

# **POLITICAL SCIENCE 101**

## **AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Westfield State University  
Online Course (POLS 0101 550)  
Winter Session  
Jan. 6, 2020 – Jan. 17, 2020

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Office Hours: By appointment

This is an expedited version of American National Government on-line, 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 the ability to think critically, two essential elements of liberal arts education.

This course is organized into four parts. In Part One we examine 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. In Part Two we focus 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 in Part Four we explore 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 means for the instructor to assess students' learning and the only venue 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.

Miroff, Bruce, Raymond Seidelman, Todd Swanstrom, and Tom De Luca. 2015. *The Democratic Debate: American Politics in an Age of Change*. Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

#### **D. Course Outline and Schedule**

Discussion I (Jan. 6 - Jan. 7): 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

Discussion II (Jan. 8 - Jan.9): The American Political System

Congressional Oversight

Presidential Powers

Checks and Balances

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 11 and 12

Discussion III (Jan. 10 - Jan. 11): 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

Discussion IV (Jan. 13 - Jan. 14): Electoral Campaigns and Interest Groups

Interest Groups & Lobbying

Money and Political Campaigns

Voter Participation

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapters 5

Discussion V (Jan. 15 - Jan. 16): 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

Discussion VI (Jan. 17 - Jan. 18): America and the Healthcare Reform

Problems in the US Healthcare System

Healthcare in Other Countries

The Obama Healthcare Reform

Reading Assignment: MSSD, Chapter 3