding course)
• be self-disciplined (do what you’ve got to do whether you feel like it or not because it needs to be done)
• take responsibility for your own learning
• not expect instructor “mercy or grace” to make up for poor academic effort

REQUIRED READINGS
We will be using the following textbooks available for purchase at the Gavilan College Bookstore:

Note1: These books can be purchased or rented online; Note2: Several copies of the Dye book have been placed on reserve at the Gavilan College Library circulation desk

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
Your overall course grade will be based on the following factors: (1) Five Politics in America quizzes worth 4% each, or 20% total; (2) one debate worth 10%; (3) Debate peer reviews worth 10%; (4) One pro-con paper worth 20% total; (5) One final exam worth 10%; (6) Ten online critical thinking assignments worth 2% or 20% total; and (7) Class Participation/In-Class Work worth 10% total.

**YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL OF THE ABOVE REQUIREMENTS IN ORDER TO PASS THE COURSE** These requirements are spelled out in more detail below:
Politics in America Quizzes (20%)
There will be 5 in-class, multiple choice/short answer chapter quizzes worth 4% each or 20% of your overall grade. The questions are multiple choice and T-F in nature. Each quiz covers roughly two chapters in the book. The questions are drawn from the Dye & Sparrow Politics in America book, as well as from my powerpoint and online lectures. If you read the chapters, Politics in America quizzes shouldn't be that hard. If you don't, I promise you that they will be difficult.

Debate (10%)
Beginning on T, 11-5, we start our formal debates. You will be organized into teams representing opposing sides for ten debates. I will make available the debate sign up sheet and syllabus for this assignment AFTER you come up with and then narrow down debate topics.

Debate Peer Reviews (10%)
To ensure that you are engaged and involved in the last portion of the class—debates—you are required to submit a relatively short critique of nine of the ten debates (excluding your own debate). Peer reviews are due on the last day of class (TH, 12/19). I will provide a set of guidelines and a Peer Review Form in the second week of the class.

Pro-Con Paper (20%)
The Pro-Con Paper is worth 20% of your total grade. It calls for you to OBJECTIVELY examine the pros and cons of a current debate (ie should we legalize marijuana, does Obamacare work, should we drug test people on welfare, should we lower the legal drinking age to 18, etc). I recommend that you choose a topic that really grabs your attention and that you are passionate about. I do NOT accept late papers. The minimum page length is approximately 10 pages. There is no maximum length though. Pro-Con Papers are due on TH, 11/7 IN CLASS

One final exam worth (10%)
I will hand out a take home final exam two weeks before the end of the semester. You will have two weeks to complete the final exam. It will be a few short essays and the questions will be broad and expansive. More on this when I hand out the final.

Online Critical Thinking Assignments (20%)
20% of your grade consists of the completion of 10 homework assignments designed to promote critical thinking. Assignments are found online in the ilearn class website. Each is worth 2%, hence they are worth 20% of your total grade. Assignments are to be completed in the class Moodle/Ilearn shell. Homework assignments may NOT be made up, regardless of the excuse. All work is to be completed and submitted in the Moodle/Ilearn class site. Do NOT send answers to online assignments to my email address as you will not earn credit.

Class Participation and Attendance (10%)
The final portion of your course grade consists of class participation (which centers on several video observations, class discussions, as well as regular attendance). In total, in-class participation/work and attendance is worth 10% of your course grade. Be on time for class and stay the full time. In the second week, I will begin to take attendance by calling roll right as class starts at 8:10am. Students are allowed two absences per Gavilan College policy. If you miss a third class, you will be dropped from the course.

COURSE RULES: Below, I lay out the basic rules of conduct I will enforce this semester:

1. It is imperative that you attend class regularly. Starting in week 2, I will take roll every class period. This is a strict policy, so you should determine now whether you think you can adhere to it. Be on time for class and stay the full time. Students are allowed two absences per Gavilan College policy. If you miss a third class, you will be dropped from the course.
2. Please make a quiet entrance if you come in late, and ask instructor after class to change your absent mark IF and ONLY IF you have a valid excuse (ie emergency). Class starts at 8:10am, NOT 815, 830, or 845, etc. Let's try to make this a civil, fun, interesting place to be. Showing up on time ready to start class is the first step in creating an environment conducive to fun and learning.
3. STUDENT HONESTY POLICY-Students are expected to exercise academic honesty and integrity. Violations such as cheating and plagiarism will result in disciplinary action which may include recommendation for dismissal.
4. All electronic devices (e.g., cell phone, iPod) must be turned off and put away (no texting, checking or sending e-mail, surfing the internet, listening to music)—any breach of this requirement will result in you being asked to leave the class that period. You will be marked absent for that day. If it happens again, you won’t be allowed to bring the device into the class. Period.
5. In fairness to students who turn in their work on time, late assignments will NOT be accepted EXCEPT in the case of emergency. Emergency cases must be cleared and discussed with your professor IN ADVANCE.
6. I do NOT accept work submitted via email. For ANY reason. You MUST submit hard copies of all written work IN CLASS. No exceptions.
7. In consideration of others who are trying to listen and participate, disruptive class behavior won’t be tolerated. In accordance with the Student Code of Conduct, such behavior can result in being expelled.
8. Learning occurs most productively in a respectful environment. Differences of viewpoints, orientation & are welcome in class discussions. If you don't feel safe or respected, please talk to Dean Lozano or me @ 848-4702, or flozano@gavilan.edu.
9. Students requiring special services or arrangements because of hearing, visual or other disability should contact the instructor, a College counselor, the coordinator of the Morgan Hill campus, or the Disabled Student Services Office.
COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS
The schedule, policies, objectives, topics, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. Any scheduling adjustments will be announced in class. PIA refers to Politics in America

