

**PLSI 303-01: Fundamentals of Political Science
Fall 2023**

Time and Place of Class Meetings: Wednesday 2:00 pm-3:40 pm on Zoom

Instructor: Dr. Rebecca Eissler

Office Location: HUM 531

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2-3 pm (in person in HUM 531) and Wednesdays 4-5 pm (via Zoom), and by appointment (please email) via Zoom

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Note: I don't check my voicemail reliably, so please email me.

Course Description: Welcome to PLSI 303, Fundamentals of Political Science! This course introduces the SFSU Department of Political Science, and to the discipline and practice of political science for majors. Students will be introduced to the department (faculty, requirements, opportunities), to the different subfields of political science, and explore how political scientists design their research in an attempt to answer significant questions within politics. The course will also provide an overview of principal methodological approaches, introduction to research design, and principles of social scientific inquiry to better prepare students for other courses in the major, especially PLSI 304 Scientific Inquiry in Political Science. This course is designed to give students the foundational skills and knowledge to successfully complete a degree in the Department of Political Science.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 1) Introduces an overview of the PLSI Dept (faculty, subfields, opportunities)
- 2) Identify key characteristics of the discipline of political science, the main intellectual and methodological approaches, and how political science compares to and differs from other social sciences.
- 3) Identify different subfields of political science and demonstrate an understanding of the main objectives and methods of each subfield.
- 4) Gain understanding and mastery of basic principles of social science inquiry and a social scientific approach to the study of politics.
- 5) Demonstrate familiarity with the principles of research design in political science.

Required Materials:

Readings will be posted on the class Canvas page, which I expect students to be checking multiple times a week. There are no textbooks to purchase.

Note: If ever a student can't access a reading via a web link, it is the responsibility of the student to contact me to let me know about the issue. Not being able to access a reading is not an acceptable reason for not having completed the reading.

Activities

Name	Contribution to Grade	Description
Midterm Exam	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Midterm Exam will cover all material from Week 1 to Week 7.The exam will consist of True/False, matching, multiple-choice, and short answer questions
Final Exam	20%	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The Final Exam will cover all material from Week 10 to Week 16.The exam will consist of True/False, matching, multiple-choice, and short answer questions
Reading Quizzes and Assignments	45%	<p>All quizzes and assignments will be online on our class Canvas page:</p> <p>Quizzes will focus on the lectures and readings discussed in class during the week. Quizzes will be open on Canvas from 5 pm on Wednesdays until 11:59 pm the following Friday. Quizzes are open book/note. You may take each quiz two times – the highest score will be kept.</p> <p>Assignments are designed to help reinforce and actively engage with concepts discussed in class. Instructions will be posted on Canvas and will take the place of quizzes on designated weeks. They will be due on Fridays at 11:59 pm.</p>
Attendance and Participation	15%	<p>This is a highly interactive class; attendance at our class sessions is expected. Additionally, there may be additional activities that will receive credit in this section.</p> <p>Failure to attend class will negatively affect your attendance grade and overall performance in this course. Students are allowed 2 unexcused absences. If you miss more than two classes, your attendance and participation grade will start to go down for every additional missed class.</p> <p>Participation in the class includes arriving on time, reading the required material prior to class, asking questions, responding to questions from the instructor and your classmates, and participating in classroom discussions.</p>

Class Policies (A to Z)

Land Acknowledgement

The campuses of San Francisco State University on the San Francisco peninsula and north bay are located within the occupied territories of the Ohlone peoples and the Coastal Miwok (who, along with the Southern Pomo, are organized as the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria). This acknowledgment demonstrates a commitment to beginning the process of working to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism.

For more information about land acknowledgments and the Ohlone people:

<http://www.muwekma.org/home.html>

<https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/>

https://badndns.blogspot.com/2020/02/land-acknowledgment-why-do-it.html?fbclid=IwAR3Tc0zJ-8Jf0k5-7PdYr8YeCyaMnjcN6EM3VkiBPZcH2_5q0_DKcpJI9IA

Academic Calendar

To review course drop, withdrawal, instruction dates, or other information related to important dates at the university, visit the SF State academic calendar, here: <https://webapps.sfsu.edu/public/webcal/acadcalendar>.

