WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY
Division of Graduate & Continuing Education

Political Science 101
AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

2014 Summer Session II
On-Line

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Office: Parenzo 110
Office Hours: by appointment

Note 1: For Westfield State students, this course earns 3 of the 9 required “Social Science” credits in the Common Core of Studies, and counts as the 3 required credits in the U.S. History & Government [HSGV] area.

Course Description
This course is a college-level introduction to American national government and politics. But this is not a glorified version of your high school civics course. Yes, we will use a textbook, but there the similarity ends. The authors and publisher of our text have made it very easy for us to examine not only the history and operation of American political institutions and processes but also to comprehend elements of continuity and change in the American political system and the social, cultural, and economic contexts in which these institutions have functioned and are functioning, as well as the nature and scope of the policies generated by those institutions and processes.

Our PLATO course website contains the syllabus, instructor announcements, exam question study lists, some of the instructor’s lecture notes from his daytime course, and additional readings. Students are expected to consult PLATO several times each week for updated information and announcements. The readings on PLATO will keep you up to date on important themes in the course and are considered part of the essential readings for the course. You will also find the assigned Videos on PLATO (as well as transcripts for some).

Course Requirements and Grades

1. Three bi-weekly tests on material for each week. Each test counts 25% of course grade. 75% of course grade
2. Paper (3,000-4,000 words) analyzing the current struggle over voting rights & voter suppression. 25% of grade

Each bi-weekly test will be posted on the PLATO Course Website no later than 6:00 pm on the Thursday of the 2nd, 4th and 6th weeks of the course and will be due no later than 11:59 PM the following Sunday. Students have 5 hours to complete each test. Study questions for each test will be posted by 9:00 AM on the 1st, 3rd and 5th Mondays of the course and should serve as your study guides and road maps through the assigned readings, videos, and instructor’s lecture notes for each test.

Textbook
An unbound, 3-hole punched paper copy of the following textbook can be purchased from the College Bookstore for approximately $87, or an on-line version can be rented for 180 days directly from the publisher for approximately $43. Publisher can be reached at the following website: www.coursesmart.com/9780205826353.

Course Outline & Assignment Schedule

Week 1. American Political Institutions
   Lesson #1: The Political and Economic Landscape
   Lesson #2: The Constitution: Separation of Powers & Judicial Review
   Lesson #3: Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
   Lesson #4: Federalism and the Hierarchy of Law
   Lesson #5: The Legislative Branch
   Lesson #6: The Presidency
   Lesson #7: The Judicial Branch

Week 2. Civil Liberties & Civil Rights
   Lesson #8: Civil Liberties I: The Bill of Rights (with emphasis on the 1st Amendment) and Important Supreme Court Decisions
   Lesson #10: Civil Rights I: The Desegregation Cases
   Lesson #11: Civil Rights II: Women’s Rights and the Rights of Minorities

Test #1 on Lessons 1-11

Week 3. Political Behavior in the American Political System
   Lesson #12: The Fourth Branch of Government: The Media
   Lesson #13: Political Socialization & Public Opinion
   Lesson #14: Interest Groups & Lobbying
   Lesson #15: Political Parties in American Politics
   Lesson #16: Political Parties in American Politics: The Two-Party System—Pro & Con

Week 4. Elections & Voting
   Lesson #17: Elections & Campaign Finance
   Lesson #18: The 2000 & 2004 Presidential Elections
   Lesson #19: The 2008 Presidential & Congressional Elections
   Lesson #20: The 2010 Midterm Congressional Elections
   Lesson #21: The 2012 Republican Primaries, Caucuses, Debates & Issues
   Lesson #22: The Growth of Super PACs

Test #2 on Lessons 12-22

Week 5. Policy-making in American Politics
   Lesson #23: The Executive Branch & the Federal Bureaucracy
   Lesson #24: The Policy-making Process
   Lesson #25: Social Policy I: Health Care Reform--Problem Recognition
   Lesson #26: Social Policy II: Health Care Reform--Agenda Setting & Policy Formulation
   Lesson #27: Social Policy III: Health Care Reform--Policy Adoption: Single Payer or Public Option vs. the Individual Mandate
   Lesson #28: Social Policy IV: Health Care Reform--Policy Implementation & Evaluation; Obamacare & the Supreme Court

Week 6. American Politics & Political Culture Today & Tomorrow
   Lesson #29: Is Washington Broken?
   Lesson #30: Is America Ungovernable?: The Tea Party & Occupy Wall Street
   Lesson #31: Rebranding the Republican Party: The Republican Party Attempts to Reinvent Itself
   Lesson #32: Has America Lost Its Ability to Function as a Democratic Nation?

Test #3 on Lessons 23-32

Papers Due