

**CUYAMACA COLLEGE**  
COURSE OUTLINE OF RECORD

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 121 – INTRODUCTION TO U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**

3 hours lecture, 3 units

**Catalog Description**

Analysis of the evolution of the structures and functions of the U.S. and California political systems from the time of the nation's founding to the present day. Emphasis is on the dynamic nature of the American political experience and how that experience impacts the functioning of the U.S. political system. The course will also explore the larger cultural, economic, and sociological forces shaping the U.S. political system. In addition, the development and evolution of the U.S. Constitution and policy making role of traditional political institutions such as the presidency, the Congress, and the judiciary will be explored. Finally, the impact of other political forces such as mass movements, the media, the bureaucracy, interest groups, and ethnic and social groups will be examined. Topics will be illustrated through reference to current political events.

**Prerequisite**

None

**Course Content**

Comprised of units to give perspectives on the structure and function of the U.S. and California governments, especially including:

- 1) Democratic political theory including different assessments of how political power is exercised in the U.S. and California
- 2) The evolution of the U.S. Constitution including the philosophies of the framers of the Constitution and the debate over its ratification
- 3) The development of civil liberties and civil rights in the U.S.
- 4) Ways, means and impact of political participation by individuals, ethnic groups and social groups
- 5) The role and impact of linkage institutions such as interest groups, the media and political parties
- 6) The structures, functions and processes of governmental and other political institutions and their impacts on the U.S. political system
- 7) The relations between different levels of government, especially focusing on U.S.-California relations
- 8) The evolution and contemporary status of economic, social and foreign policies

**Course Objectives**

Students will be able to:

- 1) Identify and analyze the ideals, goals, and processes of government and politics in the United States, including those found in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Federalist papers.
- 2) Define democracy and compare and contrast the differences between the democratic theory and reality of the democratic experience in the United States.
- 3) Identify and critically analyze the historical origins and continuing evolution of the U.S. and California Constitutions with a special focus on citizen's rights, liberties, and responsibilities.
- 4) Use various theories of political power to define and critically analyze the institutions and functions of the United States government.
- 5) Describe and analyze how changes in public opinion, interest group pressures, and the media have influenced citizen's relationship to the political system.

- 6) Describe and evaluate the U.S. federal system including the evolution of the relation of states and regions of the United States to each other and to the federal government, with a special focus on California.
- 7) Identify and describe the structures and functions of political parties, elections and voting in shaping the outcomes of the political process.
- 8) Identify key economic, social, and foreign policy issues and analyze how the political system resolves the competing tensions that such policy issues raise.

### **Method of Evaluation**

A grading system will be established by the instructor and implemented uniformly. Grades will be based on demonstrated proficiency in subject matter determined by multiple measurements for evaluation, one of which must be essay exams, skills demonstration or, where appropriate, the symbol system.

- 1) Formative or summative quizzes
- 2) Written assessments: short answers or essays
- 3) Discussion posts and replies, in-class or online
- 4) Analysis of peer-reviewed journal articles
- 5) Simulations
- 6) Projects, individual or group-based
- 7) Research papers or projects

### **Special Materials Required of Student**

None

### **Minimum Instructional Facilities**

1. Smart classroom with maps (primarily U.S. topographical and political)
2. Preferred: Technology Enabled Active Learning classroom

### **Method of Instruction**

- 1) Lecture
- 2) Small and large group discussions
- 3) Individual and group projects
- 4) Individual, small, and large-scale simulations
- 5) Guest speakers
- 6) Learning management systems for:
  - a. Individual and group assignments
  - b. Class discussions
  - c. Formative and summative quizzes
  - d. Individual reflections

### **Out-of-Class Assignments**

- 1) Individual and group assignments can include:
  - a. Analysis and interpretation of chapters in assigned text
  - b. Analysis of current events
  - c. Analysis of diversity, equity, and inclusion and its relation to course content
  - d. Analysis of peer-review journal articles
  - e. Public policy-related project

### **Texts and References**

- 1) Required (representative examples):
  - a. Krutz, Glen, and Sylvie Waskiewicz. 2019. *American Government* 2e. OpenStax.
  - b. McClain, Paula D., and Steven C. Tauber. 2019. *American Government in Black and White: Diversity and Democracy*. 4 edition. Oxford University Press.

2) Supplemental: None

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify the principles, governmental structures, and civil societal elements of American government and politics.
- 2) Summarize the historical roots and contemporary evolution of American government and politics.
- 3) Apply normative and positive approaches to the study of American government and politics.
- 4) Analyze existing applications of political science to topics such as American civil liberties, civil rights, governmental structure, and civil society.
- 5) Evaluate the similarities, differences, and relationships between the Senate, House of Representatives, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, Judiciary, the Media, and the Public.