

Virginia Western Community College

PLS 211

U.S. Government I

Prerequisites

None

Course Description

Teaches structure, operation, and process of national, state, and local governments. Includes in-depth study of the three branches of the government and of public policy. Part I of II.

Course is designed to introduce students to the American political system. Students will strengthen their analytical and critical thinking skills. Students are not required to complete this course prior to taking PLS 212 (U. S. Government II).

Semester Credits: 3

Lecture Hours: 3

Required Materials

1. Textbook
2. Internet access
3. Blackboard

Textbook:

Wilson, James Q. and John J. DiIulio, Jr. *American Government, Institutions and Policies*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 16th ed., ISBN: 9781337806824

Other Required Materials:

None

Course Outcomes

At the completion of this course, the student should be able to:

- Define power and political power.
- Differentiate between majoritarian politics and elitist politics.
- Explain the four major theories of elitist politics.
- List the natural rights.
- List and discuss limitations of government under the Articles of Confederation.
- Compare and contrast the Virginia and New Jersey Plans.
- Discuss the Great Compromise.
- Explain the Bill of Rights and why these were added to the Constitution.
- Define political culture.
- Discuss American political attitudes in comparison to other countries.
- List contributions of Locke/Jefferson/Madison/Tocqueville to political culture.
- List sources of political attitudes.
- Define political ideology.
- Discuss the new class theory.
- Compare voter turnout statistics.
- Discuss how election control has shifted from the states to the federal government.
- Discuss how voter turnout has declined over the past century and factors that keep the voter turnout low.
- Explain the role of public opinion in the American democratic system
- Discuss the basic elements of polling and explain how polling reflects the attitudes of people generally
- Define the term political party and contrast the structures of European and American parties.
- Trace the development of the U.S. party system through its four periods. Explain why parties have been in decline since the New Deal.
- Describe the structure of a major party. Distinguish major from minor parties.
- Demonstrate the differences between the party-oriented campaigns of the nineteenth century and the candidate-oriented ones of today.
- Discuss the importance of campaign funding to election outcomes, the major sources of such funding under current laws, and how successful reform legislation has been in removing improper monetary influences.
- Outline the processes for electing presidents and for electing members of Congress.
- Indicate the historical conditions under which interest groups are likely to form and specify the kinds of organizations Americans are most likely to join.
- Describe relations between leaders and rank-and-file members of groups, including why members' priorities may not determine the leaders' actions.
- List the laws regulating conflict of interest, and describe the problems involved with revolving-door government employment.
- Demonstrate how the characteristics of the electronic media have affected the actions of public officials and candidates for national office.
- Discuss the issue of media bias and how this bias might manifest itself. Assess the impact of such bias on the electorate.

Topical Description

1	The Constitution
2	Federalism
3	American Political Culture
4	Civil Liberties
5	Civil Rights
6	Public Opinion
7	Political Participation
8	Political Parties
9	Elections and Campaigns
10	Interest Groups
11	Media

Notes to Instructors

None