

**Pol 196A: Seminar in American Politics**  
University of California Center Sacramento  
Zoom Video: Wednesday 8 am - 10:50 am

**Instructor:** Dr. Ross Butters

**Email:** rbutters@ucdavis.edu

**Class:** Zoom Video with Meeting ID 952 2466 3229

**Office Hours:** Thursday 12-2 pm (and by appointment) \*Subject to Change  
Meeting ID 937 1182 7883

**Teaching Assistant:** Sharif Amlani

**Email:** samalani@ucdavis.edu

**Office:** Zoom Video with Meeting ID TBD

**Office Hours:** TBD (and by appointment)\* Subject to change

**Course Objectives:**

Political Science 196A is a four-unit course designed to bridge the practical and academic experiences of students by providing an introduction to political science research in the field of American politics and public policy, with a particular focus on the state of California. This will be a small discussion-based class that is run similar to a graduate seminar. This course will cover various theoretical and empirical issues that arise in the study of American and Californian politics and public policy. Given the size of these fields, topics covered will, in part, be determined by topics that interest students the most. In this way, the course is designed to help complement the original research students will be conducting through other courses in the program. By guiding students through the process of finding and analyzing current research, this course should help students to focus and develop their own research instincts.

**Required Textbook:**

All readings for this course will be made available on Canvas. There are no required textbooks for this class.

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance, Participation, and Assignments:* Class attendance and the corresponding readings are mandatory. All students should come to class prepared to participate in class discussion and to participate with the in- class activities.

Students should register for the class's Zoom video sessions beforehand. On Zoom, students should register using both their first and last name and turn both their audio and video on. Attendance at class will be automatically recorded.

Students that constructively contribute to class discussion most regularly and fully participate in other in-class activities will receive a boost to their attendance and participation grade. Students that do not contribute to in-class discussion or fully participate in other in-class activities will receive a lower grade. **Any student that has**

**three or more absences will not be able to receive a passing grade for the class.** Arriving 10 minutes late to class will count as an absence. Driving during class will count as an absence.

The course's Zoom Meeting ID is 952 2466 3229

*Late Policy:* Late assignments will be penalized 5% for each day they are late, including weekends. Extensions will be allowed only in the event of a medical or family emergency. The emergency must be documented [doctor's note] in order to be able to have an extension. If documentation is provided, then a decision will be made regarding whether you will be granted an extension. Final projects cannot be submitted late. Any requests for an incomplete must be accompanied by a written medical report.

*Grade Appeals:* Students will have one week from when grades are posted to appeal their grade. All appeals must include a typed, double spaced statement explaining why you are requesting a grade appeal, and you must justify with evidence from your exam, paper, or summaries. If you choose to appeal your grade, the instructor reserves the right to increase or decrease the existing grade.

#### **Academic Honesty:**

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 Code of Academic Conduct.

#### **Reporting Duties:**

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 Confidential and Non-Confidential Support Services.

#### **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.

#### **Grading Policy:**

- Attendance and Participation 30%

- Presentations (3 x 10%) 30%
- Short Paper (3 x 10%) 30%
- Take-Home Final 10%

*Attendance and Seminar Participation:*

As this course is designed to be similar to a graduate seminar, the success of this course depends on everyone being an *active* participant. Students are expected to attend all classes and come prepared to discuss the assigned readings for the week. Students should bring copies of that week's readings to class. When reading, students should not only try to understand the content of the material, but also they should attempt to think critically about the readings.

*Presentations:*

Each student is required to give three separate presentations on readings from the course. Each presenter, with help from the instructor, will choose a recently published academic article on a topic in American/California politics, or public policy that interests them. Each presentation will cover one reading for the week. The goal of the presentation is to concisely summarize the important aspects of the reading and its implications. Instructions for presentations will be provided to you, and will be available on Canvas.

*Short Papers:*

For each reading that students present on, they will also be required to do a short write-up that thoughtfully *analyzes* that reading. These papers are due one week after the class for which they are assigned. These assignments should be a minimum of three pages, double-spaced. The objective of these papers is to critically *analyze* the readings. Summarization should be short. For example, short papers may discuss potential alternative explanations for findings, or ways to approach the topic of research; relate to other readings from current or previous weeks; evaluate the conception, operationalization, and measurement of important variables; suggest hypotheses for future research; and discuss potential implications for these findings for California and the United States, among others.

*Take Home Final:*

Students will also be required to complete a Take-Home Final that will be due during the week of finals. For your final, you will write a 7-page analysis on the topic of your choosing. This paper will be a more substantial and in-depth version of the short papers you wrote throughout the quarter. All finals must be turned in via Canvas. Further requirements, instructions, and official due date for the Take-Home Final will be introduced later in the quarter.

All work must be in line with the UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct.

**Tentative Course Schedule:**

- Week 1 (**1/6**): Introduction
- Week 2 (**2/17**): Representation in the U.S. Congress
  - Fenno Jr., Richard F. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *American Political Science Review* 71:3 (September): 883-917.
  - Kujala, Jordan. 2020. “Donors, Primary Elections, and Polarization in the United States.” *American Journal of Political Science* 64(4): 587-602.
- Week 3 (**2/24**): Readings TBD
- Week 4 (**3/3**): Readings TBD
- NO CLASS on **3/10** due to presentations
- NO CLASS on **3/17** due to Quarter Finals
- Week 5 (**3/24**): Readings TBD
- Week 6 (**3/31**): Readings TBD
- Week 7 (**4/7**): Readings TBD
- Week 8 (**4/14**): Readings TBD
- Week 9 (**4/21**): Readings TBD
- Week 10 (**4/28**): Readings TBD
- Final Week: Take-Home Final due via Canvas