

## **POLITICA SCIENCE 101 AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Westfield State University  
Online Course (POLS 0101-501: 10095)  
Summer Session I  
May 20, 2013 – June 28, 2013

Professor Y. Hugh Jo  
HJo@westfield.ma.edu  
Office: Parenzo 110  
Office Hours: By appointment

### **Course Description**

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

This course is part of the Common Core of Studies at Westfield State University and counts three credits in U.S. History & Government [HSGV]. By taking this class, Westfield State students earn 3 of the 12 required credits in the Social Science Section. For non-Westfield State students, this course can be easily transferred other colleges and universities and count toward general education credits. The syllabus and course description for credit transfer can be obtained from the instructor upon request.

Since this course is taught on-line, students need to visit Westfield State University's Socrates course website (<https://bbl.westfield.ma.edu/>) and become familiar with its usage. The website has the syllabus, instructor announcements, assignments, additional readings, and the film. Any questions regarding the use of the Socrates website should be directed to the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) in Wilson Hall 114 (phone: 413 572 8130 and email: cit@westfield.ma.edu).

## Course Requirements and Grades

Students are expected to read assigned materials and complete assignments by due dates posted each week. Grades will be based on:

1. Six weekly assignments: 60%
2. Evaluation/Review of a film (*Alexander Hamilton*): 20%
3. A short paper (4-5pages): 20%

## Course Outline and Schedule

Week One (May 20-May 24): Founding of the Republic

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 (May 27-May 31): The American Political System

Congress

The Presidency

Checks and Balances

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 11 and 12

Week Three (June 3-June 7): Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

The Federal Court System

The Supreme Court

The Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 14

Week Four (June 10-June 14): Political Parties and Interest Groups

Evolution of American Political Parties

Interest Groups & Lobbying

Voting and Political Campaigns

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 7 and 9

Week Five (June 17-June 21): Policymaking in America

Budget Deficits and Government Debt

Healthcare Reform

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 17

Week Six (June 24-June 28): America in a Changing World

Globalization and the US Economy

The Financial Crisis

The Tea Party & Occupy Wall Street

Reading Assignment: TBA

## Course Materials

Miroff, Bruce, Raymond Seidelman, Todd Swanstrom, and Tom De Luca. 2010. *The Democratic Debate: American Politics in an Age of Change*. Boston: Wadsworth.

## Course Objectives

This course, part of the Westfield State Common Core of Studies, aims at enabling students to:

- explain the historical events leading to the establishment of the state and federal constitutions;
- understand the basic principles of the United States and state constitutions;
- learn the history of the United States political institutions and gain an appreciation for how the state and federal governments currently operate;
- acquire a number of interpretive perspectives on United States history and government in order to critically analyze political events past and present;
- and emerge from the course with a better sense of how government affects them and how they may be able to affect it.

In support of these objectives, this course seeks to:

- present students with primary and secondary texts relevant to the origin of the state and United States constitutions;
- require course work which asks students to analyze important aspects of the United States constitutional/governmental system;
- present students with varying points of view on the Constitution, United States history, and government;
- design activities to have the students become aware of the available sources of information on United States and state government and history;
- use writing assignments to evaluate the student's level of comprehension of the constitutions, and of United States history and government.