Course Description and Objectives

This is a transfer level, general education course designed to introduce students to the discipline of political science and to provide analysis of the history, philosophy and theory, constitutional structure, governmental institutions, and the procedures and processes of the American political system at the national and state level. Utilizing historical and current political issues and events, we will explore and discuss traditional interpretations of how American government and political system were designed, evaluate how well the system meets the ideals of democratic governance, and predict what is in store for the future of American democracy.

This course is designed to develop your ability and desire to understand and analyze American politics and to effectively participate in the American political system through your ability to

- Identify, describe and explain the theoretical foundations, structures, and functions of the United States and California government institutions.
- Juxtapose the foundations, functions, and current political problems of the United States and California political systems.
- Identify and explain the structures and functions of government prescribed by the Constitution, including assessing the relationship between government and individuals with respect to personal liberties and rights.
- Analyze the behavior of individuals and groups in a variety of political situations.

Course Format

This class combines in-person sessions that include lecture, discussion, and multi-media presentations with required out-of-class reading, writing and online activities. The format and requirements of the course emphasize critical reading and thinking, writing, and discussion, all of which are essential for success in this course and in your academic and professional careers.

As with any academic endeavor, you will be exposed to a variety of evidence and alternative points of view, some of which may be contrary to your own personal opinions and beliefs. While your success in this course will never depend on your acceptance or rejection of particular ideas, you will need to demonstrate that you remember and understand the material presented and are able to evaluate it through critical thinking.

Critical thinking requires thoughtful, systematic consideration of ideas and information form a wide range of sources in order to reach reasoned conclusions; ultimately, you may choose to accept, reject or suspend your judgment about a particular issue. Critically reading and actively listening to others are essential ways to acquire new information; analytical writing and thoughtful discussion are the primary ways to communicate the results of your critical thinking.
This course is web-enhanced. This means that most documents and resources will only be provided online, and many assignments must be completed online. All students enrolled in this class have access to the course website by logging on to Los Rios eLearning, also known as Desire 2 Learn (http://d2l.losrios.edu). In addition, you will need to regularly access MyPoliSciLab, a multimedia resource created by the publisher of your textbook. Detailed instructions will be provided about how to obtain access to MyPoliSciLab resources.

**Required Materials**

**Books and Resources:**

- MyPoliSciLab Student Starter Kit. *(See “Register for MPSL” on D2L)*
- Additional required reading will be provided by the professor, in class and/or in D2L.
- You must read one or more major newspapers and/or newsmagazines that cover local, national, and international events and/or watch or listen to local, national and world news broadcasts on a regular basis. Links to selected online news sources are available in the External Links area of the course website.

**Internet Access and an E-mail Account:**

Because this class is web-enhanced, you must regularly use the Internet to access the course website and have a working e-mail account to send/receive e-mail related to this class. You must enter your e-mail address into the Los Rios eLearning (Desire 2 Learn) system so that you do not miss out on important information regarding the class and to receive some technical support services. You must also have a valid e-mail address to register for and use the MyPoliSciLab Course Compass resources required for this course, including their technical support services.

- Free computer use and internet access for class-related work is available at the Personal Learning Environment on FLC’s main campus. For hours and additional information, call 608-6613.

- If you do not have an e-mail account, or prefer to set up an account exclusively for academic-related purposes, as a registered FLC student, you already have free Internet-based e-mail account through the Los Rios iMail system. To activate your account, go to [http://imail.losrios.edu](http://imail.losrios.edu) and then follow the on-screen instructions.
Basis for Student Evaluation

Due dates are indicted in the Class Calendar and/or on the Course Website.

- Any assignments not submitted by the due date or examinations/quizzes missed because of an unexcused absence, technical difficulties or poor planning cannot be “made-up” for credit.
- Early submission of assignments is not allowed, except by prior arrangement.
- Do not submit any assignments via e-mail, except by prior arrangement.

