

**College of San Mateo
Official Course Outline**

1. **COURSE ID:** PLSC 310 **TITLE:** California State and Local Government
Units: 3.0 units **Hours/Semester:** 48.0-54.0 Lecture hours; 96.0-108.0 Homework hours; 144.0-162.0 Total Student Learning hours
Method of Grading: Grade Option (Letter Grade or Pass/No Pass)
Recommended Preparation:
 Completion of, or enrollment in, ENGL 100 or ENGL 105

2. **COURSE DESIGNATION:**
Degree Credit
Transfer credit: CSU; UC
AA/AS Degree Requirements:
 CSM - GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: E1a. American History and Institutions
 CSM - GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: E5b. Social Science
CSU GE:
 CSU GE Area D: SOCIAL SCIENCES: DSI - Social Institutions
 CSU GE Area D: SOCIAL SCIENCES: US-3
IGETC:
 IGETC Area 4: SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES: Social and Behavioral Sciences

3. **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**
Catalog Description:
 The study of the institutions and problems of state and local government in California; California in the federal system. (Satisfies the California State and Local Government requirement.)

4. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) (SLO'S):**
 Upon successful completion of this course, a student will meet the following outcomes:
 1. Effectively communicate the historical evolution of California political institutions.
 2. Evaluate the roles played by state actors (such as the three branches of government) and non-state actors (such as interest groups, political parties and the new media) on the development and implementation of policy in California.
 3. Critically analyze theories on the impact of economic inequality, the separation of powers and institutional power relationships between the state government and the various units of local government (such as the counties, cities, and special districts) on the development and implementation of policy.
 4. Evaluate the ethical issues and conflicts inherent to contemporary political issues in California.
 5. Demonstrate understanding of the rights and duties of a citizen through participation in the political system.

5. **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**
 Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:
 1. Explain and discuss the historical evolution of California political institutions.
 2. Identify and discuss the role of interest groups, mass media, political parties, campaigns and elections in California politics.
 3. Identify and discuss California's various public policies regarding budgetary process, environment and social welfare programs.
 4. Explain and discuss institutional power relationships between the state government and the various units of local government such as the counties, cities, and special districts.

6. **COURSE CONTENT:**
Lecture Content:
 1. Geography, natural resources, climate, economic and social characteristics.
 2. Cultural and constitutional history of California.
 - A. Procedures and politics of constitutional change.
 - B. Legal and practical relationships of federalism.
 3. Political parties, interest groups, and elections.
 - A. Impact of Progressive era reforms.
 - B. Weak party system.
 - C. Public relations, interest groups and the mass media in the electoral process.

- D. Personality politics.
- 4. Direct democracy: The I. R. R.
 - A. Initiative, referendum, and recall: theory, practice & results.
 - B. Advantages and disadvantages of "direct democracy."
 - C. Use and abuse of the initiative process.
- 5. Legislature.
 - A. Representation, organization, and functions.
 - B. Features of the California legislature: centralization of leadership, legislative staffing, benefits, sessions, legislative procedures.
 - C. Lobbyist pressures and party practices in the legislative process.
 - D. Executive and legislative conflict and effect on legislature's potential.
- 6. Executive Branch.
 - A. "Strong" chief executive.
 - B. Powers of the governor: item veto, executive budget, appointive powers, legislative leadership, etc.
 - C. Limitations on the governor's power.
 - D. Other elected state officers.
 - a. Partisan offices: Secretary of state, comptroller, attorney-general, lieutenant-governor, treasurer.
 - b. Non-partisan office: superintendent of schools.
 - c. Competition with governor's role.
 - E. State bureaucracy.
 - a. Structure and function of the major departments.
 - b. Role of the civil service: rights & responsibilities of state employees.
 - c. Planning, personnel practices, budgeting, "housekeeping" agencies.
- 7. Justice in California.
 - A. Organization and jurisdiction of the state's system of courts.
 - B. Selection and removal of judges.
 - a. Executive appointment.
 - b. Voter accountability.
 - C. Grand juries and trial juries.
 - a. Role of lawyers, district attorneys, prosecutors.
 - b. Role of law-enforcement officers.
 - D. Rehabilitation.
 - a. "Hardened" criminals.
 - b. Juvenile offenders.
 - E. Problems in the administration of justice.
 - a. Delays in processing cases.
 - b. "Mass-production" justice.
 - c. Equality before the law.
- 8. Finances.
 - A. Development of fair and efficient tax system.
 - B. Budgeting, revenue, and fiscal control.
 - C. Individual taxes and tax collecting (Franchise Tax Board)
 - D. Problem of fiscal reform.
 - E. Impact of Proposition 13 and other initiatives.
- 9. Local government.
 - A. County.
 - a. Charter and "general law" counties.
 - b. Functions, offices, and problems of counties.
 - c. Change and modernization in the county.
 - B. City.
 - a. Incorporation, annexation, and legal powers.
 - b. Alternative forms of city organization: charter and "general law" municipalities.
 - c. Perplexing problems of the city: transportation, traffic congestion, crime, inequality of opportunity; air, water, and noise pollution.
 - C. Special districts and metropolitan government.
 - a. Specialized functions and complexity.
 - b. Problems: overlapping jurisdictions, lack of accountability, and waste.
 - c. Advantages of special districts.
 - i. B.A.R.T.

