

WEST VALLEY COLLEGE

If you are enrolled in this class you must send me an email from within our **Angel Classroom** before the second day of class. This email informs me of your intention to stay enrolled in the class and holds your spot. Because there is a long waiting list, those who do not send me an email **from Angel** may be dropped to allow others to enroll.

Course Syllabus

COURSE: Political Science 1

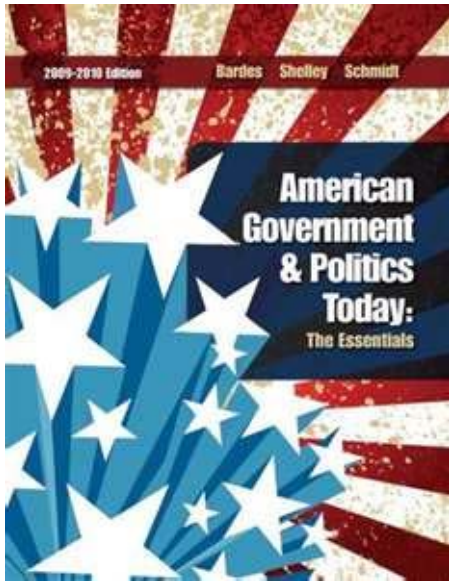
INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Sondra L. Ricar

EMAIL: Prior to the beginning of class, you can email me at sondra.ricar@wvm.edu. Due to the number of emails I receive, please put your name and the name of the class in the subject line. This helps me to identify students from all the other emails I receive. Once class begins, please email me **ONLY** through our Angel classroom.

OFFICE HOURS: Since this is an online class, I have no campus office hours. Once the class begins, if you email me, I will get back to you within 24 hours, usually less. In addition I will hold office hours during the regular semester. My office hours are held online **BUT** I cannot be on the whiteboard in all my online classes at the same time so I will simply be online on Angel, at the times announced each semester, reloading my page every 5 minutes to see if there are any emails. In addition once class begins I require that you email me from within ANGEL **ONLY** because I can get my ANGEL mail from anywhere with an internet connection.

VOICEMAIL: ext. 3369 Checked rarely. It is preferable to contact me via email.

THE TEXTBOOKS ARE REQUIRED: I realize the books are expensive but if you wish to pass the quizzes, it is necessary for you to purchase the editions I have here. Please do not ask me if you can use an earlier version of the books. It is not acceptable. I am also aware of the fact that there is a newer version of the textbook available but I want you to use this version.



Bardes, et. al., American Government and Politics Today, The Essentials, 15th Edition, 9780495571704

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is an introductory course in American political science. We will endeavor to learn about the Constitution and some of the founding principles of American government. One of the main concerns of this class will be the way in which the government is affecting our lives today, why, and what we can do about it. We will look at some of the mistakes made by our government in the past. Our job here is not to be judgmental; we are going to try to understand why our government has acted in such a manner, not condemn it for doing so. I ask only that you come to class with an open mind, prepared to learn, and willing to explore issues from many points of view. It is important to respect other's opinions, particularly if you wish them to respect yours.

ONLINE COURSE DISCLAIMER

Online education is not for everyone. This is not to say that you are unintelligent if you do not do well in this course, but you need to be self-directed, self-disciplined and patient. For example, in a face-to-face class when you have a quiz, if there is something you don't understand you can approach the professor and ask. In this class that is not an option. You will have to read the lectures on your own, interact with your classmates on discussion boards, and take quizzes to measure how much you have absorbed. In a traditional classroom I can see when a student doesn't understand something, just based on their expression. Obviously that is not an option here. You must be willing to ask a question when something is unclear. I am not a mind-reader. I do not expect you to be a mind-reader either. If I have been unclear on something, you must let me know. You must pay attention to the calendar and due dates. While I will email the class Sunday evenings with reminders for that week's work and it will all be entered into the calendar, it is your responsibility to remember when something is due. It is very easy to fall behind if you slack off and you will not pass the class if you do not stay on top of the work. In order to successfully complete this course, you should plan your schedule very carefully and try to stick to it. Look carefully at your work schedule, school schedule, and family obligations and allow plenty of time for each.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

