

ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE
Social Sciences Division
POL 104 – American Government
Course Outline

Course Number & Name: PLS 104 American Government

Credit Hours: 3.0 **Contact Hours:** 3.0 **Lecture:** 3.0 **Lab:** N/A **Other:** N/A

Pre- or Co-requisites: Grades of “C” or better in ENG 096 and RDG 096 or placement

Concurrent Courses: None

Course Outline Revision Date: Fall 2020

Course Description: This course examines the United States Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and the structure and processes of the American governmental system. All of the branches of government are examined within the economical, historical, political, social, and contemporary context.

General Education Goals: POL 104 is affirmed in the following General Education Foundation Category: **Society and Human Behavior**. The corresponding General Education Goal is as follows: Students will use social science theories and concepts to analyze human behavior and social and political institutions and to act as responsible citizens. POL 104 also addresses the General Education Integrated Course Goals: **Ethical Reasoning and Action** and **Information Literacy**, which are respectively as follows: Students will understand ethical issues and situations; and Students will address an information need by locating, evaluating, and effectively using information.

Course Goals: Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. describe and examine citizenship in the changing democracy;
2. describe and examine the US Constitution;
3. describe and examine federalism;
4. describe and examine civil liberties in America;
5. describe and examine civil rights in America;
6. describe and examine public opinion in America;
7. describe and examine political participation;
8. identify, describe, and examine interest groups in America;
9. describe and examine political parties and campaigns (i.e., citizens and the electoral process in America);
10. describe and examine the differences between the media and the press;
11. describe and examine the role of Congress;

Course Goals (continued):

12. describe and examine the role of the President and the executive branch of government;
13. describe and examine bureaucracy;
14. describe and examine the courts and judicial power in a democratic setting;
15. define and examine public policy; and
16. define and examine foreign and defense policies.

Measurable Course Performance Objectives (MPOs): Upon successful completion of this course, students should specifically be able to do the following:

1. Describe and examine citizenship in the changing democracy:
 - 1.1 *define and explain politics, power, and participation;*
 - 1.2 *describe and explain American political ideals;*
 - 1.3 *describe and explain the changing face of the American citizenry; and*
 - 1.4 *describe and explain the future of citizenship in America*
2. Describe and examine the US Constitution:
 - 2.1 *explain the foundations of American democracy;*
 - 2.2 *describe the birth of the American nation;*
 - 2.3 *explain US Constitutional principles;*
 - 2.4 *explain US Constitutional construction;*
 - 2.5 *describe and explain the fight to ratify the US Constitution;*
 - 2.6 *explain Constitutional change;*
 - 2.7 *describe and explain the relationship between the US Constitution and civic participation; and*
 - 2.8 *describe and explain political engagement today*
3. Describe and examine federalism:
 - 3.1 *describe and explain the division of power in the US government;*
 - 3.2 *describe and explain the evolution of intergovernmental relations;*
 - 3.3 *describe and explain federal-state relations;*
 - 3.4 *describe and explain interstate relations; and*
 - 3.5 *define, describe, and explain federalism and civic engagement today*
4. Describe and examine civil liberties in America:
 - 4.1 *describe US Constitutional rights and liberties;*
 - 4.2 *describe and explain freedom of religion;*
 - 4.3 *describe and explain freedom of speech;*
 - 4.4 *describe and explain freedom of the press;*
 - 4.5 *describe and explain freedom of assembly and association;*
 - 4.6 *describe and explain the Second Amendment;*
 - 4.7 *describe and explain the rights of the accused;*
 - 4.8 *describe and explain the right to privacy; and*
 - 4.9 *describe and explain the correlation between civic engagement and US Constitutional liberties*

5. Describe and examine civil rights in America:
 - 5.1 *describe and explain the role of African Americans and the correlation between civil rights of all Americans;*
 - 5.2 *describe and explain the concept of equality;*
 - 5.3 *describe minority groups other than African Americans in the US and their impact in America;*
 - 5.4 *describe the correlation between women's rights and civil rights; and*
 - 5.5 *describe and explain the connection between civil engagement and civil rights*

6. Describe and examine public opinion:
 - 6.1 *define and describe the role of public opinion in the context of American politics;*
 - 6.2 *describe and explain how political opinions are formed;*
 - 6.3 *describe, discuss, and explain group differences in political opinions;*
 - 6.4 *describe and explain how public opinion is measured;*
 - 6.5 *describe and explain polling techniques;*
 - 6.6 *describe and explain the content of American public opinion;*
 - 6.7 *describe and explain the connection between public opinion and public policy; and*
 - 6.8 *describe and explain the relationship between public opinion and civic engagement today*

