

“There pressed down on the landscape a smell like water that householders have inadvertently left flowers in while they went off for a summer holiday. It was an ideal setting for a talk about politics.”

The Earl of Louisiana  
A.J. Liebling

Liebling wrote those words more than 40 years ago about a trip to Baton Rouge, a state capital with a rich past and a big river that helped form its history. Sacramento has its own big river, vivid past and an ever-changing quota of characters who writing new chapters for California’s own story.

Reporters privileged to cover California government and politics get a crack telling the first version of history in their accounts for newspapers, magazines, radio, television and Web sites. In J298, students will learn how to report and write about state government and politics both in the classroom and in the Capitol.

Students with a passion for government and politics and curiosity about how their state works will learn the basics of news reporting by writing daily and feature stories about what happens in the Capitol and its environs. Instruction will include reporting techniques, public records and discussions of rules for interviews. Special attention will be paid to the legal consequences of using confidential sources for government reporting.

The state budget process will be reviewed in detail, as the class overlaps the legally required deadlines for passage of the spending plan for the new fiscal year. Students will select specific policy areas for their beats and write stories about developments in those areas. Guest speakers will include lobbyists, legislative staff members, reporters who will share their insights on California politics.