You are responsible for reading the assigned books for this course. The textbook is your main source. Although we will not discuss all the material covered in the textbook, you are responsible for reading it. You will also have a reader and online assignments to read. The book and reader will be the basis for your assignments. The required reading is available for purchase in the campus bookstore. It is also on two-hour reserve in the library. There will also be lectures and possibly other material online for you to read. You will have a quiz in each module. I expect you to read a good newspaper regularly so that you are aware of current events. You can read the newspaper online or in paper form. There will be a quiz for each module. You will have to read a lecture for each module. Some lectures will be on material covered in the textbook. These lectures will be to expand on key points. Often lectures, however, will cover material that is important for you to know but not covered in the textbook. Some

modules the lectures are very lengthy, as the textbook chapter does not cover some important information. The textbook is the tool for you to learn the information about the basic facts of the topic for that module. Without this knowledge, you will not be able to put the information from the lectures in context. The lecture material will be important on your quizzes and discussion boards, for you to be able to analyze the events and works and the varied interpretations of them.

CODE OF CONDUCT:

All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the student code of conduct in the college catalog. I expect you to adhere to that code of conduct. Students who do not will be asked to leave the class. If you experience harassment or threatening behavior from any student in this class, please let me know so that I can take action to remedy the situation. Likewise, if I feel that you are harassing me or any person in class, I will take action to have you removed from the class. I take cheating seriously. Any incident will receive a zero and be reported to the Dean of Student Services and will result in your receiving an F for the course, in addition to whatever steps the Dean of Student Services chooses to take.

ACCESSIBILITY AND LATE POLICIES

Each module will open at the same time and the Discussion Boards and quizzes will be open for one week only, currently Thursdays from 11 am to the following Thursday at 11 am. You must complete the work within that week. **I will not accept any late work.** In the past several students found this policy to be arbitrary and unprofessional. I do not accept late work in any of my classes. I set aside time to grade your work in order to give you timely responses to it. Late work complicates my ability to grade in a timely manner. And fundamentally, if I allow you to start falling behind, you will rapidly run into trouble. You will have a full week on each module so you must plan accordingly. It is also necessary for you to post to the discussion board twice each module, once with your own post and then in response to another post. Currently the first post must be completed by 11am Monday and the reply post by 11am Thursday but these times are subject to change. This means you cannot wait until the end of the week to do your work. You must do both posts each week, in addition to your weekly quiz.

WINTER OR SUMMER SCHEDULE

Obviously, this schedule is dramatically different from the normal semester. However, you must keep in mind the fact that in the four-week summer session we are supposed to complete the same amount of work as during the normal 15 week semester. The assignments will be clearly identified and the due dates will be inflexible. In general you will expect to have a module closing at 8am Monday through Thursday each week. The following week's module will open at 8am Thursday so if you wish you may do the majority of your work on the weekend. You will need to be aware of the workload and allocate the time accordingly. From the perspective of the state mandate (a 3-unit course requires 9 hours of homework a week during the normal semester), you should plan on allocating a minimum of five hours a day for this course.

COMPUTER EXCUSES

You are taking an online class; it is your responsibility to have access to a computer and backup your files. What does this mean? Computer crashes, lost disk information, Internet access becomes unavailable, hardware/software difficulties, time zone issues, or your dog ate your computer does not constitute reasons for inability to complete your work.

SPECIAL NEEDS:

Education should be open and available to everyone. Wounded warriors may have acquired injuries which through the American with Disabilities Act entitles them the use of accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for students with verified disabilities. To determine if you qualify or need assistance with an accommodation, please contact Disabled Student Services. Students with special needs due to either "visible" or "invisible" disabilities are encouraged to see me in my office or contact me via email. Explain your difficulties and what I can do to help you by providing the appropriate accommodations. I will need verification of your needs from the appropriate college facility and their recommendations for accommodating your needs. I strongly believe physical problems should not hinder your education and would like to do whatever I can to make all students comfortable in my class.

