

Lassen Community College Course Outline

PLSC-1 American Institutions

3.0 Units

I. Catalog Description

Designed to acquaint the individual with the basic principles of American national, state and local governments. Content will include the U.S. Constitution (origin and development), general functions and relationships of the three levels of government, political parties and electoral processes. This course may be used for partial fulfillment of the U.S. History and American Institutions requirement for graduation from four-year colleges. This course has been approved for hybrid, online and correspondence delivery.

Recommended Preparation: Successful completion of ENGL105 or equivalent multiple measures placement.

Transfers to both UC/CSU

General Education Area: B

CSU GE Area: D8

IGETC GE Area: 4H

C-ID POLS 110

51 Hours Lecture, 102 Hours Expected Outside Class Work, 153 Total Student Learning Hours

Scheduled: Fall, Spring

II. Coding Information

Repeatability: Not Repeatable, Take 1 Time

Grading Option: Graded or Pass/No Pass

Credit Type: Credit - Degree Applicable

TOP Code: 220700

III. Course Objectives

A. Course Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. In an essay or exam, the student will demonstrate knowledge of the basic principles of American national, state and local governments, content of the U.S. Constitution and Amendments, functions of the three branches of government, political parties and the electoral process, major court decisions involving Constitutional protection, and components of U.S foreign policy.
2. Given a current or historical political topic, the student will demonstrate the ability to research, using the Internet and other media, the background and implications of the issue, and write an organized documented essay or paper, giving their findings and interpretations.
3. Demonstrate competency in writing or by participating in an activity, how to effectively participate in politics at the national, state, and county and/or city levels.

B. Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. To identify some key terms and concepts in the political system and distinguish between what may be idealistic and what may be normative.

2. List the characteristics, identifying features, and major components of the nation's and the world's ideologies.
3. Evaluate the forces which led to the construction of the Constitution and identify the Constitution's major features.
4. Compare and contrast the provisions and protections of the U.S. Constitution and the constitution of the State of California.
5. Chart the formation of the two-party system identifying the major political parties.
6. List the functions of special interest groups. Identify major special interest groups by name and issue area.
7. Identify factors that shape politics and policy making including diversity, political culture, political socialization, political ideologies and public opinion.
8. Identify the major components of the campaign process.
9. Identify major voting rights legislation
10. List both the delegated or expressed powers and the implied powers of the president.
11. Evaluate the extent to which personality affects the office of the President
12. List the basic powers of Congress. Compare the characteristics of the House of Representatives with the Senate.
13. Chart the bill process.
14. Identify the role of the states and local communities.
15. Evaluate the relationship between the states, the local communities and the national government.
16. List the California Courts and the Federal Courts and their jurisdictions.
17. List the basic protections afforded by the Constitution and subsequently evaluate the consequences of the major court decisions regarding those protections.
18. Identify the major factors affecting the economic system. List the consequences of policy decisions such as government spending and taxation. Evaluate the importance of varying economic periods of inflation, recession and depression.
19. Reconstruct and evaluate the major events in U.S. foreign policy and assess the implications of events such as war and terrorism.

IV. Course Content

Students should be able to identify the major components of the political system including the U.S. Constitution, and to evaluate the system critically.

A. The Political Framework

1. Political terms, concepts, philosophies, and ideologies. Identifying and evaluating key terms and concepts such as democracy, freedom and legitimacy to distinguish between and list the major ideologies in the U.S. and in the World. The process of amending and interpreting the Constitution and the California Constitution.
2. Framing the Constitution to evaluate the forces which led to the construction of the Constitution and identify the major components. Individual and group political behavior of Americans and California constitution, such as elections, interest groups, political parties and the media.
3. Identify the major sources of conflict between the national government and the states, including the theory and practice of federalism, and the contemporary operations of California state and local politics institutions within the framework of federal-state relations.

B. Political Parties and Voting Interest Groups

1. Evaluate the political participation process based on factors that shape politics

and policymaking including diversity, political socialization, political ideologies and public opinion, and media, and distinguish between the activities of political parties and interest groups.

2. Identify major rights in legislation.

C. The Institutions of Government

1. The Executive Branch

- a. National - President
- b. State - the Governor
- c. Local - the Mayor/Town Manager

2. The Legislative Branch

- a. National - Congress (Senate/House of Rep)
- b. State - State Court System/Superior Court
- c. Local - Town Council

3. The Judiciary Branch

- a. National - Federal Court System/Supreme Court
- b. State - State Court System/superior Court
- c. Local - Municipal/County Court Systems

4. The Bureaucracy

Identify the layers of government from the national government level down through the state and local levels.

D. The Rights of Citizens

1. Civil Liberties

To identify the basic protection afforded by the constitution such as freedom of religion and freedom of speech. To evaluate the rights of persons accused of crimes through such concepts as search and seizure, self-incrimination and the right of counsel.