Attendance

Students are encouraged to attend every class. I will take attendance in every class meeting. As we meet once weekly, students are allowed 2 excused absences. Students who miss in excess of 2 class sessions will see their attendance and participation portion of the grade affected. Students should come to class having read all material assigned up to and including that day. If you are absent from class, I am happy to discuss course material in my office hours after you have obtained the notes from another student.

Children

Your children are welcome in class and office hours! If for any reason, you need to have your children come with you to class, have them come with you. We will work together!

Communication

It's really important that I be able to communicate with you. I will send announcements at the start of each week, so please have announcements for the class turned on. If you need help with that please look at this page:

<https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/How-do-I-manage-my-Canvas-notification-settings-as-a-student/ta-p/434>

COVID/ Wildfire Contingency Plan

In the event that campus closes (whether for one week or for the remainder of the semester) because of COVID or wildfires, the affected class sessions will still meet via Zoom. I plan to email and upload to Canvas a Zoom link as soon as I am aware of a campus closure, but it is your responsibility to check email/the Canvas class page. During those online classes, if/when they happen, I kindly ask that you find a relatively quiet space, mute yourself when you are not speaking and have your cameras on.

This will also be the plan if at any point during the semester I should contract COVID, as I would not be able to come to campus. My fingers are crossed that we won't need any of this, but it's better to be prepared!

Drops, withdrawals and WU grades

Students may drop a class during the first two weeks. Students are encouraged to drop before the end of the second week if they don't want the class and no longer plan to attend. Dropping the class is the responsibility of the student! However, I reserve the right of dropping you from the course if: (1) you fail to log in within 3 days after the start of the semester; (2) you fail to log in for more than one week during the session; (3) if you fail to turn in less than half the assigned work or exams.

Students who do not drop and no longer attend may receive a WU grade (withdrawal-unauthorized). Please be aware that a WU grade is counted as an F for GPA purposes. After the second week, you can withdraw from a class only if you have **serious and compelling reasons with current, relevant supporting documentation**. The following are examples of **non-serious and non-compelling reasons** and would be denied:

- Changing major
- Poor academic performance in class
- Course no longer needed
- Missing pre-requisite(s)
- Instructor forgot to drop
- More time needed for other classes

Unexpected changes in work schedule or serious accident, protracted illness, or family emergencies may be considered serious and compelling if appropriate supporting documentation is attached. The petition must be submitted within a reasonable timeframe (e.g., within 2 weeks of illness or change in work hours) and must include your unofficial transcripts. In the last two weeks of the semester, you may not withdraw from a class or the University, except only in the case of a **documented** serious illness or verified accident.

Withdrawals cannot be initiated electronically and must be submitted using a paper application. A maximum of 18 units can be withdrawn, and a course can only be repeated once with a failing grade.

Depression

Undergraduate life can often involve depression, a serious matter that may need attention. If you suffer from depression or suicidal thoughts, please visit student health services or consult a health professional. You can also come and talk to me, and I'll assist you in finding help on or off campus. For emergencies, call (800) 273-8255 (anonymous, federally-funded suicide hotline) or (415) 781-0500 (a local crisis line) -- or visit a local 24-hour emergency room. For on-campus psychology & counseling appointments, call (415) 338-2208.

Disclosures of Sexual Violence (Title IX)

SF State fosters a campus free of sexual violence including sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, and/or any form of sex or gender discrimination. If you disclose a personal experience as an SF State student, the course instructor is required to notify the Dean of Students. To disclose any such violence confidentially, contact:

- The SAFE Place – (415) 338-2208; psyservs.sfsu.edu/content/safe-place
- Counseling and Psychological Services Center – (415) 338-2208; psyservs.sfsu.edu

Disability Access

Students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor. The [Disability Programs and Resource Center](#) (DPRC) is available to facilitate the reasonable accommodations process. The DPRC is located in the Student Service Building and can be reached by telephone (voice/TTY 415-338-2472) or by email to dprc@sfsu.edu.