DISCUSSION BOARD:

I will have a discussion board on the home page for the course. You should check this board regularly as this is where some important announcements will be made, in addition to your ANGEL email account. This board is the first place to go if you find something you don't understand, as your classmates might be able to help. I will check this board regularly to respond to questions. You can however always email me if you feel your question is "too stupid" to put on the board. Usually what will happen in that case is I will remove your identifying information and send my answer to the whole class, as they are all wondering the same thing. Please feel free to discuss topics other than the class subject matter, but try to maintain some standard of civilized behavior. Refer to the Netiquette guide to ensure your posts are not violating acceptable standards.

STUDENT LEARNER OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course the student should be able to:

1. Students will be able to explain the Constitutional institutions, structure, processes, and functions of government set up by the US Constitution and the California constitution, and explain how those institutions historically evolved.
2. Students will be able to define, cite and analyze:- The Bill of Rights- The 1st ten amendments and the compromises of 1787- Famous Supreme court decisions vis a vis the Bill of Rights- How Judges Make Law- Judicial Activism versus judicial restraint- The clash between individual rights and the rights of the community

3. Students will be able to differentiate between civil rights and liberties; define each and evaluate American democracy in its protection of and expansion of the rights. Recognize the significance of the The 14th Amendment as an augmentation to the Bill of Rights. Discuss and analyze how rights have impacted minorities and women, namely, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Native American, women, the elderly, the disabled.
4. Students will be able to define federalism, identify the major Supreme Court decisions the have contributed to its evolution, contrast the powers of the national government with those of the states, recognize and explain the role of the states in modern federalism and discuss the operation of and institutions of California's state and local government vis a vis the national government and discuss supremacy.
5. Students will be able to define and discuss the functions of: Interest Groups, PACS, political parties, the media, and other organizations in both national and state government.
6. Students will be able to define and analyze the relationship between the Executive, legislative, and Judicial branches of government at the national, state and local levels, with a emphasis on the concepts of separation of powers, checks and balance, and judicial review.

BASIS FOR GRADE:

Your work will be evaluated on a straight point system, with the following breakdown:

90-100%	- A	60-69%	- D
80-89%	- B	0-59%	- F
70-79%	- C		

1. Quizzes:

There will be a quiz for each module based on the readings and lectures. If you miss a quiz, it cannot be made up. The quizzes will usually contain short essay questions. The essay questions will draw from the lecture and assigned readings. You need to have finished your readings before attempting the quiz. The essay questions ask you to interpret the material, not simply regurgitate facts. The essay questions are demanding and require thoughtful answers. In the traditional classroom the students are allocated 5 minutes for an essay question and I generally expect a half-page written answer (roughly 200 words) so keep that in mind when answering these questions. If your answers are not long enough, you will not receive enough points to pass the quiz. If you find you cannot write that much in the time allotted, you might have an accessibility issue and need to be tested at DESP. Each quiz will be randomly generated with the questions a variety of questions so that you cannot share your answers with your friends. You will only be allowed to access each quiz one time and you will have fifteen minutes to complete the quiz. If you do not know for sure that you will be able to complete the quiz at that time, do not access it. I have the time limit set in this way for two reasons. In the traditional class the students are only allowed 5 minutes to write the essay. And, if I allow more time, too many students spend their time looking up answers in the books or online. I do not mark down for poor grammar on the essays and do not

expect nicely formed paragraphs. This is an information dump. I understand that, but at the same time I must be able to understand your answer so please do not use texting abbreviations or slang. **You must average 70% on the quizzes to pass the class.** Please keep this in mind as in the past several students failed the class simply because their quiz grades were not high enough. It is unfortunate, but this is part of my class policy and you must make sure you are willing to undertake this work.

