

POLS 101 AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Westfield State University
Online Course (POLS 0101 501)
Summer Session I
May 18, 2020 – June 26, 2020

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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 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 the upcoming presidential election in November. 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 venue 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* (6th Edition). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

C. Course Outline and Schedule

Week One (May 18-May 22): 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 (May 25-May 29): The American Political System
Congressional Oversight
Presidential Powers
Checks and Balances
Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 11 and 12
- Week Three (June 1-June 5): 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 (June 8-June 12): Electoral Campaigns and Interest Groups
Interest Groups & Lobbying
Money and Political Campaigns
Voter Participation
Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 5
- Week Five (June 15-June 19): 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 (June 22-June 26): America and the Healthcare Reform
Problems in the US Healthcare System
Healthcare in Other Countries
The Obama Healthcare Reform
Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 3