

POLS 201: California State Government and Politics
Occidental College
Updated April 3, 2024

Spring Semester, 2024
Mondays and Wednesdays
4:05-5:30 PM
Room: Johnson 203

Instructor: Dr. Isaac Hale (he/him)
Email: halei@oxy.edu
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday, 11:00 AM – noon
Friday, 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Office: Johnson Hall 308

Course Description

This course provides an overview of main themes in the development of California state government and the political institutions, social/demographic trends, and public policies that give shape to its politics. We will focus on political theories that help us understand: 1) the major problems facing California and its communities, 2) the economic, social and political forces that have shaped California's development, 3) the structure and role of government in addressing the state's problems, and 4) the major participants and stakes in California politics.

Participation will be a large portion of your grade, and you cannot expect to succeed without reading all the assigned material and coming to class. Do not be shy to speak up, even if you are not certain about something. There is no penalty for engaging in debate or questioning what I am telling you – in fact, both are heavily encouraged!

I have taken several steps to make this course as engaging and accessible as possible. There will be no final exam or midterm for this course. Instead, the course will have short quizzes throughout the semester and a final policy memo. This will help ensure that students face less pressure and that each graded assignment is worth less of the total grade.

One final note – this course is meant to be fun! While the material in this class will take a broad perspective on California politics, our discussions should be extremely relevant to current political events. If there is something happening in the news that is relevant to our class, I will be sure to allocate time to discuss it. Major legislation, elections, scandals, news stories, and policy debates are all fair game!

Course Objectives

The student learning outcomes for this course are as follows:

- Learn about the major problems in contemporary California politics, including inequality, housing, and climate change
- Explore how California's political institutions have changed over time

- Determine how California's current institutional arrangements shape policy outcomes and the behavior of elected officials
- Assess how immigration and increasing diversity have transformed California politics
- Examine how different interests and coalitions shape state politics
- Situate the political power of the state government relative to the power of national and local governments
- Debate whether the design California's political institutions promote normatively desirable policy outcomes
- Produce a memo to a California legislator advising them to vote yes or no on a recent important bill that came before the legislature

Required Texts

There is one required text for this course. The first and second editions are out of date, so please make sure you get the third edition. Electronic and paper editions are available for rent and purchase via the bookstore.

- Edited by Ethan Rarick. *Governing California: Politics, Government, and Public Policy in the Golden State*. 3rd ed. Berkeley Public Policy Press, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California.

You may access all other readings through Moodle portal for this class or via hyperlinks in the syllabus.

Core Program Requirements

POLS 201 fulfills a U.S. Diversity (CPUD) core program requirement.

Class Expectations

Credit Hour Policy

POLS 201 is a 4-unit course. On average, you should expect to spend at least twelve (12) hours a week (including in-class time) on this course.

Lecture Slides

Slides will be used in class on most days. Slides will be posted to Moodle following the class session.

Online Access

All readings and documents for this course (except the textbook) can be accessed through the Moodle website or via hyperlinks in the syllabus schedule. Messages will be sent by me via Moodle, so make sure you have email notifications for Moodle messages activated.

Email

I welcome questions and comments by email. When you email us, you should compose your email as you would any piece of professional correspondence. We will respond to your emails as quickly as possible, but please do not expect a quick response to email sent on weekends or after 5pm on any day.

Laptops and Other Electronics

Generally speaking, laptops are not allowed in class. [Numerous studies confirm that](#) students who take notes by hand retain more information over time and that laptop bans improve student engagement in smaller classes. It is also far less distracting to others when there is not constant typing and visual distraction going on during a lecture/discussion. As such, laptops, phones, and other electronic devices are not allowed in class.

If you have a documented learning disability that is helped by typing your notes, contact me and I will be happy to consider an exception. Furthermore, if you have a very compelling reason why you strongly prefer to take notes during lecture with a laptop, you may write me an email letting me know, and we can discuss the matter individually. Any laptops approved for use in-class must not be used for web surfing during class.

You may bring an e-reader, tablet, or another “lie-flat” device to access readings in class. You may not use it for tasks such as surfing the web or email. You are encouraged to bring *Governing California* and printouts of the other readings to class.

