Course Outline for Political Science 1

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Catalog Description:

POSC 1 - Introduction to American Government 3.00 units
Introduction to the historical development and current structure of American political ideals and institutions, including the Federal and California Constitutions, civil liberties and civil rights, political parties, campaigns and elections, and citizenship duties.

Strongly Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL 1A

Grading Option: Optional

Discipline:

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<th>Units</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
<th>Contact Hours</th>
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Prerequisite Skills:
None

Measurable Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:
1. analyze political issues in a critical and objective manner;
2. identify and explain the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy;
3. explain the basic principles of a democratic form of government;
4. discuss the concept of federalism and evaluate its impact on the American political system;
5. explain the basic principles of the Federal and California Constitutions and place these principles in the context of American history;
6. discuss the concept of separation of powers and identify the roles of the three branches of government;
7. describe and assess the process of enacting legislation in the U.S.;
8. discuss the expansion of suffrage and its impact on government and society;
9. describe the historical context of United States constitutional amendments;
10. identify and explain the concept of civil liberties and civil rights and their application in American society;
11. describe the development of national political party systems and evaluate the role of political parties in American government;
12. describe and assess patterns of voting and political participation in the U.S.;
13. analyze the roles of the media in contemporary U.S. politics;
14. describe the unique characteristics of California history, political institutions, party system, and public policy making;
15. apply course content to contemporary political events locally, nationally, and internationally.

Course Content:

1. Gain a thorough understanding of the fundamental history, theoretical principles, and processes that guided the foundation of American democracy
2. The Constitutional sources of American political culture
3. The historical development of American Federalism, division of powers, and contemporary Federal/State relations
4. The adoption of the Federal Constitution and the enactment of subsequent amendments
5. The roles and responsibilities of the Legislative Branch including:
   - A. Lawmaking
   - B. Representation
   - C. Oversight
6. The roles and responsibilities of the Executive Branch including:
   - A. The American Presidency
   - B. Federal Bureaucracy
   - C. Diplomacy
7. The roles and responsibilities of the Judicial Branch including:
   - A. The Federal Court system
   - B. Judicial Review
8. The importance and implications of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights including:
   - A. The Bill of Rights
   - B. Constitutional Amendments
   - C. Due Process and Equal Protection
   - D. History of the Civil Rights Movement
9. The development and role of political parties and special interests in U.S. politics
10. The role of the media and public opinion polling in U.S. politics
11. Civic participation and the rights and duties of citizenship in the U.S.
12. The ramifications of economic and social policies for national, California, and local governments
13. The development of the California Constitution
14. The development of California’s political institutions including:
   A. The plural executive
   B. The legislative
   C. The judiciary

15. Analysis of the unique characteristics of California’s politics: the initiative, referendum, and recall

Methods of Presentation
1. Lecture/Discussion
2. Audio and video presentation
3. Computer assisted instruction
4. Course simulations (such as mock Congress)

Assignments and Methods of Evaluating Student Progress
1. Typical Assignments
   A. Write a persuasive essay on a controversial contemporary political topic and support your opinion with academic facts and evidence.
   B. Summarize and critically analyze an important court decision, piece of legislation or executive order showing its relationship to key principles of the US Constitution.
   C. Develop a research question on a political topic related to course content and write a thesis-driven paper that answers your question and is supported with academic political science research.
   D. Work in a group to research key facets of a ballot initiative, political candidate or other important political issue and present research findings to the class.

2. Methods of Evaluating Student Progress
   A. Quizzes
   B. Midterm Examination
   C. Written assignments
   D. Oral presentations (individual or group)
   E. Class Participation
   F. Final Examination
   G. Attendance

3. Student Learning Outcomes
   Upon the completion of this course, the student should be able to:
   A. Develop a basic understanding of the American Political system—it’s origins, structure and institutions-to enable students to be active and informed citizens.
   B. Strengthen students’ ability to take and persuasively support a political position with evidence/argumentation.
   C. Understand of the origins, structure, and institutions of American Political system and the value of this knowledge in sustaining American democracy.

Textbooks (Typical):

Special Student Materials
Abbreviated Class Schedule Description:

Strongly Recommended: Eligibility for ENGL 1A