7. Describe and examine political participation:
 - 7.1 *describe and explain political participation;*
 - 7.2 *describe and explain the characteristics of political participation;*
 - 7.3 *describe, define, and explain ingredients for political involvement;*
 - 7.4 *describe and explain the role of voting in a democracy;*
 - 7.5 *describe and explain the various forms of political participation;*
 - 7.6 *describe and explain the impact of political participation patterns;*
 - 7.7 *describe and explain policy; and*
 - 7.8 *describe and explain the relationship between political participation and civic engagement*

8. Identify, describe, and examine interest groups in America:
 - 8.1 *identify, describe, and examine organized interest groups;*
 - 8.2 *describe and examine the roots of interest group politics in America;*
 - 8.3 *describe and explain whose interests are represented by interest groups in the US;*
 - 8.4 *explain and discuss why individuals join interest groups;*
 - 8.5 *describe and explain interest group strategies;*
 - 8.6 *describe and explain lobbying and other tactics used to make politicians/elected officials accountable; and*
 - 8.7 *describe, explain, and discuss the correlation between interest groups and citizen engagement today*

9. Describe and examine political parties and campaigns (i.e., citizens and the electoral process in America):
 - 9.1 *describe and explain the correlation between political parties and electoral politics;*
 - 9.2 *describe and explain the growth and development of the American two-party system;*
 - 9.3 *describe and explain the political party structure;*
 - 9.4 *list and describe third-party and independent candidacies;*
 - 9.5 *discuss the correlation between the candidate and electoral politics;*

- 9.6 *explain the role of voters in the electoral process; and*
- 9.7 *describe political parties, political campaigns, and the connection to civic engagement today*

10. Describe and examine the differences between the media and the press:

- 10.1 *define the press;*
- 10.2 *define the media;*
- 10.3 *compare and contrast the press and the media;*
- 10.4 *describe evolving civic life and the role of the media;*
- 10.5 *describe the media environment in America;*
- 10.6 *describe the connection between media and political campaigns;*
- 10.7 *describe the government coverage in the media; and*
- 10.8 *describe the connection between the media and civic engagement today*

11. Describe and examine the role of Congress:

- 11.1 *describe and explain the origin and development of Congressional power;*
- 11.2 *describe the connection between civic life and Congressional change;*
- 11.3 *describe the process for getting elected;*
- 11.4 *describe and explain Congressional responsibilities and benefits;*
- 11.5 *list, describe, and explain the keys to political power;*
- 11.6 *list and describe the functions of Congress; and*
- 11.7 *discuss the connection between civic engagement and Congress today*

12. Describe and examine the role of the President and the executive branch of government:

- 12.1 *describe and explain the origin and powers of the Presidency;*
- 12.2 *describe the path to the Presidency;*
- 12.3 *describe the process for getting elected;*
- 12.4 *describe and explain Presidential power;*
- 12.5 *describe and explain the roles of the President;*
- 12.6 *describe the executive branch of the US government;*
- 12.7 *describe the concept of Presidential style;*
- 12.8 *assess Presidential power and its limits;*
- 12.9 *describe and explain the role of the Vice Presidency; and*
- 12.10 *discuss the connection between civic engagement and the Presidency today*

13. Describe and examine bureaucracy:

- 13.1 *describe and explain bureaucratic changes and evolving civic life;*
- 13.2 *describe and explain the nature of bureaucracy;*
- 13.3 *describe federal bureaucrats;*
- 13.4 *identify and describe sources of bureaucratic power;*
- 13.5 *identify, define and describe bureaucratic power; and*
- 13.6 *discuss the relationship between the bureaucracy and civic engagement*

14. Describe and examine the courts and judicial power in a democratic setting:

- 14.1 *describe national court structure;*
- 14.2 *describe and explain the nature of the judicial process;*
- 14.3 *describe the changing nature of the US Supreme Court;*

- 14.4 describe and explain the US Supreme Court decision-making process;
- 14.5 describe and explain the US Supreme Court selection process;
- 14.6 describe and explain the Lower Court selection process; and
- 14.7 discuss the relationship between civic engagement and the judiciary

