

**VALENCIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

POS 2041-0: UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Instructor: John De Graca
Semester: Fall 2011
Days: Tuesdays and Thursdays
Time: 14:00 – 16:45
Room: B9-110
Office:
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Disclaimer

The instructor reserves the right to alter or change this syllabus based on class needs.

Course Description

This class is designed to help students understand five key features of the United States Government: 1. The role of government in the America; 2. The American System including the American people, the Constitution, and Federalism; 3. Links between people and government through public opinion, news media, interests groups, political parties, elections, and money and politics; 4. The Institutions: Congress, the Presidency; The Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary; and 5. Civil Liberties and Rights encompassing both civil liberties and civil rights.

Course Objectives

Upon the successful completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate the following skills and abilities:

- ✓ Create an advanced understanding and appreciation of the history, study, and practice of the US government.
- ✓ Identify, discuss, and compare the various components of the US Government.
- ✓ Review and critique the strengths and weakness of each component in relation to their applications to government.
- ✓ Discuss each point delineated in course description
- ✓ Understand national,(federal), state, and local governments.
- ✓ Develop the necessary government skills to deal with real world situations.

Course Format

The course is divided into lecture sections and each section comprises of three components: an introduction overviewing the topic being examined; Power-Point slides summarizing the major points of

the readings; and assignments which include weekly research tasks associated with the theme(s) being discussed. In-class activities include lectures, and discussions of assignments.

Required Texts: The required textbooks are available at VCC Bookstore (and online bookstores). Additional readings will be assigned when necessary.

Welch, S., Gruhl, J., Rigdon, S., and Thomas, S. (2012). Understanding American Government (13th edition), Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, Boston.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is not tolerated and it is reported to school authorities in accordance to VCC academic honesty policy. After reading the college's policy guidelines regarding academic integrity, students have the obligation to ask the instructor for clarification if there is anything that is not clear about course procedures and grading policies. Students take mid-term and final exams. Weekly quizzes are provided.

Disability Access Statement

The VCC provides reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations in this course must contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester (no later than the end of the first week) to discuss needed accommodations.

Grading and Grading Scale

The grading for this course is based on the following areas:

Learning Activity	Percentage of Final Grade
Attendance	10%
Class Participation	10%
Reading Assignments and quizzes	20%
Midterm Exam (Wed, Oct 19)	25%
Final Exam	35%
Total	100%

Final Grades will be earned as follows:

Points	Grade
100-95	A
90-94	A-
89-86	B+
85-83	B
82-80	B-
79-76	C+
75-73	C
72-70	C-
69-60	D
59-0	F

Course Expectations

Students are expected to read all assigned readings for a specific class prior to the class in order to be prepared to engage in class activities.

Class Participation

The success of this class is dependent on student participation in class discussion. Each student is expected to be in class and to actively participate in each class session. Attendance and participation is worth 20% of the final grade. Hence, the student will receive full credit for participation if she or he contributes with meaningful comments at every class session. Partial credit and non-credit are granted too. Components of class participation include:

- Demonstrate familiarity with assigned readings when called upon
- Student regularly attends class
- Student contributes to class discussion
- Student asks relevant questions, and
- Makes valuable contribution to the group learning experience

Exams

Midterm and final exams consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and short essays questions. They will be in-class exams and encompass all materials read prior to the date of the exam.

Reading Assignments

Week 1

Date: September 27

Syllabus Review; **The role of Government in America**

Date: September 29

The American System

Welch et al (2012). Ch. 1 - The American People pp. 18-39 and Ch. 2. - The Constitution pp. 40-65.

Week 2

Date: October 4

- Welch et al (2012). Ch. 3. - Federalism pp. 66-93

Date: October 6

Links between People and Government

Ch. 4 - Public Opinion, pp. 94-117 and Ch. 5 - News Media, pp. 118-153

Week 3

Date: October 11

- Ch. 6 - Interest Groups, pp. 154-181

Date: October 13

- Ch. 7. - Political Parties, pp. 182-205

Week 4

Date: October 18

- Ch. 8 - Elections, pp. 206-249

Date: October 20

- MID-TERM EXAM

Week 5

Date: October 25

- Ch. 9 - Money and Politics

Date: October 27

Institutions

- Ch. 10 - Congress, pp. 280-324

Week 6

Date: November 1

- Ch.11 - The Presidency 324-259

Date: November 3

- Ch. 12 - The Bureaucracy, pp. 324-390

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Week 7

Date: November 8

- Ch. 13 - The Judiciary, 390-417

Date: November 10

Civil Liberties and Rights

Ch. 14 – Civil Liberties, pp. 418-455

Week 8

Date: November 15

- Ch. 15 Civil Rights

Date: November 17

- **FINAL EXAM**