- ii. Golden Gate Bridge District.
 - iii. Water and air pollution control districts.
 - d. Trend to multiple function special districts.
 - e. Problems of representation and reluctance of counties and cities to relinquish responsibilities.
10. Challenges to government in California.
- A. Protecting the state's natural resources against rapid population growth.
 - B. Reconciling demands for social justice and public order.
 - C. Maintaining and improving the quality of education.
 - D. Playing a meaningful role in a post-industrial economy.
 - E. Integrating and reforming governmental activities and operations.
 - F. Maintaining credibility and hope in the political process.

7. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Typical methods of instruction may include:

- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Field Experience
- D. Field Trips
- E. Guest Speakers
- F. Service Learning
- G. Other (Specify): Lecture/discussion. Reading assignments in texts and source collections; also articles and political commentaries in periodicals such as the San Francisco Chronicle, Sacramento Bee, Capitol Weekly News, San Jose Mercury-News. Use of media: film, DVD, online access, videotapes, CDs, slides. Guest speakers (elected or appointed officials at the state and local level or from public interest groups such as League of Women Voters) on state and community topics or candidates for elected office on an equal-time basis. Group discussion/work. Attendance at public meetings, such as city councils, school boards, commissions, or county board of supervisors, and reports on such meetings. Volunteering/interning for campaigns, elected officials, government agencies, or political organizations.

8. REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Representative assignments in this course may include, but are not limited to the following:

Writing Assignments:

Written assignments may include essays, research papers, reports on political activities, written responses to online class discussions and other assignments the instructor deems appropriate.

Reading Assignments:

Reading assignments may include textbooks, original source materials such as the Constitution, online sources such as periodicals and web pages, and other assignments the instructor deems appropriate.

Other Outside Assignments:

Reports on attendance at state or local government activities, such as city council meetings or court hearings.

9. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF EVALUATION

Representative methods of evaluation may include:

- A. Class Work
- B. Exams/Tests
- C. Group Projects
- D. Homework
- E. Oral Presentation
- F. Papers
- G. Projects
- H. Quizzes
- I. Research Projects
- J. Written examination

10. REPRESENTATIVE TEXT(S):

Possible textbooks include:

- A. Michelson, M.R., et al. *Governing California in the Twenty-First Century*, 9th ed. W.W. Norton, 2022
- B. Van Vechten, R.B.. *California Politics: A Primer*, 7th ed. CQ Press, 2023
- C. Janiskee, B.P.. *Democracy in California*, 6th ed. Rowman & Littlefield, 2023
- D. Gerston, L., et al. *California Politics and Government*, 15th ed. Cengage, 2021

E. Lawrence, D.G., and J. Cummins. *California: The Politics of Diversity*, 11th ed. Rowman & Littlefield, 2023

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Course Originator: Lee Miller