15. Define and examine public policy:

- 15.1 describe and discuss the nature and scope of public policy;
- 15.2 describe and explain policy making and evaluation;
- 15.3 describe domestic policy;
- 15.4 describe economic policy; and
- 15.5 discuss the relationship between civic engagement and public policy today

16. Define and examine foreign and defense policies:

- 16.1 describe and explain the history and development of defense and foreign policy;
- 16.2 identify, define, describe, and examine US interests in a constantly changing world;
- 16.3 describe the process for making foreign policy;
- 16.4 list, define and describe tools of foreign policy;
- 16.5 identify, describe, and discuss issues confronting the future; and
- 16.6 discuss the relationship between civic engagement and foreign policy today

Methods of Instruction: The instructor may use any of the following instructional methods: lectures, group activities, role play, oral presentations, work on polls, essays, factual research assignments, films, cable, news, websites, television programs, field trips, and/or community outreach projects.

Outcomes Assessment: Quiz and exam questions (if applicable) are blueprinted to course objectives. Checklist rubrics are used to evaluate non-test type assessment instruments (e.g., role play, oral presentations, and projects), for the presence of course objectives. Data collected will be analyzed to provide direction for the improvement of program instruction, viability of class assignments, relevancy of assigned course materials, and evaluation of instructional time spent on specific topics.

Course Requirements: All students are required to:

1. Maintain regular on-time attendance.
2. Complete assigned homework (if applicable) and complete all written and oral exercises inside and outside of class (scored grading).
3. Voluntarily participate in class discussions, exercises, and group projects.
4. Participate in/take all assessment activities (e.g., midterm, final, paper, presentation and/or project) as scheduled.

Methods of Evaluation: Final course grades will be computed as follows:

Grading Components	% of final course grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance/Participation Attendance points will be computed based on the ratio of the number of days attending the course during a regular semester 	15 – 25%

(i.e., 28 contact days). A similar procedure will be used to determine participation points.

- **Notebook containing Course Handouts, Program Summaries and Table of Contents** **5 – 10%**
The notebook is assigned as a practical exercise designed to assess the student's ability to organize large volumes of information and allows students to create their own reference sources.
- **Topic Sentence Outlines** **5 – 10%**
Topic sentence outlines are practical exercises designed to enhance students' reading comprehension and study skills.
- **Oral Presentation Chapter Review** **5 – 10%**
The oral presentation is a brief exercise designed to provide students with an opportunity during each class session to report on a relevant news story or current event related to course objectives. This activity is also designed to enhance student's oral communication skills.
- **PowerPoint Presentation** **15 – 25%**
The PowerPoint presentation requires comparing the US Constitution and government system to another country's constitution and government system, which relates to many course objectives. It also provides students with the opportunity to enhance their technological skills in an academic environment.
- **Programs, lectures, seminars and/or workshops** **5 – 10%**
Students may attend internal or external programs, lectures, seminars and workshops on topics related to course objectives and prepare brief written summaries of the events/programs. These opportunities provide students with a chance to engage in academic scholarship.

Grading Components

- **Extra Credit Opportunities**
 - Voter registration – Provide written evidence of participation in the electoral process
 - Volunteer with any political campaign
 - Work as an election poll-worker

NOTE: The instructor will determine (as appropriate) the specific components for the course and provide specific weights which lie in the above-given ranges at the beginning of the semester.

Academic Integrity: Dishonesty disrupts the search for truth that is inherent in the learning process and so devalues the purpose and the mission of the College. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- plagiarism – the failure to acknowledge another writer's words or ideas or to give proper credit to sources of information;

- cheating – knowingly obtaining or giving unauthorized information on any test/exam or any other academic assignment;
- interference – any interruption of the academic process that prevents others from the proper engagement in learning or teaching; and
- fraud – any act or instance of willful deceit or trickery.

Violations of academic integrity will be dealt with by imposing appropriate sanctions. Sanctions for acts of academic dishonesty could include the resubmission of an assignment, failure of the test/exam, failure in the course, probation, suspension from the College, and even expulsion from the College.

Student Code of Conduct: All students are expected to conduct themselves as responsible and considerate adults who respect the rights of others. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. All students are also expected to attend and be on time for all class meetings. No cell phones or similar electronic devices are permitted in class. Please refer to the Essex County College student handbook, *Lifeline*, for more specific information about the College’s Code of Conduct and attendance requirements.

