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Please see the course information below.

Course: POLS 101 - Introduction to the Government of the United States

Catalog Desc: (No prerequisite. POLS 101 is recommended over POLS 100 for majors in prelegal, social sciences, liberal arts, and teaching.)

An introduction to political science as a survey of American government. Students learn methods of political analysis and the application of these methods to the study of American government. The course emphasizes national government but provides an understanding of government at the state and local level as well. Students develop insights into the clash of ideas in American politics and how they can influence political outcomes. (CSU/UC)

AA/AS Areas B or F, CSU Area D-8, IGETC Area 4, CSU U.S. History, Constitution, and American Ideals

Expected Outcomes: Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Identify key factors in the historical and philosophical origins and foundations of the American political system.
2. Analyze, evaluate, and provide examples of the delicate balance between the values of freedom and order in the American constitutional system and legal process and the role of the citizen in this balance.
3. Explain and illustrate the interactions between federal, state, and local governments.
4. Describe, compare, and contrast the making of social, economic, and international policy.
5. Analyze public policy issues from both normative and empirical perspectives.

Critical Thinking: Students are required to:
1. Compare and contrast political systems and political offices.
2. Construct practical applications of abstract principles.
3. Compare and contrast normative empirical analyses to the study of American government.
4. Identify personal political values and identify the root values (political culture) underlying them.
5. Identify the disparities between ideal and reality in political systems.
6. Identify assumptions, biases, etc. in assigned texts.
7. Compare and contrast public policy issues and American political culture.
8. Evaluate the functioning of federal, state, and local governments.

Lecture Content:

A. Introduction and Basic Concepts
B. The Declaration of Independence
   1. The philosophical foundations and the promise for the future
C. The Constitution of the United States
   1. Framers' perceptions of human nature
   2. Delicate balance between freedom and order
   3. Readjusting the balance: The Bill of Rights - civil liberties, and civil responsibilities
   4. Civil rights
   5. Comparisons with California Constitution
D. Political Culture
   1. Components
   2. Comparisons
E. Federalism
   1. Basic concepts, definitions, historical rights
   2. Conflict and cooperation: Federal state relations and the shifting balance of power - the role of crises, constitutional amendments, judicial interpretation, and money
   3. Political power of the states in the federal-state partnership
F. Informal Power Centers: Public Opinions
   1. Polls and surveys and their implications for representative democracy

G. Informal Power Centers: Media
   1. Definitions, roles, and impact
   2. Responsibility and accountability
   3. Diverse images of the media

H. Informal Power Centers: Money and Politics
   1. Background
   2. Is there a problem? The numbers, political action committees, other techniques for raising and distributing funds
   3. The historical explanation for the current situation
   4. The solution dilemma and the conflict of values
   5. Is change possible?
   6. California's problem

I. Informal Power Centers: Political Parties
   1. Traditional roles and power
   2. Current roles and power
   3. Realignment and dealignment and their impact
   4. California's major political parties

J. Formal Power Centers: Congress
   1. Structure, composition, power
   2. Comparison with other legislative systems
   3. Impact of term limits in California

K. Formal Power Centers: Presidency
   1. Evolution of presidential power
   2. Federal and state executive powers compared
   3. Relationship between president and legislature
   4. The bureaucracy; power and roles

L. Formal Power Centers: Judiciary
   1. Definitions and structure
   2. Judicial review: federal and state
   3. Judicial independence and judicial accountability; federal and state compared

M. Policy-making
   1. Political analysis

N. Economic Policy

O. Social Policy

P. Foreign Policy

Lab Content: N/A