2. Civil Rights

To identify past and present discriminatory practices and to evaluate the implications to present day society.

E. Public Policy

1. Economic Policy

To identify the major factors in our economic systems and to list the consequences of such policies as spending and taxation and the consequences of varying periods of recessions or depressions.

2. Foreign Policy

To reconstruct the major events in U.S. foreign policy and to evaluate the implications of events such as war, summit meetings and terrorism.

V. Assignments

A. Appropriate Readings

A student college level text supplemented by newspaper articles, journal articles or magazines. The bureaucratic process will be explored and studied by assignment.

B. Writing Assignments

A writing component will be included in each examination. Additional writing is expected through projects which include letters to political figures, letters to newspapers, comparison and contrast papers or book reviews on selected political topics.

C. Expected Outside Assignments

Students will have the opportunity during the course to attend political events, attend a court proceeding, watch and evaluate the national news, register to vote and vote in

a local election, state or national election or work on a candidate's campaign. Interviews will also include the pulse on politics within the state and local community.

When opportunity presents, guest speakers will be visiting the live-hybrid class to educate the "real world" experience of politics in action on a local and state level.

D. Specific Assignments that Demonstrate Critical Thinking

The course is designed to cause students to go beyond the factual information and assess the degree to which theory relates to reality. In the political sphere opinions are vital; consequently students are encouraged to develop independence of thought in order to make reasoned decisions in the future. Students are invited to offer opinions but at the same time to detect faulty reasoning. The political sphere almost of necessity invites criticism and this is encouraged. As topics are discussed, students are expected to test theories based on diversity, political socialization, and ideologies and explore public opinion in the topics. Students are expected to challenge themselves and their peers realizing that they may be in turn criticized or presented with counter arguments.

VI. Methods of Evaluation

Traditional Classroom Instruction

Students must demonstrate mastery of content through evaluations using a mixed format. Students are required to write letters to political figures or write comparison and contrast papers on current topics or issue areas.

1. Objective examination including multiple choice, matching, and completions
2. Essay examinations
3. Writing projects

Correspondence Delivery

Same as face to face with the exception of the desired use of proctored exams and exclusion of participation in classroom activities. Students will be expected to complete assignments and activities equivalent to in-class assignments and activities. Written correspondence and a minimum of six opportunities for feedback will be utilized to maintain effective communication between instructor and student.

Online Delivery

Same as face-to-face instruction with the addition of asynchronous and synchronous discussions, online quizzes and exams. Students will be expected to complete assignments and activities equivalent to in-class assignments and activities. Electronic communication and a minimum of six opportunities for feedback will be utilized to maintain effective communication between instructor and student.

Hybrid Evaluation

A combination of traditional classroom and online evaluations will be used. These include objective examinations and essay examinations in the traditional classroom setting and online quizzes and exams, essay forum postings, chat rooms, and email communications in the hybrid component of the course.

VII. Methods of Delivery

Check those delivery methods for which, this course has been separately approved by the Curriculum/Academic Standards Committee.

Traditional Classroom Delivery **Correspondence Delivery**

Hybrid Delivery

Online Delivery

Traditional Classroom Instruction

Lecture, discussion, audio-visual media, and other appropriate methods.

Correspondence Delivery

Assigned readings, instructor-generated typed handouts, typed lecture materials, exercises and assignments equal to face to face instructional delivery. Written correspondence and a minimum of six opportunities for feedback will be utilized to maintain effective communication between instructor and student.

Online Delivery

Assigned readings, online-delivered instructor-generated written activities, lecture material, exercises, and assignments. Web-links to relevant websites and exercises may be used to supplement instructor-generated lecture material. Student and instructor participation in forum-based discussions. Electronic communication and a minimum of six opportunities for feedback will be utilized to maintain effective communication between instructor and student.

Hybrid Delivery

A combination of traditional classroom and online instruction will be utilized. Each semester-a minimum of 17 hours will be taught face-to face by the instructor and the remaining hours will be instructed online through the technology platform adopted by the District. Traditional class instruction will consist of exercises/assignments, lectures, visual aids, and practice exercises. Online delivery will consist of exercises/assignments, lecture posts, discussions, adding extra resources and other media sources as appropriate.

VIII. Representative Texts and Supplies

“Government by the People” 27th Edition, 2021, ISBN 10:13-690018-6, ISBN-13: 978-0-13-690018-4 Rental Edition ISBN 10:0-13-689994-3 ISBN 13:978-0-13-689994-5

Readings about California government and politics provided by Instructor

IX. Discipline/s Assignment

History, Political Science

X. Course Status

Current Status: Active

Original Approval Date: 3/27/1990

Revised By: Toni Poulsen

Curriculum/Academic Standards Committee Revision Date 11/01/2022