

Course Outline
POLS 121
Introduction to Law
3 Credit Hours

The Community College of Baltimore County

Description.

Introduction to Law

Describes the institutions and profession of law in America, for students considering further study or a career in law. Examines the legal system in terms of its role in society, its organization, the training and profession of its members, and the basic substance and procedures of civil and criminal law.

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 and attributes of “law” and its functions in a society;
2. Describe the principal historical and modern philosophies of law;
3. Compare and contrast the nature of systems of law in different kinds of states: e.g., primitive, developing, modern, religious, secular, socialist, capitalist;
4. Describe the origins and development of the American legal system;
5. Describe the structure and functions of American courts;
6. Describe the origins and development of the profession of lawyer in America;
7. Describe the education, certification and employment of American lawyers;
8. Describe the occupation of judges, including their selection and work;
9. Describe the nature and procedures of civil law actions in the U.S.;
10. Describe the major legal rules governing contracts, equity, domestic and tort law;
11. Describe and evaluate the major criticisms of American civil law;
12. Describe the nature of criminal law actions in the U.S.;
13. Compare the different major theories on the root causes of crime in modern society;
14. Identify the principle categories of crime in the United States;
15. Describe the American criminal justice process, including investigation, arrest, pre-trial actions, the trial process, sentencing and corrections;
16. Describe and evaluate the major criticisms of the American criminal justice system.

Major Topics

I. The Nature and Functions of Law

1. The essence of Law: maintaining order and making fair decisions
2. Philosophies of law, Ancient to Modern

3. Comparative legal systems

II. The American Legal System

4. Origins and development of the American legal system
5. Structure and functions of American courts
6. Origins and development of the legal profession in America
7. Education, certification and employment of American lawyers
8. Selection and occupation of judges

III. Settling Civil Disputes

9. Nature and procedures of civil law actions in the U.S.
10. Principles of civil law: contracts, equity, domestic law and torts
11. Evaluation of the American system of settling civil disputes

IV. Criminal Justice

12. The American system of criminal justice
13. Root causes of crime in American society
14. Principle categories of crime in American law
15. The American criminal justice process, including investigation, arrest, pre-trial actions, the trial process, sentencing and corrections
16. Evaluation of the American criminal justice system.

Course Requirements

Students will be expected to demonstrate learning through:

1. Two or more extensive in-class examinations, including analytical essay questions;
2. Additional written or oral exercises (e.g., quizzes, reports, term papers) at the instructor's discretion.

Other Course Information

1. This course is a Social and Behavioral Sciences elective.
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.

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