Electronic Devices

Cell phones should be silent and put away during class time.

Email policy

I attempt to respond to all student emails in a timely fashion, but please allow 48-72 hours for a response. I likely will not respond to email on the weekends, starting Fridays at 5 pm. Additionally, when emailing me, a professional and respectful style of correspondence is expected. Students are responsible for regularly checking Canvas and their email address that is on record with the University for communications. These will be the primary modes of communication outside of class.

Grades

The course will use the plus/minus grading scale as follows:

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	≥93
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86

B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	<60

Scores of 0.5 and higher will be rounded up and scores of less than 0.5 will be rounded down.

Grade Appeals

How to appeal a grade: <https://senate.sfsu.edu/policy/grade-appeal-practices-and-procedures-current>.

Grading Questions

All questions regarding grades or exam questions must be submitted in writing no more than 10 days after the return of the graded assignment. Additionally, these questions must include a reasonable explanation of why the answer you gave on the test is accurate, including any citations from class lectures or readings to support your answer.

Health & Safety Commitments

Your health and safety are our paramount concern at SF State. We ask every member of our campus community to join a pledge to make and follow plans to keep fellow students, faculty, and staff safe and well. Feeling confident, safe and well will help you focus on your academic success. To participate in this class, all students are expected to:

- **stay informed** on the most up-to-date information related to SF State's COVID-19 response and Campus Comeback plan
- **plan ahead for possible class disruptions** due to COVID-19 or other unexpected events, such as unhealthy air quality caused by smoke
- **take care of yourself and others** by staying home when you aren't feeling well or believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, and
- **follow all required health and safety guidelines**, including verifying your proof of vaccination or exemption status before coming to class; and wearing a multilayered mask over your nose and mouth at all times when indoors on campus; and wash your hands as often as possible (i.e. soap and water, hand sanitizer).

For more information about SF State's response to COVID-19 and how you can keep yourself and others safe and well, visit the [Campus Comeback Website](#). To plan for how you will maintain your academic success when unexpected events disrupt regular

teaching and learning activities, follow the information on the course syllabus and consult the [Keep Learning](#) guide.

In-class Discussion

Occasionally, there will be in class discussions related to political issues and current events related to the course material. I expect and want to hear a range of opinions from the students in the class. Common kindness and courtesy are expected from all participants and all opinions will be treated with respect. My role is to ask follow-up questions and solicit counterarguments related to the topic at hand; it is not my intention to sway your views and I encourage the respectful exchange of all ideas.

Late Work Policy

Be sure to pay close attention to deadlines—there are many deadlines and while there will be reminders, completing the work is your responsibility. Every student gets one late quiz or assignment that will be accepted without documentation of a serious or compelling reason. To use that, students must email me (reissler@sfsu) as soon as you realize you missed the assignment deadline. Late work that is accepted is subject to a 10% penalty. Exams are not eligible for this policy.

Makeup Exams

Makeup exams will only be given in the case of medical reasons or in extraordinary circumstances. Students must notify me in advance of the close of the exam to schedule such a makeup. The format of the makeup exam is at my discretion, so as to preserve academic integrity. Additionally, written documentation of the medical reason or extraordinary circumstance will be required, and students should expect the documentation to be verified. Additionally, makeup exams may be subject the late work penalty policy.

Office Hours

Students are encouraged to attend my office hours to discuss course material and assignments. This is an opportunity to get better, more in-depth answers to any concerns. I am happy to schedule appointments during university business hours, should there be conflicts with my standard weekly office hours. Additionally, I welcome you to come to my office hours to meet with me for major advising or any other concerns.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism includes using someone else's exact words, or even their ideas but not their exact words, without proper citation. It is a good rule of thumb that if you did not know the information before you started the assignment, you must cite your source. If you are still unsure of how to cite, ask your instructor or a librarian.

For more information on Standards for Student Conduct, visit the Office of Student Conduct site, here: <https://conduct.sfsu.edu/standards>.

