POLITICAL SCIENCE 101
AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Westfield State University
Online Course (POLS 0101)
Summer Session II
Jul. 2, 2018 – Aug 10, 2018

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Office Hours: By appointment

This is an on-line version of American National Government, a college-level introductory course to American national politics. This course is part of the Common Core of Studies at Westfield State University and counts three credits in U.S. History & Government [HSGV] of the Social Science Section. This is also one of the three required courses for a major in Political Science at the University. By taking this class, Westfield State students earn 3 of the 12 required credits in the Common Core Social Science Section. For non-Westfield State students, this course can be easily transferred to other colleges and universities and count toward general education credits.

A. Course Description
This course seeks to introduce students to basic theories, key concepts, and important historical questions and policy issues in American politics. The intended audience of this class is non-political science majors, who take this course for general education credits, as well as political science majors, who seek to build a solid foundation of social sciences for their careers and a better understanding of the world we live in. Either way, this course is designed to help students broaden their insight and develop critical mind, two essential elements of liberal arts education.

This course is organized into four parts. Part One examines the theme of the democratic debate that shaped the struggle among the founding fathers over the constitution and the basic contours of political discourse today. Part Two focuses on the basic institutions of American politics: Congress, the presidency, and the courts. Part Three covers the basic processes of political participation in America: electoral mobilization, public opinion, the media, political parties, and interest groups. And Part Four explores major policy issues in this country: civil rights, economic policy, social welfare policy, and the healthcare reform.

B. Course Requirements and Grades
Students are required to participate in six group discussions online, with each discussion having five questions. Students will be working on 30 questions total, which will be the only tool for the instructor to assess students’ learning and the only means for students to demonstrate their progress in learning in this course.
C. Course Materials
*The Democratic Debate* by Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom, and De Luca is required for this course. To purchase/rent the book, go to the campus bookstore’s website http://www.westfieldstate.bncollege.com/ or call 413 579 3103.


D. Course Outline and Schedule

Week One: Founding of the United States
- The Independence War
- The Constitutional Convention and Shaping of the US Government
- The Federalists vs. the Anti-federalists
- Reading Assignment: Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom, and De Luca (MSSD), Chapter 2

Week Two: The American Political System
- Congressional Oversight
- Presidential Powers
- Checks and Balances
- Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 11 and 12

Week Three: The Judiciary and Civil Liberties
- The Federal Court System
- The Supreme Court in History
- The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties
- Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 14

Week Four: Electoral Campaigns and Interest Groups
- Interest Groups & Lobbying
- Money and Political Campaigns
- Voter Participation
- Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 5

Week Five: Policymaking in America
- Social Welfare Policy – Social Security and Medicare
- Budget Deficits and Government Debt
- The Tea Party & Occupy Wall Street
- Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 17

Week Six: America and the Healthcare Reform
- Problems in the US Healthcare System
- Healthcare in Other Countries
- The Obama Healthcare Reform
- Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 3