**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE**

**COURSE SYLLABUS: RST 255**

**AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND RELIGION**

**Fall 2015**

COURSE SECTION: Sierra Hall 192, Mondays and Wednesdays 9:30a-10:45a

PROFESSOR: R. C. Rodman, PhD

FACULTY OFFICE: Santa Susanna 419. Office phone: 818-677-6878

FACULTY EMAIL: rrodman@csun.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Mondays and Wednesdays right after class until 12:20pm

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this class, students will learn about the religious and political influences on the formation of what has come to be known as “America.” Students will be introduced to the U.S. and California Constitutions and the historical, political, religious, and cultural debates and issues that the brought such documents into being. Students will learn about the complex task of forming a civil society by examining the underlying ideas and debates informing American politics. In this class, students learn about United States history; the Constitution of the United States; and the principles of state and local government. This course satisfies the Title V United States Constitution requirement and the California State and Local Government requirement.

II. TEXTBOOKS AND REQUIRED MATERIALS : You must have these materials with you in class.

* Corbett and Corbett, *Politics and Religion in the United States*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2014). ISBN 978-0-415-64463-1 PRINT ONLY (No digital download!)
* Rodman, ed., *Ever the Twain Shall Meet: Religion & Politics in the U.S*. (San Diego: Cognella Academic Publishing, 2015), ISBN: 978-1-62661-312-6 PRINT ONLY (Not digital download)
* Primary texts and readings posted on Moodle.

III. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND TITLE V

**Title V: United States Constitution and Government and California State and Local**

**Government Evaluation Criteria:**

• US-2 Criterion 1 Course content teaches the political philosophies of the framers of the Constitution.

• US-2 Criterion 2 Course content teaches the operation of United States political process and institutions under the US Constitution.

• US-2 Criterion 3 Course content teaches the rights and obligations of individual citizens in the political system established under the US Constitution.

• US-3 Criterion 1 Course content addresses the Constitution of the State of California.

• US-3 Criterion 2 Course content addresses the nature and processes of California state and local government.

• US-3 Criterion 3 Course content addresses the relationships between the US government and California’s state and local governments.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

* understand the development of United States and California political ideals, institutions, and processes;
* understand citizens’ rights and obligations established by the United States and California constitutions;
* understand the structures and processes of federal, California, and local governments;
* understand federal and state constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the history of legislative and judicial efforts to apply the principle of religious freedom;
* understand the role of religion in public life in the United States, California, and local municipalities, including its role in both political debate and public and private education;
* describe and analyze the histories of the United States and California over significant time periods;
* explain the principles and major provisions of the Constitutions of the United States and California;
* compare United States and California political institutions and practices;
* describe and examine the histories and development of political institutions as related to diverse peoples in the United States and California

IV. COURSE POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS

**Familiarity with Moodle**: Technological Information: This class will employ Moodle for both student assignments, class updates, and communication. It is your responsibility to learn how to use Moodle. For information and instructions about Moodle, go to: http://www.csun.edu/it/studentmoodle-help/

**Attendance and Participation:**

* Attendance is mandatory. I make no distinction between excused and unexcused absences. The more absences you have, the lower your grade. Leaving during class and being tardy will also lower this portion of your grade.
* Showing up isn’t enough. You must be fully prepared for each class. All assignments must be read prior to the class they are assigned, and all readings must be brought to class.
* You must fully participate in the class by asking/answering questions, fully participating in discussions, and fully engaging in any other activity of the class.
* Please make sure you attend to your personal needs before or after the class. You may not leave during class. No cell phones, texting, or Internet use for anything other than class work.

**Written Work:** All papers must meet basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper grammar, punctuation, and syntax, but also serious reflection on your topic. There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the Writing Program at CSUN’s Learning Resource Center, Room 408, Bayramian Hall, 818-677-2033 or go to: <http://www.csun.edu/lrc/writing.html>.

**Deadlines:** Because due dates are stated at the outset, all papers/assignments must be turned in or posted on Moodle on the date listed. Late work will be docked a point for each day late, as of the due date. Failure to show up on the day of presentations will result in forfeiting your ability to present and all the points that go with it.

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but also for the course.Plagiarism is one form of cheating, but not the only one. Other examples include “borrowing” stealing, buying or otherwise procuring papers and exams, or having someone else take an exam or write an essay for which you take credit. All instances of cheating will result no credit for the assignment and follow up with the Dean’s office.

**Special Accommodations**: If you have a documented learning disability and/or a physical disability and need special accommodations in order to complete course requirements, please make sure the instructor is informed.

**Contact with the Professor:** My office hours are posted above. I look forward to working with each of you in class and on an individual basis. Therefore, I urge you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you, and help you with the assignments. I especially urge you to see me if you are confused about the course or an assignment. Really successful students ask questions! Please contact me by email, in class, or during office hours with your questions, comments, or requests.

