Course Syllabus

Department: Social Sciences

Date: 4/1/12

I. Course Prefix and Number: POL 100

Course Name: American Government

Credit Hours and Contact Hours: 3 credit hours and 3 contact hours

Catalog Description including pre- and co-requisites: no pre-requisites or co-requisites

This course explores the nature and dynamics of the American political system, including the basic structure, functions, and processes of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the roles of political parties and special interest groups, the mechanics of political campaigns and elections, the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, and prominent issues in U.S. domestic and foreign policy.

II. Course Outcomes and Objectives

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the methods political scientists use to explore political phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and the employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis.

- Demonstrate knowledge of the major concepts, models and issues of American government (including the basic structure, functions, and processes of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, the roles of political parties, the mechanics of political campaigns and elections and the major features of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights) so as to better equip themselves with the knowledge, skills and values necessary to be involved in their communities.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the major issues in American foreign policy, and how the federal government handles issues related to immigration and the management of natural resources, and thereby obtain some of the insights necessary to live interdependently in a diverse, sustainable global community.
• Demonstrate the ability to comprehend, interpret, analyze and evaluate college-level primary and secondary source readings in the field of American government.

• Identify, analyze and evaluate arguments made by some of the major authors in the field of American government, and, in their own writing, will demonstrate well-reasoned arguments when interpreting political science-related subject matter.

• Demonstrate the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, use and share information from a range of published and electronic political science-related resources.

**Relationship to Academic Programs and Curriculum:**

This course fulfills the SUNY Gen Ed requirement of 3 credits of Social Science coursework. It is also a Social Science elective.

**College Learning Outcomes Addressed by the Course:**

- [ ] writing
- [ ] oral communications
- **X** reading
- [ ] mathematics
- **X** critical thinking
- [ ] computer literacy
- [ ] ethics/values
- **X** citizenship
- **X** global concerns
- **X** information resources

**III. Instructional Materials and Methods**

**Types of Course Materials:**

Textbook, published primary source reader (or electronic equivalent), assigned political science monograph or issues-debate reader, College learning management system.

**Methods of Instruction:**

Lecture, reading and discussion

**IV. Assessment Measures:**

- Essay exams and/or quizzes will be employed to assess students’ understanding of the methods political scientists use to explore political phenomena, including observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, and employment of mathematical and interpretive analysis. (Critical Thinking competency)

- Essay exams and/or quizzes will be employed to assess students’ knowledge of the major concepts, models and issues of American government, including the basic structure, functions, and processes of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of
government, the roles of political parties, the mechanics of political campaigns and elections and the major features of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. (Critical Thinking and Citizenship competencies).

- Essay exams and/or quizzes will be employed to assess students’ ability to comprehend, interpret, analyze and evaluate college-level primary and secondary source readings in the field of American government (Reading competency).

- An assigned paper (critical book review or research paper) will be employed to assess students’ ability to gather information from a range of published and electronic political science-related sources, to identify, analyze and evaluate arguments made by some of the major authors in the field of American government, and to develop a well-reasoned and evidence-supported argument (Critical thinking, Computer Literacy and Information Management competencies).

- Essay exams and/or quizzes will be employed to assess students’ understanding of the major issues in American foreign policy and how the federal government handles issues related to immigration and the management of natural resources. (Global Concerns competency).

V. General Outline of Topics Covered:

What a Political Scientist Does: Methods, Research, Analysis and Interpretation

The Nature of Democratic Government & the Alternatives

The U.S. Constitution

Federalism

Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

Public Opinion & Political Socialization

Interest Groups & Lobbies

Political Parties

Campaigns and Elections

Politics & the Media

The Legislative Branch: Congress

The Executive Branch: The Presidency

The Judiciary: The Supreme Court
The Bureaucracy

Domestic & Economic Policy

American Foreign Policy