Desk Name Tag (yes, this is required)

To facilitate discussion, I ask that you place a name tag on the desk in front of you in class each day. Although attendance will not be taken, showing up to class with your desk name tag will affect your participation grade. One way to make this name tag is to take an 8½ x 11-inch piece of construction paper or lightweight cardboard, fold it in half lengthwise (so it’s now 4¼ x 11 inches), and write your name on one side so that your name is upright when you put the folded piece of paper like a tent on the desk in front of you. Please write your full name (**FIRST AND LAST**—using whatever name you prefer to be called as your first name) in **LARGE, VERY DARK, BOLD** letters. I will bring nametag supplies on the first day of class.

Grading

Grading for this course will be calculated as follows:

Quizzes (best 9 out of 10)	45%
Policy Memo	35%
Discussion Questions	10%
<u>Participation</u>	<u>10%</u>
Total:	100%

The final letter grade will be assigned according to the standard table:

93-100: A	87-89: B+	77-79: C+	67-69: D+
90-92: A-	83-86: B	73-76: C	60-66: D
	80-82: B-	70-72: C-	00-59: F

If you are 0.5 points or less from the next letter grade at the end of the course, the grade submitted to the registrar will be rounded up to the next letter grade. You will not be able to see this rounding on Moodle.

All graded items listed above are detailed in the sections that follow.

Quizzes

10 short answer/multiple choice quizzes will be administered over the course of the quarter. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes will take place at the beginning of class most Wednesdays. Quizzes will be graded out of 5 points each.

There will be a quiz every week EXCEPT:

- No quiz week 1
- No quiz week 8, spring break
- No quiz week 10, Professor Hale travelling
- No quiz week 12, guest speaker
- No quiz week 15, the last week of class

Everything is fair game! Quizzes may cover two kinds of information:

- 1) Material from the assigned readings, even if we do not discuss it in class.
- 2) Material discussed in class, even if it is not covered in the readings.

Since you may miss or drop a quiz, no make-up quizzes will be offered. For the same reason there is no need to inform me if you will miss a quiz. All quizzes will be graded out of 5 points. Each quiz (not including the dropped quiz) will be worth 5% of your final grade.

Policy Memo

In lieu of a final exam, you are required to submit a policy memo for this class. You will be advising a member of the California Assembly about whether he or she should vote Yes or No on a major bill in the current 2024 legislative session.

Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, **double-spacing**, and proper citation format (see section below). Additionally, please number each page. The essay should be **five-six pages long** (and should certainly not exceed seven). This page limit does not include a bibliography, which should be at the end of your paper.

Memos will be graded on content (persuasiveness of evidence provided), analysis (claims drawn about the evidence provided), structure (clarity of argument and logical “flow” of the memo), and mechanics (grammar, punctuation use, sentence and paragraph composition, etc. A rubric will be posted on Moodle.

A full prompt and list of bills to pick from for the policy memo will be posted on Moodle. The policy memo is due on the scheduled final exam day (Friday, May 3rd), at midnight (11:59 PM).

Discussion Questions

We will be hosting several guest speakers who will discuss their experiences working in California state government and politics. Each speaker will give a presentation and take questions. Before each of these sessions, you will write two questions that you might ask the speaker during the question-and-answer period. You will submit these questions **on Moodle** at least 24 hours in advance of the session.

Questions submitted fewer than 24 hours in advance of the speaker will not receive full credit.

Please print out/write down your questions and bring them to the guest speaker!

Questions will be graded:

- **Check-plus:** insightful and/or reflective of course material
- **Check:** satisfactory (or <12 hours late)
- **Check-minus:** no submission (or >12 hours late)

Participation

Your participation grade will be based on the overall effort you put into the class, including the effort you put into your assignments, your attendance in class (and having a desk tag!), and your participation in discussions. Come to class, participate in class discussions, earn a good participation grade, and get more out of the class. It's a win-win. You are also encouraged to bring up news stories, relevant examples, and "dank" California politics memes.

Extra Credit Meme

You may earn extra credit by creating and submitting a meme related to course content. The extra credit is worth up to one point on your final grade (e.g., raising an 89% final grade to a 90%). In order to receive full credit, the meme must be used correctly! I suggest using <https://knowyourmeme.com> to make sure you are using your meme correctly. You can create memes using meme generators such as <https://imgflip.com/memegenerator>. Your meme will be shared in class, so be creative!

