GROSSMONT COLLEGE

Official Course Outline

# POLITICAL SCIENCE 121 – INTRODUCTION TO U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

1. Course Number Course Title Semester Units Semester Hours

POSC 121 Introduction to U.S. 3 3 hours lecture: 48-54 hours

Government and Politics 96-108 outside-of-class hours 144-162 total hours

2. Course Prerequisites

None

Corequisite

None.

Recommended Preparation

A “C” grade or higher or “Pass” in English 110 or ESL 119 or equivalent.

3. Catalog Description

This course analyzes the evolution of the structures and functions of the U.S. and California political systems from the time of the nation’s founding to the current day in what is now the United States. This course emphasizes the continuity and uniqueness of the American political experience and how that experience has derived from other political cultures. This will be examined in the context of the larger cultural, economic, and sociological forces shaping the U.S. political system. Attention will also be given to significant events affecting the evolution of the U.S. political system since its founding. The development and evolution of the U.S. Constitution and policy making role of traditional political institutions such as the presidency, the Congress, and the judiciary will be explored. The impact of other political forces such as mass movements, the media, the bureaucracy, interest groups and ethnic and social groups will also be examined. All topics covered in the course will be illustrated through reference to actual political events occurring as the course progresses.

4. Course Objectives

Students will:

a. Evaluate the goals, processes, and problems of government and politics in the United States.

b. Examine the ideal and reality of democracy in the United States as well as various theories of how political power is exercised

c. Examine the historical origins and continuing evolution of the U.S. Constitution, especially with regard to citizens’ rights, liberties, and responsibilities.

d. Analyze the structure and functions of U.S. government and learn how changes in public opinion, ethnic and social group pressures, interest group pressures, and economic imperatives have been transformed by government into social and political policy.

POLITICAL SCIENCE 121 – INTRODUCTION TO U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS page 2

4. Course Objectves (continued)

e. Examine the U.S. Federal system including the evolution of the relation of states and regions of the United States to each other and to the federal government, with a special focus on California.

f. Explore the evolution of the role of major ethnic and social groups in U.S. Government and politics.

g. Assess U.S. government and politics in order to be able to make critical and informed decisions about the U.S. political system and their participatory role in the system.

h. Examine the evolution of U.S. foreign policy and the roles played by the United States in international relations.

i. Examine the evolution of social and economic policy and the cultural, economic, and ideological forces impacting the development of said policy.

5. Instructional Facilities

a. Standard classroom with whiteboard/blackboard and seats fitted for note taking.

b. Maps (primarily U.S. topographical and political).

c. Audiovisual equipment – television, video clips, overhead projector, projection screen, digital processing presenter, computer with data projector monitor and internet access.

6. Special Materials Required of Student

None.

7. Course Content

Comprised of units to give perspectives on the structure and function of the U.S. and California Governments, especially including:

a. Democratic political theory including different assessments of how political power is exercised in the U.S. and California.

b. The evolution of the U.S. Constitution including the philosophies of the framers of the Constitution and the debate over its ratification.

c. The development of civil liberties and civil rights in the U.S.

d. Ways, mean, and impact of political participation by individuals, ethnic groups, and social groups.

e. The role and impact of linkage institutions such as interest groups, the media, and political parties.

f. The structures, functions, and processes of governmental and other political institutions and their impacts on the U.S. political system.

g. The relations between different levels of government, especially focusing on U.S.-California relations.

h. The evolution and contemporary status of economic, social, and foreign policies

8. Method of Instruction

a. Class discussions.

b. Lecture.

c. Multimedia presentations.

9. Methods of Evaluating Student Performance

a. Quizzes and examinations, including a final exam: objective and essay questions.

b. Written and oral projects stressing analysis and evaluation, and including an internet research component on topics such as state and national governmental relations, judicial decisions affecting civil rights or economic policy proposals.

.

# POLITICAL SCIENCE 121 – INTRODUCTION TO U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS page 3

10. Outside Class Assignments

a. Textbook reading.

b. Conducting research in preparation for written and/or oral projects on topics such as state and national governmental relations, judicial decisions affecting civil rights or economic policy proposals.

11. Texts

a. Representative Text(s):

(1) Burns, James MacGregor, et al. *Government By The People*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2011.

(2) Dye, Thomas. *Politics in America*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2010.

(3) Greenberg, Edward and Benjamin Page. *Struggle for Democracy*. New York, NY: Addison, Wesley, Longman, 2010.

(4) Braunwarth, Joseph, Dewhirst, Saffell, and Stadelman. *Open to Debate: An Introduction to United States Government and Politics.*  San Diego, CA: National Social Science Press, 2011.

(5) Patterson, Thomas E. *We the People*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill College, 2010.

(6) Lawrence, David G. *California: The Politics of* *Diversity*. Stamford, CT: Wadsworth, 2012.

b. Supplementary texts and workbooks:

None.

Addendum: Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, our students will be able to do the following:

* 1. Describe the structure of the US national government and evaluate the roles of major forces shaping the formation of public policy including public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.
  2. Describe the origins and evolution of the US Constitution, especially with regard to citizens’ rights.
  3. Evaluate the dynamics of a Federal system with particular attention to the relationships between California and the Federal government.

Date approved by the Governing Board: May 21, 2013