1. **Active Participation**

Your success in this class depends on your interaction with the course materials both in and outside of the classroom. You should complete all reading and assignments before each class meeting, and be aware of current issues and events in American politics and government. Your active participation will be assessed based on several components:

- **Reading, Preparation, and Review**

  Reading and attending class sessions complement each other; one cannot substitute for the other. It is your responsibility to follow the reading schedule as indicated in the class calendar, announced in class and/or posted on the website.

  Reading prior to each class session will aid your understanding of class presentations and discussions and your ability to retain the information.

  *MyPoliSciLab* contains an online version of your textbook, Essentials of American Government, with pre- and post-chapter tests and other review material such as a Study Guide that includes a summary, outline, practice test, electronic flash cards and a PowerPoint presentation for each chapter. Study questions for Fiber-Ostrow’s *California State Politics* are also available on the course website.

- **Attendance and Discussion (in-class and online)**

  You should attend all class sessions, arrive on time, remain and stay alert for the entire class session. *Per to Los Rios Community College District's policy, I have the right to drop you if you miss more than 4 hours of lecture.* Habitual absence, tardiness, and/or early departure will not only reduce your overall grade, but will also put you at risk for missing important information about class requirements. If you are absent, consult with a classmate and refer to the course website to find out what you missed.

  During class sessions you should take notes and willingly participate individually in either small groups, during open lecture, presentations, and discussions.

  You will also be instructed to participate online by posting messages to the course website’s Discussion Forum. More information about using the online Discussion Forum will be explained in class and will also be available on the course website.
2. **Examinations**

You will complete four (4) examinations. Each exam will consist of four sections: multiple choice, true and false, matching, and short answer questions taken from material covered in class sessions (lecture and discussions), readings, handouts, and other assignments. The questions will be designed to assess your factual knowledge as well as your understanding of various concepts. Information about the topics covered on each exam and sample questions will be available on the course website.

You will need a *Scantron form 886-E, a No. 2 pencil, eraser, and ink pen* to complete each exam.

Your best three scores on the four examinations will be calculated in your final course grade; the lowest score will automatically be dropped.

3. **MyPoliSciLab Activities and Quizzes**

You will complete several online exercises in *MyPoliSciLab*. Details about which exercises to complete and instructions on how to register for the site, complete the exercises, and submit your results will be explained in class and will be available on the course website.

4. **Research Briefs**

You will complete four (4) research-based assignments that require you to conduct focus research. You are required to report and analyze your findings in writing and/or through oral presentations and/or small group discussions. Details about specific assignments and instructions on how to complete them and submit your work will be explained in class and will be available on the course website.

5. **U.S. Constitution Workbook & Test**

You will complete a U.S. Constitution Workbook based on careful reading, summary, and interpretation of the U.S. Constitution and secondary sources. The workbook has four (4) parts: questions based on specific parts of the workbook will be included on the examinations. In addition, you will take an open-workbook U.S. Constitution Test at the end of the course. The assigned textbook includes an annotated copy of the U.S. Constitution.

6. **Current Events Presentation and Responses**

Based on a reputable news source, you will summarize a current event related to American politics in a written entry posted on the course website’s Discussion Board and explain your analysis of the event in a brief in-class oral presentation. You will also be required to respond to other students’ presentations online. Details on how to complete this assignment will be explained in class.
Grade Scale

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Research Briefs (4)</td>
<td>120</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPSL Activities &amp; Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S. Constitution Test</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Current Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Active Participation</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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Course Letter Grades

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<th>Points</th>
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<td>695-794</td>
<td>C (Satisfactory)</td>
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<tr>
<td>595-694</td>
<td>D (Unsatisfactory)</td>
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<tr>
<td>0-594</td>
<td>F (Failing)</td>
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Absences, “Make-ups” and Late Assignments

- Only absences due to personal illness (when verified in writing by the Health Center or your physician), FLC authorized athletic events and field trips (when the professor is notified in advance) will be excused. While I understand that there may be other reasons for which may choose not to attend a class session, I am not in the business of judging the merit of value of each student’s reasons for being absent.