OUR CLASS CONTRACT

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| **What I Expect From You** | **What You Can Expect From Me** |
| You will treat everyone in class, including the professor, with respect and courtesy due all human beings. | I will treat you with the respect and courtesy due all human beings. |
| You will attend every class, give your full attention to the material, and conduct yourself in an appropriate manner. | I will attend every class, give my full attention to the material and conduct myself in an appropriate manner. |
| You will agree to do the work outlined in the syllabus on time. | I will return your work in a timely fashion. |
| You can ask for help. | I will assist you in any way I can, and make myself available to you via office hours. You can expect a response to email within 24 hours except in rare cases. |
| You will acknowledge that your perception of effort, by itself, is not enough to justify a distinguished grade. | I will not discriminate against you on the basis of your identity or your well-informed viewpoints. |
| You will prepare carefully for every class. | I will prepare carefully for every class. |
| You will not plagiarize, cheat, copy, or steal the work of others. | I will pursue the maximum punishment for plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of academic integrity. |
| You will not make excuses for your failure to do what you ought; you will accept the consequences – good and bad – of your actions. | I will keep careful records of your attendance, performance, and progress. |

V. ASSESSMENT (Point System)

* Attendance & Participation: 15 points (You lose partial points for: every absence; being late/leaving early; texting in class and not contributing in class)
* Discussion Questions: 30 points (Due beginning of every week as typed hard copy)
* Exams & quizzes: 40 points
* First Amendment Group Presentation & Essay: 10 points
* Final Essay: 5 points

TOTAL: 100 Points

**Grading: Plus-Minus System will be used**

**Letter Grade Allocation**

* 94-100 A
* 90-93 A-
* 87-89 B+
* 83-86 B
* 80-82 B-
* 77-79 C+
* 73-76 C
* 70-72 C-
* 60-69 D

VI. SCHEDULE

*You should have the week’s reading and assignments done on Monday of each week; you can finesse and correct your work as we discuss the materials in class. Warning: you will be asked about your reading/work! BRING ALL MATERIALS TO CLASS!!!*

**What is the First Amendment? Is America A Christian Nation?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 8/24 | Introduction to the course  Buy the course textbooks | Foundation questions  Interview assignment |
| Week of 8/31 | **Read**: Materials posted on Moodle  **Read:** Corbett, 1-middle of 35 | Type up interview, bring to class |

**How/why was America invented? Who gets rights? Who gives them?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 9/7  NO CLASS ON 9/7 (Labor Day) | **Read:** Rodman, ed., pp. 1-23 | DUE WEDNESDAY: Do the discussion questions on p. 23 |
| Week of 9/14  5 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 27-55  **Read:** Corbett, pp 35-44 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions on p. 55  **EXAM 1** |

**What did liberty mean for early colonists? Liberty for what, and from what?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 9/21 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 59-68  **Read:** Corbett, pp. 44-53 |  |

**Why did the framers of the Constitution studiously avoid religion?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 9/28 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 69-79  **Read** Corbett, pp. 53-63 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions on p. 79 |

**What is the Second Great Awakening? How do politics and religion intersect in it?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of  10/5  11 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 83-96 **Read:**  Corbett, pp. 64-top of 67 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions 1-7 on p. 105 |

**How did California become a state? What compromises were made for statehood, and why were they necessary?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 10/12  13 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 97-105  **Read:** California’s Constitution, selections on Moodle | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions 8-13 on p. 105  **EXAM 2** |

**How can folks who all purport to be Christian differ so much on the issue of slavery? Did Abraham Lincoln change his mind?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 10/19  15 | **Read:** Rodman 109-127  **Read:** Corbett, pp. 69-74 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions on p. 127 |

**What enabled women to be, and in what ways were they, influential in politics even though they couldn’t vote? What “weapons” did they use to engage in politics?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 10/26  17 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 131-141 **Read:** Corbett, pp. 72-74 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions on p. 141  **EXAM 3** |

**What is “Civil Religion”?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 11/2  19 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 145-154  **Read:** Corbett, pp. middle of 84-92 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions 1-4 on pp. 167 |

**Why was there such resistance to JFK & MLK, and where did it come from?**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 11/9  NO CLASS ON 11/11 (Veterans Day) | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 155-167 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions 5-7. To answer question 7, look at Jim Crow materials posted on Moodle. |
| Week of 11/16 | **Read:** Rodman, pp. 171-180  **Read:** Corbett, pp. 123-177 | DUE MONDAY: Discussion questions on p. 180  **EXAM 4** |

**Group Work**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| Week of 11/23 | Group Project assignments | Work independently in groups |
| Week of 11/30 | Group work, presentations | ESTABLISHMENT PRESENTATIONS on Weds. Dec. 2 |
| 12/7  LAST DAY OF CLASSES is 12/8 | Presentations | EXERCISE PRESENTATIONS  On Mon. Dec. 7 |

**Finals**

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| **Week of** | **What to Read/Do** | **Assignments** |
| 12/9-12/15 | **FINALS WEEK** | DUE: Final Essay, TBA |