2. Discussion:

Each module you will have a discussion board assignment. I will post two topics or questions each module and you must respond to the prompt with an answer of a specific word count minimum. You must also respond to the posting of a classmate with an answer of a specific word count minimum. I also stipulate that you must respond to both prompts in each module. In other words, if you respond to prompt A in your initial post you must address the issues raised by prompt B in your response post. Each discussion board initial post will be worth 10 points. Each response post will be worth 5 points. You will be graded on your content, which must address the issues raised by the assignment. Your response posts must take into account the comments I make on the initial posts, which I will address in a bulk email to the class. I spend time thinking about the posts and do like to think you read my comments and think about them. **You must average 70% on the discussion board assignments to pass the class.** In the past many students failed this part of the course because they routinely only posted once a module. You must use common English in your posts. I will take points off if your answer is too short or if you use texting abbreviations. Some of the issues that have been problems in recent classes are:

1. I may edit the posts. In other words, if I read something that needs to be addressed to prevent the rest of the class from wrongly interpreting something, I will insert comments directly into the post, using a different colored font. This is not meant as criticism of the author, but it is meant to clarify things so that other students do not have problems when making a reply to that post.
2. Please keep to the time period. Many of the questions asked are broad and there is a tendency to talk about current events. While I also am guilty of that at times, in general you should at least ground your post in the time period of the module.
3. Please address the prompts I put up each module. You may find something else fascinating for that module, but if it isn't one of the prompts I put up, it doesn't belong on that discussion board. If you want to discuss something fascinating, the General Chat board is the place for it. If you go off topic, you will lose points.
4. Please do not explain the facts that you learned from the lecture and/or textbook. I presume all students have done the assigned reading and if you are explaining the facts it is judged to be a way to pad your word count. That will lead to a reduction in grade.
5. There is an assumption that all you have to do is post and you will receive full points. It is not quite that simple. Your post must be long enough, it must engage the topic, and it must show some signs of thought. While the vast majority of the prompts ask for opinions, they must be reasoned, thoughtful opinions, not simply "because I think so." Finally, and at one level most important, please treat one another civilly. Do not tell someone they are wrong or ignorant or prejudiced. You are free to disagree with one another, but do it in a polite manner.

3. Homework assignments:

You may have other homework assignments on Angel. These would be internet assignments where you would be asked to search for something specific and post it to a community bulletin board. Or you will have a question where you must respond with a 300-500 word answer in a drop-box. The points for these assignments will be explained when the assignment is announced. **You must average 70% on these assignments to pass the class.**

4. Final Exam:

You must take and pass the final exam to pass the class. The final exam will most likely be short essay questions. It will be comprehensive only in a very loose way. **You must take and pass the final exam to pass the class.**

Excessive Absences:

In the traditional, face-to-face classroom, the college policy is once you have missed three classes you should be dropped for excessive absences. Obviously this is difficult to maintain in the online environment. Therefore the policy will be that if you miss four assignments I can drop you. You will have two due dates a week so if you have missed more than two modules, you can be dropped. I do realize that sometimes something happens in your life that necessitates missing class. However, this is online so available from anywhere. If something happens that may cause you to miss due dates, contact me to let me know what is happening. I will see if we can work out the problem without dropping you.

Extra Credit:

It is important that each student be judged on the same body of work. Therefore, **there will be no extra credit in this class.** You will be judged solely on the basis of the work outlined in this syllabus.

By staying in this class you are agreeing to undertake all of the work outlined in this syllabus. Be sure you are aware of the workload and adjust your schedule accordingly.

READING SCHEDULE

The reading schedule changes each semester due to the changing calendar. The schedule will be posted separately on ANGEL. However, if you wish to see a typical schedule, you may email me prior to the beginning of class or prior to registration and I can send you a copy of the schedule. It may be the schedule from the current semester, but it will at least give you a feeling for the workload of the class.