Week 1 → Introduction
T, 9-1: Take roll/add codes + Go over Syllabus
Reading/work: None

TH, 9-3: Survey + Debate Topics
Reading/work: None

Week 2 → The Basics—What is Politics?
T, 9-8: What is Politics? Lecture, video ("Do You Believe in Magic?" with John Stossel), and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 1

TH, 9-10: Public Opinion (your opinions on everything political). Team knowledge competition (for extra credit points)
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 1

Week 3 → American Political Culture: Ideology
T, 9-15: American Political Culture. Lecture, video clips and discussion. Dye, Quiz 1 (PIA, Chs 1-2)
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 2 (all)

TH, 9-17: Ideology: Or what the hell is a Liberal, Conservative, Libertarian, and a Socialist? Lecture, videos ("What is Ideology?") and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 2 (all)

Week 4 → The Constitution—Federalism; Civil Liberties/Rights
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 3 and Ch 4 (skim)

TH, 9-24: What are Civil Liberties/Rights? Brief overview of terms, video ("You Can't Say That" with John Stossel), and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Chs 14-15

Week 5 → Civil Liberties/Rights; Campaigns & Elections
T, 9-29: Guest Speaker—Professor & Police Officer Steve Smith. Dye, Take home Quiz 3 (PIA, Chs 14-15)
Reading/work: PIA, Chs 14-15

TH, 10-1: Campaigns & Elections. Lecture and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 8

Week 6 → Mass Media; Governing Institutions I (Congress)
T, 10-6: Mass Media. Video and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 6

TH, 10-8: Congress I. Lecture, video, discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 10

Week 7 → Governing Institutions I (Congress) & II (The Presidency)
T, 10-13: Congress II—Video and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 10; Super, Ch 4

TH, 10-15: Presidency I—Lecture, video ("Presidential Mandates"), and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 11

Week 8 → Governing Institutions II (The Presidency) & III (The Court System)
T, 10-20: Presidency II—Good v Bad Presidents (short videos & discussion)
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 11.

TH, 10-22: Presidency III—Lecture, video ("Inside the Obama White House" with Brian Williams), discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 11. Dye, Quiz 4 (PIA, Chs 10-11)

Week 9 → Public Policy; Foreign Policy
T, 10-27: Guest Speaker—"The American Court System" with Superior Court Judge, the Honorable Tom Breen
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 13
TH, 10-29: Public Policy—Deficits, the Budget, & the Welfare State-Lecture, video ("10 Trillion and Counting"), and discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Chs 16-17

**Week 10 ➔ Foreign Policy**
T, 11-3: Public Policy--the Welfare State ("John Stossel Goes to Washington") + discussion. Dye, Quiz 5 (PIA, Chs 16-17)
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 16-17

TH, 11/5: Foreign Policy--American Foreign Policy in the post-9-11 Era. Lecture + Video ("The Road to 9/11") + discussion
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 18

**Week 11 ➔ The Great Debates begin!!**
T, 11-10: Foreign Policy—Assessing the War on Terrorism; Video ("Top Secret America") + discussion. Dye, Quiz 6 (PIA, Ch 18)
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 18

TH, 11-12: Debate 1
Reading/work: PIA, Ch 18

**Week 12 ➔ The Great Debates Continue!!**
T, 11-17: Debate 2
Reading/work: None

TH, 11-19: Debate 3
Reading/work: None

**Week 13 ➔ The Great Debates Continue; Thanksgiving Holiday!!**
T, 11-24: Debate 4
Reading/work: None

TH, 11-26: *No School-Thanksgiving Holiday*
Reading/work: None

**Week 14 ➔ The Great Debates Continue!!**
T, 12-1: Debate 5
Reading/work: None

TH, 12-3: Debate 6
Reading/work: None

**Week 15 ➔ The Great Debates End!!**
T, 12-8: Debate 7
Reading/work: None

TH, 12-10: Debate 8
Reading/work: None

**Week 16: Final's Week**
T, 12-15: 8-10am: Debate 9 & 10. Debate Peer Reviews and extra credit assignments are due
Reading/work: None

*Note:* students are held responsible for any announcements or changes made during class time whether present, late, or absent