

**POL 193: Seminar in American Politics, UC Davis**  
**Winter 2020**  
**Drs. Travis Baker**

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**Class Times:** Wednesday 10-11

**Location:** UC Center Sacramento

**Office Hours:** Wednesday 1-2, Friday 12-1, and by  
appointment

**Email:** tjbaker@ucdavis.edu

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### **Purpose of the Course**

POL 193 is a course designed to complement courses on public policy and research design, as well as your internship experience. The focus of this class is providing students with knowledge and skills that will help them to better understand and affect the state legislative process. In this class, students will learn about the structure of government and public policy in California/United States, the roles of policy stakeholders, and ways they can more effectively affect the policy process. Through assignments such as letter writing, Op-Eds, and elevator speeches, students will also develop written and oral skills that will help them more effectively communicate their ideas in a policy setting.

Your work in this class is part of a larger initiative to engage undergraduate students with public policy in state legislatures. ENACT, The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation, provides an online network for students across the country to connect on legislative issues.

### **Course Requirements**

Attendance, Participation, & In-Class Assignments	40%
Bill Summary and Map of Coalitional Field	20%
Letter to the Legislator	20%
Op-Ed	20%

Attendance, participation, and in-class assignments: Students are expected to attend all classes and arrive to class on time. Students should come to class prepared to discuss any assigned readings and complete the in-class assignments. Grades will be based on attendance and participation in class activities. Students will be given time in class to work on assignments. This time is to be used only for coursework. Students are encouraged to bring their laptops to class for these assignments. Students that do not fully participate during this work time will receive a lower grade. Students may have two unexcused absences for the class. Any student that has more than two unexcused absences will not be able to receive a passing grade for the class.

Bill Summary and Map of Coalitional Field: For this class, students are required to summarize a current piece of legislation in California. Students will also map the policy stakeholders relevant to that legislation. Additional information on this assignment will

be provided during the quarter.

Letter to the Legislator: Students will compose a letter to their sitting state legislator regarding a piece of legislation. You do NOT have to send your letter to a legislator. Additional information on this assignment will be provided during the quarter.

Letter to the Editor: Students will write a newspaper OpEd on a piece of legislation that interests them. You do NOT have to submit your OpEd to a newspaper. Additional information on this assignment will be provided during the quarter. All work must be in line with the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct.

It goes without saying that all of your graded work must be done by you without assistance from others. You are encouraged to discuss the class and materials with others, but your answers to exam questions and your written essays must be yours and yours alone, with proper attribution for sources you wish to cite. If you are unfamiliar with the University's policy on academic dishonesty and associated penalties, see <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/>.

Please be advised that UC Center Sacramento professors, instructors, teaching assistants, and administrators are mandatory reporters under Title IX. This means that we are required to pass on reports from students, whether communicated verbally during class discussion or office hours or as part of a written assignment or exercise, to the UC Davis Title IX officer and other relevant UC Davis officials. If you wish to seek out help or resources with a non-mandated reporter, please see <https://sexualviolence.ucdavis.edu/get-support>.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet any of the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation for individual learning needs. UC Davis will make every attempt to accommodate all qualified students with disabilities.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

Week 1: Syllabus and Introduction

Week 2: Structure of Government/Public Policy

Week 3: Legislation and Coalitional Landscape

Week 4: Contacting Legislators

Week 5: OpEds

Week 6: Policy Briefs/Fact Sheets

Week 7: Elevator Speeches

Remaining Weeks: TBD