

College of San Mateo
Official Course Outline

1. **COURSE ID:** PLSC 215 **TITLE:** Contemporary Issues In American Politics
Units: 3.0 units **Hours/Semester:** 48.0-54.0 Lecture hours; and 96.0-108.0 Homework hours
Method of Grading: Grade Option (Letter Grade or Pass/No Pass)
Recommended Preparation:
Eligibility for ENGL 100 or ENGL 105, and completion of, or concurrent enrollment in, any READ 400-level course.
2. **COURSE DESIGNATION:**
Degree Credit
Transfer credit: CSU; UC
AA/AS Degree Requirements:
CSM - GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: E1. Option 2- Group 1: American history and institution
CSM - GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS: E5b. Social Science
CSU GE:
CSU GE Area D: SOCIAL SCIENCES: DSI - Social Institutions
CSU GE Area D: SOCIAL SCIENCES: US-2
IGETC:
IGETC Area 4: SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES: Social and Behavioral Sciences
3. **COURSE DESCRIPTIONS:**
Catalog Description:
Learn how the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of California function in real life by analyzing and debating contemporary political issues.
4. **STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOME(S) (SLO'S):**
Upon successful completion of this course, a student will meet the following outcomes:
 1. Effectively communicate understanding of the roles played by state actors (such as the 3 branches of government) and non-state actors (such as interest groups, political parties and the news media) on the development and implementation of policy.
 2. Critically analyze theories on the impact of federalism, the separation of powers and economic inequality on the development and implementation of policy.
 3. Discuss the impact of ethnic, cultural and economic diversity on political issues and policy.
 4. Evaluate the ethical issues and conflicts inherent to contemporary political issues.
 5. Demonstrate understanding of the rights and duties of a citizen through participation in the political system.
5. **SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**
Upon successful completion of this course, a student will be able to:
 1. Effectively communicate understanding of the roles played by state actors (such as the 3 branches of government) and non-state actors (such as interest groups, political parties and the news media) on the development and implementation of policy.
 2. Critically analyze theories on the impact of federalism, the separation of powers and economic inequality on the development and implementation of policy.
 3. Discuss the impact of ethnic, cultural and economic diversity on political issues and policy.
 4. Evaluate the ethical issues and conflicts inherent to contemporary political issues.
 5. Demonstrate understanding of the rights and duties of a citizen through participation in the political system.
6. **COURSE CONTENT:**
Lecture Content:
 1. Democratic Theory: The relationship between individuals and their government.
 2. Separation of Powers: The powers and responsibilities of the 3 branches of government.
 3. Checks and Balances: The interaction of the institutions making up the 3 branches of government.
 4. Federalism: The interaction of the federal and state governments.
 5. Local Government: The interaction of state and local governments.
 6. Civil Liberties: Individual rights and limits on the powers of government.
 7. Civil Rights: Diversity, equity and discrimination.

8. Economic Inequality: The distribution of economic resources and their impact on the political system.
9. Interest groups
10. Political Parties
11. The Media
12. Voting and Elections
13. Public Policymaking: The interaction of interest groups and government institutions.
14. Contemporary Political Issues, in the areas above, and in those below:
 - A. The Economy
 - B. The Environment
 - C. Criminal Justice
 - D. Education
 - E. Political/Constitutional Reform
 - F. Foreign Policy

7. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

Typical methods of instruction may include:

- A. Lecture
- B. Discussion
- C. Guest Speakers
- D. Other (Specify): Lecture/discussion. Individual and group presentations. Written or oral reports on specific issues in contemporary American politics. Assignments in issues source books and in library research. Attendance at meetings of public interest organizations such as the World Affairs Council of Northern California or the Commonwealth Club of California. Guest speakers in class on topical issues. Participation in the activities of interest groups, political parties, or political campaigns.

8. REPRESENTATIVE ASSIGNMENTS

Representative assignments in this course may include, but are not limited to the following:

Writing Assignments:

Research papers, analytical essays, short-answer questions on assigned readings, letters to elected representatives, reports on political events attended, reports on participation in political activities.

Reading Assignments:

Textbooks, websites, reports, newspapers, newsmagazines.

Other Outside Assignments:

Oral presentations.

9. REPRESENTATIVE METHODS OF EVALUATION

Representative methods of evaluation may include:

- A. Class Participation
- B. Class Work
- C. Exams/Tests
- D. Group Projects
- E. Homework
- F. Oral Presentation
- G. Papers
- H. Projects
- I. Quizzes
- J. Research Projects
- K. Written examination

10. REPRESENTATIVE TEXT(S):

Possible textbooks include:

- A. Miller, W.. *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Political Issues*, ed. McGraw-Hill, 2017
- B. Stinebrickner, B.. *Annual Editions: American Government*, ed. McGraw-Hill, 2017
- C. Canon, D.T; Coleman, J.J.; Mayer, K.R.. *Faultlines: Debating the Issues in American Politics*, 5 ed. W.W. Norton & Co., 2017

Possible periodicals include:

- A. . *CQ Researcher*, Volume 2018
- B. . *Time Magazine*, Volume 2018
- C. . *Newsweek*, Volume 2018
- D. . *The Economist*, Volume 2018

E. . *New York Times*, Volume 2018
F. . *Washington Post*, Volume 2018

Origination Date: November 2018
Curriculum Committee Approval Date: December 2018
Effective Term: Fall 2019
Course Originator: Lee Miller