

## **POLS 101 AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Westfield State University  
 Online Course (POLS 0101 501)  
 Summer Session II  
 July 6, 2021 – Aug. 13, 2021

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 Zoom Office Hours: By appointment

This is an on-line version of American National Government, a college-level introductory course to American 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. 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.

This course focuses on major contemporary issues in American national politics. After briefly examining the founding of the United States and key institutions in the federal government, we discuss major controversies in the nation. We examine America's failing healthcare system that has badly prepared the nation for the COVID 19 outbreak; we also explore ways to contain soaring healthcare costs. We look into the US government's budget deficits and rising federal debt. We cover the electoral college system and some notable presidential elections. We talk about Social Security, Medicare, and other popular government programs. And we also discuss the pros and cons of free trade and the United States' economic policy.

### **A. Course Requirements**

Students are required to participate in *six group discussions* online (one discussion per week). Students will be working on five questions each week, totaling 30 questions over the six-week period. Group discussions will be the only means for the instructor to assess students' learning and the only way for students to demonstrate their progress in learning in this course.

### **B. Course Materials**

*The Democratic Debate* by Miroff, Seidelman, Swanstrom, and De Luca is required for this course. All other reading materials will be made available on PLATO.

Miroff, Bruce, Raymond Seidelman, Todd Swanstrom, and Tom De Luca. 2015. *The Democratic Debate: American Politics in an Age of Change* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

### **C. Course Outline and Schedule**

Week One (July 6-July 9): 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 (July 12-July 16): The American Political System

Congressional Oversight

Presidential Powers

Checks and Balances

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 11 and 12

Week Three (July 19-July 23): 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 (July 26-July 30): Electoral Campaigns and Interest Groups

Interest Groups & Lobbying

Money and Political Campaigns

Voter Participation

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 5

Week Five (Aug. 2-Aug. 6): Policymaking in America

Social Welfare Policy – Social Security and Medicare

Budget Deficits and Government Debt

Problems in US Healthcare

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 17

Week Six (Aug. 9-Aug. 13): The Healthcare Reform and America in a Changing World

The Affordable Care Act

Healthcare in Other Countries

Free Trade vs. Protectionism

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 3