

Virginia Western Community College

PLS 212

U.S. Government II

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 II of II.

Students will be introduced to useful skills for understanding American Government. Students will strengthen their analytical skills.

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:

- Explain the differences between a congress and a parliament.
- Delineate the role that the Framers expected the United States Congress to play.
- Describe the characteristics of members of Congress and the factors that influence who gets elected to Congress.
- Identify the functions that party affiliation plays in the organization of Congress.
- Describe the formal process by which a bill becomes a law.
- Identify the factors that help to explain why a member of Congress votes as he or she does.
- Explain the differences between the positions of president and prime minister.
- Discuss the approach taken by the Founders in regard to executive power.
- List and describe the various offices that make up the executive branch.
- Enumerate and discuss the various facets—formal and informal—of presidential power.
- Compare and contrast the American and British models of government bureaucracy.
- Show how the roles and missions of the agencies are affected by internal and external factors.
- Review congressional measures to control the bureaucracy and evaluate their effectiveness.
- Explain what judicial review is and trace its origins.
- Explain what is meant by a dual-court system and describe its effects on how cases are processed, decided, and appealed.
- List the various steps that cases go through to reach the Supreme Court and explain the considerations involved at each step.
- Explain how the concept of legitimacy affects the scope of government activity and the extension of benefits to one or more groups of people.
- Use the above terms to explain the four types of politics presented in the text: majoritarian, client, interest group, and entrepreneurial, giving examples of each.
- Analyze the roles played in the process of public policy formation by people's perceptions, beliefs, interests, and values.
- Explain the economic, substantive, and political reasons for the national debt.
- List and briefly explain four competing economic theories.
- List the four major executive-branch agencies involved in setting economic policy and explain the role of each.
- Analyze federal fiscal policy in terms of the text's four categories of policymaking politics.
- Describe the four factors that shape the American approach to welfare policy.
- Describe the major elements of the social welfare system: Social Security Act of 1935, the Medicare Act of 1965, the abolition of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, and the development of the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program.
- Discuss the politics of welfare reform.
- List the constitutional powers of the president.
- Compare powers with the authority of Congress in foreign affairs.
- Summarize essential elements of the anti-appeasement, disengagement, and human-rights worldviews.
- Analyze the key allocative decisions about the defense budget.
- Explain the objectives of the 1947 Defense Reorganization Acts.
- Explain why the cost-overrun problem is due to bureaucratic and political factors.

Topical Description

1	A description of Congress
2	How bills become laws
3	A description of the Presidency
4	The Bureaucracy
5	The Judiciary
6	The Policy-Making Process
7	Economic Policy
8	Social Welfare
9	Foreign and Military Policy

Notes to Instructors

None