Religious Observance

If you will miss class due to religious observance, please notify me at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance. If you must miss a class or quiz or an examination for religious observance, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Syllabus Change Policy

Disclaimer: This syllabus is subject to change.

Important note about a possible work stoppage during the semester

The California Faculty Association (the labor union of Lecturers, Professors, Coaches, Counselors, and Librarians across the 23 CSU campuses) is in a difficult contract dispute with California State University management. It is possible that we will call a strike or other work stoppage this term. I promise to promptly inform you of any schedule disruption. Our working conditions are your learning conditions; we seek to protect both. For further information go to www.CFAbargaining.org.

University Grading Information

Information regarding grades: <https://cms.sfsu.edu/content/grades-student-information>.

Course Schedule

Every effort will be made to keep to the plan below. As the instructor, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way so as to serve the educational needs of the students enrolled in this class. Any changes will be announced in class and coming to class will ensure that you are up to date on any changes.

Date	Topics & Activities	Deliverables	Reading
Week 1 (8/23)	Introduction to the Class, the Department, and the Discipline	Syllabus Quiz-Due Friday Sept 1st at 11:59pm	Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff Chapter 2 Fraga et al. 2020
Week 2 (8/30)	Research in Political Science and Formulating Research Questions	Quiz #1 (Covers Weeks 1 & 2)- Due Friday Sept 8th @ 11:59 pm	Getting Started by Baglione Bose and Burnett 2022
Week 3 (9/6)	Developing a Literature Review with Librarian Mira Foster	Finding Sources Assignment-Due Friday Sept 15th@ 11:59 pm	Johnson, Reynolds, and Mycoff Chapter 3 Willeck and Mendelberg 2022 (Skim)
Week 4 (9/13)	Developing Theory		Johnson and Reynolds pg 60-81 Street et al. 2017

Date	Topics & Activities	Deliverables	Reading
Week 5 (9/20)	Developing Concepts and measures	Quiz #2 (Covers Weeks 3, 4, & 5) Due Friday Sept 29th @ 11:59 pm	Johnson and Reynolds pg.81-86 Pollock and Edwards pg. 1-13 Cohen and Luttig 2019
Week 6 (9/27)	Describing Variables		Chapter 2 of Pollock and Edwards
Week 7 (10/4)	Measures of Central Tendency		Review Chapter 2 of Pollock and Edwards Chapter 1 of V.O. Key
Week 8 (10/11)	Midterm Exam	No Class: Exam Available Thursday, Oct 5 th to Saturday Oct 14 th @ 11:59pm	
Week 9 (10/18)	Research Design		Chapter 4 of Kellstadt and Witten
Week 10 (10/25)	Major Requirements: How to Navigate a BA in Political Science Class visit from SFSU American Politics Faculty	Quiz #3 (Covers Weeks 9 & 10) Due Friday Nov 3 rd @ 11:59 pm	Lowi et. al. Chapter1: The Five Principles of Politics.
Week 11 (11/1)	What can I do with a B.A. in PLSI? Class visit from SFSU Comparative Politics Faculty		O'Neil Chapter 1: Introduction to Comparative Politics
Week 12 (11/8)	ADVISING DAY (NO CLASS)	Advising Assignment Due Friday Nov 17 th @ 11:59 pm	
Week 13 (11/15)	Law school: What it takes and how to get there PLSI		Murphy et. al. Chapter 1: Political Jurisprudence

Date	Topics & Activities	Deliverables	Reading
	Class visit from SFSU Public Law Faculty		
Week 14 (11/23)	FALL BREAK: No Class; have a great day!		
Week 15 (11/29)	What are the options for graduate programs (non-law)	Quiz #4 (Covers Weeks 11, 13, 15) Due Friday Dec 8 th @ 11:59 pm	Read Section 1: What is Political Theory
	Class visit from SFSU Political Theory Faculty		
Week 16 (12/6)	Ethics in political science research		Read two articles on Ethics
Week 17	Finals Week	Exam will be open 12/7 to 12/15	