

Course Outline
POLS 101
American Government and Politics
3 Credit Hours

The Community College of Baltimore County

Description

American Government and Politics

Examines questions of who gets what, when and how in American politics; covers constitutionalism, democracy, and the governmental process in the U.S.; realistically examines the roles of public opinion, elections, parties, and pressure groups; the workings of the presidency, Congress, bureaucracy and the courts; and the distribution and manipulation of power.

Prerequisite: (RDNG 052 or LVR 2); (ENGL 052 or LVE 2); (MATH 081 or LVM 1)

Overall Course Objectives (Learning Objectives)

Upon completion of this course the student will be able to:

1. Explain the meaning of “politics” and “government”;
2. Describe and explain the historical conditions surrounding the establishment of the American political system and the Constitution of 1787;
3. Explain and assess the concepts of “constitutionalism” and “limited government”;
4. Define the concept of “democracy” and evaluate to what degree and in what ways the American people influence government;
5. Describe the nature of the American “political culture” and analyze the fundamental values underlying the workings of American government and politics;
6. Define “public opinion” and evaluate how it does, and doesn’t, influence government;
7. Assess the role of “mass media” in influencing politics and government;
8. Describe the workings of American elections (both presidential and congressional), voter behavior, and analyze how they influence what government does;
9. Describe American political interest groups and assess how they influence government;
10. Evaluate the influence of money—especially campaign contributions--in the conduct of elections and its influence upon elected officials;
11. Describe and analyze the role of the office of the presidency and “leadership” functions;
12. Describe the major elements of the “political executive”—e.g., the White House staff, Executive Office of the President, cabinet and sub-cabinet--and determine the functions they perform in the conduct of government;
13. Analyze the major functions of the Congress and describe its organization;
14. Describe the legislative process and determine its implications for policy-making;
15. Analyze the relationship between the president and Congress in policy-making, including legislation and the budgetary process;
16. Describe the nature and organization of the Federal administrative bureaucracy and assess its role in making and administering public policy;

17. Describe the structure of the Federal judiciary and assess the role of the judiciary in the political system;
18. Identify and evaluate the major elements of present Federal domestic policies for the:
 - (a) management of the economy, including taxation and regulation of business;
 - (b) protection of personal health, security, welfare and the environment;
 - (c) protection of civil liberty and civil rights;
19. Identify and evaluate the major elements of present Federal foreign policies for the:
 - (a) maintenance of military security;
 - (b) conduct of diplomacy and relations with international organizations;
 - (c) protection of international trade and finance.

Major Topics

1. The meaning of “politics,” “government,” and a “political system”;
2. The origins of the U.S. political system and the Constitution of 1787;
3. “Constitutionalism” and “limited government” in the American political system;
4. The meaning of “democracy” in a political system;
5. Political culture, public opinion and the mass media;
6. Elections, parties and voting behavior;
7. Political interest groups;
8. The role of money in American politics;
9. The office of the American presidency and the political executive;
10. The U.S. Congress;
11. The Federal administrative bureaucracy;
12. The Federal judiciary;
13. Contemporary domestic policies;
14. Contemporary foreign policies.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to demonstrate learning through:

1. Periodic short objective in-class exercises (“quizzes”);
2. Two or more extensive in-class examinations, including analytical essay questions;
3. In-class participation—individually and in groups-- in discussion of the issues and problems presented by the course;
4. Additional exercises, individual and group, written and oral, in class or outside class (e.g., reports, debates, term papers) at the instructor’s discretion, including at least one exercise requiring the collection of data through the Internet.

Other Course Information

1. This course satisfies a College General Education requirement in the Social & Behavioral Sciences.
2. Regular attendance and participation in class is a requirement for this course.
3. Students will be expected to have regular access to a required text and such additional learning material as an instructor may assign.
4. The instructor, at his/her discretion, may arrange for guest lecturers, audio/video presentations, and/or attention to current events as a part of the Course content;
5. The instructor will be available to assist students through regular office hours, telephone, and in some cases voice mail and Internet email.

5/25/2000