- The meme is due Wednesday, April 24th at 11:59 PM

Late Submissions

Do not wait until the night before it is due to begin to work on an assignment. Life is complicated and full of unexpected surprises. Plan for uncertainty by managing your time efficiently. Even if your work is not complete because something unexpected interfered, submit what you have accomplished prior to the emergency. After-the-fact extensions will be granted only under extreme circumstances, and at my sole discretion.

If you know in advance that you will miss an assignment deadline, you may submit a partially completed assignment early — and then appeal for an extension.

Assignments submitted late will have 10% deducted from their final score for every day they are late. This penalty begins immediately following the day and time the assignment is due and will not be prorated.

Grade Appeals

If you are not satisfied with the grade you receive on an assignment, please take the following steps:

- 1) Review any comments/feedback I have provided.
- 2) If you still have questions, come to my office hours, or contact me by email.
- 3) If you still believe the grade you received is in error, submit a one-paragraph written request for a regrade by email. If the request is approved, your work will receive a completely new evaluation by me. Your score may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

Disabilities

All academic and housing accommodation requests are managed by Disability Services & Student Support (DSSS). It is a student's responsibility to contact DSSS if they need accommodations or additional support. Any student who has, or thinks they may have, a physical, learning, or psychological disability may contact Disability Services at accessibility@oxy.edu to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic Integrity is a shared community value. It is built around trust and respect between members of the Occidental Community and embodies a commitment to honesty and integrity in every aspect of one's academic life.

All members of the Occidental community are committed to uphold the highest degree of academic integrity. Unless stipulated otherwise, the academic work done for all assignments is expected to be the student's own; students are expected to give proper credit to the ideas and work of others.

Generally speaking, you must cite the person at the end of the sentence in which you use another person's idea. When you use a specific phrase, you must put that phrase in quotation marks and cite the original author at the end of the sentence in which you use the phrase. If you wish to submit a piece of writing that you have used in another class, you must receive my permission before doing so.

Signing the Academic Integrity Commitment at the beginning of every semester represents a student's affirmation to uphold the shared values of honesty and integrity. When signing the Integrity Commitment associated with work in a course, students are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information; nor assisted others in these actions.

Support Services

A number of services are available here at Occidental College to make sure that you excel in your academically and socially.

There are a number of opportunities for **academic support**. Please visit the following website at <https://www.oxy.edu/academics/student-success> to see the variety of services offered, including writing support, tutoring, research assistance, language tutoring, and academic coaching.

The Emmons Wellness Center provides **medical services and counseling**. Visit their website for information on specific services provided: <https://www.oxy.edu/student-life/resources-support/emmons-wellness-center>

Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience

Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL website: <https://www.oxy.edu/student-life/resources-support/orsl/academic-accommodations>

Sexual Harassment and Assault Resources

In the event that you write or speak about having experienced discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic or sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment), as a designated Responsible Employee, I must inform the Civil Rights & Title IX Office. They will contact you to let you know about resources and support services at Oxy, as well as reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Civil Rights & Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options.

If you do not want the Civil Rights & Title IX Office contacted, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with:

- Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (myoung@oxy.edu)
- Oxy 24/7 Confidential Hotline (323-341-4141)

The College's civil rights policies, along with additional resources, can be found at: <https://www.oxy.edu/civil-rights-title-ix>. If you would like to contact the Civil Rights & Title IX Office directly, you may email Civil Rights & Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at fulcher@oxy.edu or call 323-259-1338.

Weekly Topics & Readings

The list below indicates reading assignments and class topics. All readings (excluding the required text) will be available on Moodle or linked below. You should do each day's readings before that day's class. I'll generally keep us on schedule but note that discussions may bleed over from one class to the next.

Part I. Political Institutions in Flux

Date	Topics	Readings Due & Additional Information
Week 1		
Mon, Jan 22	Course Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the syllabus
Wed, Jan 24	What's the Matter with California?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dan Walters. 2024. <i>CalMatters</i>. "It's a new year, but California will continue to struggle with existential issues in 2024." Ezra Klein. 2021. "California Is Making Liberals Squirm." <i>The New York Times</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alt. link: https://archive.is/z1cj3 <i>The Economist</i>. 2018. "Why one of America's richest states is also its poorest." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alt. link: https://archive.is/RpmZw
Week 2		
Mon, Jan 29	The Progressive Movement I: Initiatives and Referenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ken Miller. "Direct Democracy: The Initiative, Referendum, and Recall." Chapter 5 in <i>Governing California</i>
Wed, Jan 31	The Progressive Movement II: The Recall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz day! Laurel Rosenhall. 2021. <i>CalMatters</i>. "Recalling a California governor, explained" MOODLE: Walter J. Stone and Monti Narayan Datta. 2004. "Rationalizing the California Recall." <i>PS: Political Science and Politics</i>
Week 3		
Mon, Feb 5	Professionalizing the California Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOODLE: Peverill Squire. 1992. "The Theory of Legislative Institutionalization and the California Assembly," <i>Journal of Politics</i>, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 1026-1054.
Wed, Feb 7	Term Limits and the Future of the Legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz day! Bruce Cain, Thad Kousser, and Karl Kurtz. "The Legislature: Life Under Term Limits." Chapter 10 in <i>Governing California</i>.