Course Content Outline: based on the text *We the People*, Edition: 13th; ISBN: 9780393539042; Author: Ginsberg; Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company, Incorporated

Unit	Topics to be Covered
1	Citizenship in Our Changing Democracy – Introduction & course overview; politics, power, and participation; American political ideals; the changing face of the American citizenry; the future of citizenship
2	The Constitution: The Foundation of Citizen’s Rights – The foundations of American democracy; the birth of a nation; Constitutional principles; Constitutional construction; the fight for ratification; Constitutional change; the Constitution and civic engagement today
3	Federalism: Citizenship & the Dispersal of Power – The division of power; the evolution of intergovernmental relations; federal-state relations; interstate relations; federalism and civic engagement today
4	Civil Liberties: Expanding Citizens’ Rights – Heritage of rights and liberties; freedom and religion; freedom of speech; freedom of press; freedom of assembly and association; right to keep and bear arms; rights of the accused; the right to privacy; civic engagement and Constitutional liberties
5	Civil Rights: Toward a More Equal Citizenry – African Americans and civil rights; interpreting equality; other minority groups; women and civil rights; civic engagement and civil rights

- 6 Public Opinion: Listening to Citizens – Understanding public opinion in the context of American politics; how political opinions are formed; group differences in political opinions; measuring public opinion; polling techniques; the content of American public opinion; public opinion and public policy; public opinion and civic engagement today
- 7 Political Participation: Equal Opportunities and Unequal Voices – Political participation: opportunities, costs, and benefits; characteristics of political participation; ingredients for involvement; voting; other forms of political participation; the impact of participation patterns; participation and civic engagement today
- 8 Interest Groups in America – Organized interests: who are they?; the roots of interest group politics in America; whose interests are represented?; why join?; interest group strategies; lobbying and other tactics; interest groups and civic engagement today
- 9 Parties & Campaigns: Citizens & the Electoral Process – Political parties and electoral politics; the growth and development of the American two-party system; built to win: party structure; third-party and independent candidacies; candidate and electoral politics: candidate-centered campaigning; voters in the electoral process: how Americans decide; parties, political campaigns, and civic engagement today
- 10 Media: Tuning In or Tuning Out – Evolving Civic Life and Media Changes; the Media Environment in America; Media and Political Campaigns; Government Coverage in the Media; the Media and Civic Engagement Today
- 11 Congress: Doing The People’s Business – Origin and powers of Congress; civic life and Congressional change; getting elected; doing the job: responsibilities and benefits; keys to political power; the functions of Congress; civic engagement and Congress today
- 12 The President: Power & Paradox – Origin and powers of the Presidency; the path to the Presidency; getting elected; Presidential power; Presidential roles; the executive branch; Presidential style; assessing Presidential power and its limits; the Vice Presidency; civic engagement and the Presidency today
- 13 Bureaucracy: Citizens As Owners & Consumers – Bureaucratic changes and evolving civic life; the nature of bureaucracy; federal bureaucrats and their work; sources of bureaucratic power; controlling bureaucratic power; the bureaucracy and civic engagement
- 14 The Courts: Judicial Power in a Democratic Setting – National court structure; the nature of the judicial process; the changing nature of the Supreme Court; Supreme Court decision making; Supreme Court selection; Lower Court selection; civic engagement and the judiciary

- 15 Public Policy: Responding to Citizens – The nature and scope of public policy; policy making and evaluation; domestic policy; economic policy; civic engagement and public policy today
- 16 Foreign and Defense Policy: Protecting American Interest in the World – Defense and foreign policy in an historical perspective; defending US interests in a constantly changing world; making foreign policy; the tools of foreign policy; confronting the future; civic engagement and foreign policy today

NOTE: In POL 104 instructor must provide economic, historic, political, and social context for American government, process, structure and system. The instructor may include additional ideas based on his/her expertise and/or interest. However, because Criminal Justice and Paralegal Studies majors may be enrolled in the course, it is essential that considerable emphasis in instruction is placed on the US court structure and system. Suggested assessment activities to be performed at midterm and at the conclusion of the course are listed below.

Suggested Midterm Assessment Activities – Prepare topic sentence outlines of each chapter in the first half of the textbook answering questions in each chapter

Suggested Final Assessment Activities – Prepare topic sentence outlines of each chapter in the second half of the textbook answering questions in each chapter; any activity that requires students to be able to ultimately describe, explain, and discuss the US Constitution and system of government paying specific attention to the US courts in conjunction with another assessment activity that evaluates the students' ability to define, explain and apply political and governmental jargon, terminology, and vocabulary.