- **Any assignments not submitted by the due date or examinations missed because of an unexcused absence, technical difficulties or poor planning cannot be “made up” for credit.**

- Early or late submission of assignments and/or make-up examinations is only allowed for an excused absence when you notify the professor via e-mail or voicemail prior to the scheduled absence and submit proper documentation immediately upon your return to class.

- Examinations missed due to any excused absence must be made up within 7 calendar days of the original scheduled exam date.

- **I reserve the right to withdraw any student from the class after more than 4 hours of unexcused absences, habitual tardiness and/or early departure.** While I reserve the right to withdraw you from the class, it is ultimately your responsibility to withdraw within published deadlines if you do not intend to complete the class requirements.

Grade Reporting and Posting

- Graded assignments and examinations will be returned within one week of submissions. Online quizzes will be graded automatically upon submission.

- It is your responsibility to keep copies of all assignments you submit (in print or electronic version) and keep all graded assignments and examinations that are returned to you throughout the entire semester. There may be an occasion when you need to demonstrate that you completed an assignment on time and/or confirm the grade you earned.
As a courtesy, grades for each assignment, and a running total of points earned, will be periodically posted in the Gradebook area of the course website.

**Dealing with Technology Problems**

- Technology problems are not considered excusable reasons for not completing and submitting required work on time. Plan ahead and have a back-up plan.
- It is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to the appropriate browser setting, software programs, and plug-ins that will allow you to successfully view and use all course materials available online. Use the HELP tab at the top of any page in Los Rios eLearning (D2L) to view orientation material and to check Browser Settings.
- If you experience an individual Los Rios eLearning (D2L) related problem such as difficulty logging on, accessing the course website or using any of its features, the Los Rios Online Support Center is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by using the HELP tab at the top of any page, by telephone (1-866-353-9451) or via e-mail (use the link on the HELP page).
- Have a back-up plan in case of personal technology problems. Students will valid Student Access Cards (available at the Student Services Building, Library circulation desk, or Administration building) may use computers on any of the Los Rios campuses. Also, your local public library, and Internet café, and/or a friend’s computer are other potential options available in case of personal technology failure.

**Contacting Professor Villavicencio**

If at any time you have questions about class policies or you sense you may have problems meeting class requirements, you should contact me as soon as possible. The best way to reach me is by e-mail (my e-mail address is on the front of this syllabus). Include your class number (POLS 301) on the subject header; if not on the subject line, your e-mail message will not be read. Identify yourself by your first and last name as it appears on the class roster.

The Cyber Café found in the Discussion Board of D2L is an online discussion board designated for general questions about the course content/and or policies. Members of the class are strongly encouraged to assist one another in the Cyber Café.
Professor’s Resume

Cirian Villavicencio is a political science adjunct professor at both American River and Folsom Lake Colleges. He is a graduate of the Los Rios Faculty Diversity Internship Program where he mentored under political science professor, Tressa Tabares at American River College. He is currently a public affairs/political consultant with a firm in Folsom. Active in politics, Cirian was an intern for the late Congressman Tom Lantos (12th District-San Mateo) and served as a staffer for the California Asian Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus in the State Capitol. He worked on several political campaigns including Steve Westly for Governor and was the co-founder of Sacramento for Obama. He formerly sat with the Sacramento County Democratic Central Committee as an alternate member for the 9th Assembly District. Cirian was also elected as a delegate who represented the 5th Congressional District in support of Barack Obama at the Democratic National Convention in Denver last summer. He was also elected as a delegate for the 10th Assembly District and will attend the California Democratic State Conventions in 2009 and 2010. He also served as a deputy foreman of a federal grand jury panel for the Eastern District of California. Today, he continues to actively participate in the community as a citizen member of the Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee for Sacramento County and as a notary public for the State of California. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and earned his Master’s Degree in Public Administration from the University of Southern California (USC) where he also graduated with honors and specialized in the areas of political management and homeland security.