Week 4		
Mon, Feb 12	Bargaining with Governors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethan Rarick, “Governors and the Executive Branch,” Chapter 9 in <i>Governing California</i>.
Wed, Feb 14	Movements and Elections in California	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz day! Frederick Douzet and Kenneth P. Miller. “California’s Political Geography: Coast vs. Inland and Increasingly Blue.” Chapter 3 in <i>Governing California</i>.
Week 5		
Mon, Feb 19	PRESIDENT’S DAY – NO CLASS	
Wed, Feb 21	Changing the Rules: Primary and Redistricting Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz day! Vladimir Kogan and Eric McGhee. “Redistricting: Did Radical Reform Produce Different Results?” Chapter 6 in <i>Governing California</i>. Seth Masket. “Polarization Interrupted? California’s Experiment with the Top-Two Primary,” Chapter 7 in <i>Governing California</i>.

Part II. The Politics of Diversity

Week 6		
Mon, Feb 26	The Geopolitics of Diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jack Citrin, Morris Levy, and Andrea Campbell. “State of Change: Immigration Politics and the New Demography of California.” Chapter 2 in <i>Governing California</i>.
Wed, Feb 28	2024 California Election Preview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz day! Sahil Kapur, Bridget Bowman, and Alexandra Marquez. <i>NBC News</i>. “9 California races that could decide the battle for the House in 2024.” Yue Stella Yu. 2023. <i>CalMatters</i>. “California Democrats are divided on Senate race, Gaza war.” Paul Mitchell. 2016. <i>Capitol Weekly</i>. “CA120: Gen X, millennials abound, but oldies decide elections.” Sameea Kamal. 2024. <i>CalMatters</i>. Why does California elect local judges?

Week 7		
Mon, Mar 4	Public Opinion in California Campus event with Raquel Centeno (USC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choi Auditorium • <i>Submit discussion questions on Moodle at least 24 hours beforehand</i> • Scott Keeter. <i>Pew Research</i>. "Public Opinion Polling Basics"
Wed, Mar 6	Political Incorporation of Minority Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz day! • MOODLE: Raphael Sonenshein and Mark H. Drayse. "The Political Geography of Coalitions in an Age of Immigration: The Case of Los Angeles." in <i>The New Political Geography of California</i>.
Week 8		
Mon, Mar 11	SPRING BREAK– NO CLASS	
Wed, Mar 13		
Week 9		
Mon, Mar 18	Case Study: Oakland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MOODLE: Frederick Douzet, "The Geopolitical Transition of Oakland." in <i>The New Political Geography of California</i>.
Wed, Mar 20	Race as a Political Issue: Demographics and Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz day! • Gustavo Arellano. 2019. "Pete Wilson still defending Prop. 187 and fighting for a better place in history." <i>The Los Angeles Times</i>. https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-11-17/proposition-187-pete-wilson-latinos • Jessica Ogilvie. 2019. "Proposition 187: Why a Ballot Initiative That Passed 25 Years Ago (And Never Went Into Law) Still Matters." <i>LAist</i>. https://laist.com/news/proposition-187-what-you-need-to-know • Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams. 2007. "Purple Voters in the Golden State." in <i>Hoover Digest</i>.

Week 10		
Mon, Mar 25	Moving On Up to Sacramento	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Mitchell. 2024. <i>Capitol Weekly</i>. “CA120: Voter reforms increased Latino votes but not Latino voting power.” • John Osborn D'Agostino, Sameea Kamal and Ariel Gans. 2023. <i>CalMatters</i>. “How much does the Legislature look like California?” • PODCAST: <i>Capitol Weekly Podcast</i>. “Paul Mitchell: Changing Voter Demographics; Plus the Senate Primary.” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ iTunes link: https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/paul-mitchell-changing-voter-demographics-plus-the/id1447532432?i=1000641679125 ○ Spotify link: https://open.spotify.com/episode/6mWUSnconk3lz4DRaxIpFI?si=ec7b8d921f2149c0
Wed, Mar 27	NO CLASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Hale will be presenting at the 2024 meeting of the Western Political Science Association in Vancouver

Part III. Perspectives on Policy

Week 11		
Mon, Apr 1	The Layers of California Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Max Neiman. “Local Government: Designing and Financing the Cities and Counties of California.” Chapter 13 in <i>Governing California</i>.
Wed, Apr 3	Comparative State Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz day! • Sarah Anzia. 2019. “Most research finds little evidence that interest groups influence US politics, but that’s because it’s focused on the federal government.” <i>LSE USAPP</i> blog. • MOODLE: Jake Grumbach. “Protecting Democracy from State Level Threats in the Age of National Parties.” In <i>More Than Red and Blue: Political Parties and American Democracy</i>. American Political Science Association and Protect Democracy. • <i>National Conference of State Legislators</i>. 2021. “Full- and Part-Time Legislatures.” • RADIO CLIP: “How Powerful is The Texas Governor Compared to Other State Governors?” <i>KUT News</i>. 2017.
Fri, Apr 5	California Politics in 2024 Campus event with California State Senator María Elena Durazo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:00 PM • Choi Auditorium • <i>Submit discussion questions on Moodle at least 24 hours beforehand</i> • <u>Please</u> attend if possible. You will receive a point of extra credit for attending.

Week 12		
Mon, Apr 8	Campus event with Los Angeles District Attorney George Gascón	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM • Mosher 1 • <i>Submit discussion questions on Moodle at least 24 hours beforehand</i> • This event is in place of normally scheduled class. <u>Please attend if possible.</u> • Emily Bazelon and Jennifer Medina. 2021. “He’s Remaking Criminal Justice in L.A. But How Far Is Too Far?” <i>The New York Times Magazine</i>.
Wed, Apr 10	<p>Crime and Punishment: California’s Public Safety Realignment</p> <p>With in-person guest lecture from Brandon Martin (PPIC)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Submit discussion questions on Moodle at least 24 hours beforehand</i> • Magnus Lofstrom, Joseph Hayes, Brandon Martin, Deepak Premkumar, and Vicki Hsieh. 2022. “Policy Brief: Racial Disparities in Traffic Stops.” <i>Public Policy Institute of California</i>. • Deepak Premkumar, Thomas Sloan, Magnus Lofstrom, Joseph Hayes, and Mary Severance. 2023. “Policy Brief: Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on Arrests in California.” <i>Public Policy Institute of California</i>. • Heather Harris and Stephanie Barton. 2023. “Policy Brief: Pandemic Policymaking and Changed Outcomes in Criminal Courts.” <i>Public Policy Institute of California</i>.
Week 13		
Mon, Apr 15	Education & Taxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David N. Plank and Susanna Loeb. “Education: Back From the Brink.” Chapter 14 in <i>Governing California</i>
Wed, Apr 17	Water and Environmental Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz day! • Megan Mullin. “Water in California: A Case Study in Federalism.” Chapter 15 in <i>Governing California</i>.

Week 14		
Mon, Apr 22	The Housing Crisis with Zoom guest lecture from Professor Stan Oklobdzija (Tulane University)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ZOOM LINK: https://occidental.zoom.us/j/86838206375 (Passcode: 216160) • <i>Submit discussion questions on Moodle at least 24 hours beforehand</i> • David Byler. 2021. "Why California's Population Boom Has Stalled." <i>The Washington Post</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alt. link: https://archive.is/9XnQi • Christian Leonard. 2023. "It's not just the Bay Area — the number of affordable homes is plummeting across California." <i>San Francisco Chronicle</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alt. link: https://archive.is/a5UZY
Wed, Apr 24	Reforming California & 2024 Election Update	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quiz day! • MOODLE: Michael S. Latner & Kyle Roach. 2011. "Mapping the Consequences of Electoral Reform." <i>The California Journal of Politics & Policy</i>. • TBA reading on the 2024 election
Week 15		
Mon, April 29	IN CLASS: California Politics Jeopardy & Snacks!	