



Western Technical College

10809122 Introduction to American Government

Course Outcome Summary

Course Information

Description Introduces American political processes and Institutions. Focuses on rights and responsibilities of citizens and the process of participatory democracy. Learners examine the complexity of the separation of powers and checks and balances. Explores the role of the media, interest groups, political parties and public opinion in the political process. Also explores the role of state and national government in our federal system.

Instructional Level Associate Degree Courses

Total Credits 3

Total Hours 54

Textbooks

We the People. 15th Edition. Copyright 2024. Patterson, Thomas E. Publisher: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company. **ISBN-13:** 978-1-265-63300-4. Required.

Success Abilities

1. Cultivate Passion: Expand a Growth-Mindset
2. Refine Professionalism: Act Ethically
3. Refine Professionalism: Improve Critical Thinking

Course Competencies

1. **Explore American political culture.**

Assessment Strategies

- 1.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 1.1. you specify characteristics of American political culture.
- 1.2. you describe sources and influences of political socialization.

Learning Objectives

- 1.a. Explain the foundational principles of democracy.
- 1.b. Discuss the value of constitutionalism.
- 1.c. Examine the range of shared American political values.
- 1.d. Investigate political expectations in democratic systems.
- 1.e. Explore the role of compromise in political culture.
- 1.f. Evaluate inherent conflicts in the American political system.

2. Explore citizenship responsibilities.

Assessment Strategies

- 2.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 2.1. you describe types of political participation.
- 2.2. you indicate your level of participation.
- 2.3. you describe patterns of voting behavior.
- 2.4. you identify procedures used to vote.

Learning Objectives

- 2.a. Examine the role of informed voters in successful democracies.
- 2.b. Contrast citizenship privileges with citizenship rights.
- 2.c. Explore the relationship between efficacy and apathy in a democratic system.
- 2.d. Analyze social conflict and its role in democracy.
- 2.e. Discuss the forces which exert a moderating effect on democracy.

3. Analyze types of governments.

Assessment Strategies

- 3.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 3.1. you compare totalitarian, authoritarian, and democratic forms of government.
- 3.2. you characterize types of government by the degree of governmental control, individual liberty, and equality.

Learning Objectives

- 3.a. Explore comparative philosophies of government.
- 3.b. Contrast the goals and outcomes of democracy and dictatorship.
- 3.c. Summarize the benefits and drawbacks of federalism and centralism.
- 3.d. Analyze the ideological spectrum from communism to fascism.

4. Examine Democratic principles.

Assessment Strategies

- 4.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 4.1. you compare characteristics of direct and representative democracy.
- 4.2. you identify examples of present-day direct democratic principles: referendum, recall, and citizen initiatives.
- 4.3. you describe limitations of democratic government.
- 4.4. you compare the relationship between majority rule and minority rights.
- 4.5. you apply the theory of social contract to the American political system.

Learning Objectives

- 4.a. Discuss popular sovereignty.
- 4.b. Summarize the characteristics of a republic
- 4.c. Analyze the differences between freedom and liberty.
- 4.d. Examine the role of an independent judiciary in a democratic system.
- 4.e. Discuss the inter-dependency of political institutions in Madisonian democracy.

5. Identify functions and purpose of government.

Assessment Strategies

- 5.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 5.1. you classify government activities according to regulatory, distributive, or redistributive.
- 5.2. you identify sources of political legitimacy.

Learning Objectives

- 5.a. Analyze American government as an expression of national will.
- 5.b. Compare the delegate function to the representative function of government.
- 5.c. Explore the risks of anarchy.
- 5.d. Examine the ways in which government provides social and economic order.
- 5.e. Discuss the four fundamental tasks of government – justice, treasury, defense, foreign affairs.
- 5.f. Analyze the responsibilities and functions of government in developing and implementing domestic and foreign policy.

6. Explore the philosophers and documents that influence the development of the Constitution.

Assessment Strategies

- 6.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 6.1. you link core documents to political philosophies and principles.
- 6.2. you explain the principle of natural rights.

Learning Objectives

- 6.a. Evaluate the core ideas of Enlightenment political philosophers.
- 6.b. Explore political tracts of the colonial and revolutionary eras in the context of evolving democracy.
- 6.c. Analyze the structure of the Articles of Confederation and the reasons for its failure.
- 6.d. Distinguish innovation in the US Constitution from inherited concepts based on English common law.
- 6.e. Examine the motives and concepts of the Bill of Rights.

7. Explore the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances.

Assessment Strategies

- 7.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 7.1. you categorize constitutional powers as delegated, implied, and reserved.
- 7.2. you provide examples of checks and balances.
- 7.3. you identify examples of separation of powers (federal and state, state, and local).

Learning Objectives

- 7.a. Summarize the core tenets of the Madisonian model.
- 7.b. Chart the basic checks of three-branch, decentralized government.
- 7.c. Analyze the relationship of federalism to governmental restraint.
- 7.d. Contrast the ideas of federalism and early national republicanism.
- 7.e. Examine the role of compromise in the separation of powers.

8. Analyze civil liberties.

Assessment Strategies

- 8.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 8.1. you differentiate civil rights and civil liberties.
8.2. you analyze amendments and landmark Supreme Court cases relating to civil liberties.
8.3. you analyze current issues related to civil liberties.

Learning Objectives

- 8.a. Interpret basic concepts of the social contract within Enlightenment political philosophy.
8.b. Analyze the justification for limited government.
8.c. Summarize basic civil liberties, including the First Amendment and the rights of the criminally accused.
8.d. Evaluate the role of the federal courts in enforcing constitutional civil liberties.
8.e. Discuss the role of selective incorporation in the expansion of civil liberties.
8.f. Examine the US Supreme Court's extension of civil liberties to non-citizens.

9. Trace the development of Civil Rights.

Assessment Strategies

- 9.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 9.1. you outline historical development of civil rights.
9.2. you analyze amendments and landmark Supreme Court cases relating to civil rights.
9.3. you analyze current issues related to civil rights.

Learning Objectives

- 9.a. Summarize the historical context of civil rights from the early national era to the present.
9.b. Explore bigotry as a force in American public life.
9.c. Explain the role played by peaceful protest and the enforcement of civil liberties in the success of the African-American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.
9.d. Analyze the influence of the Civil Rights Movement on subsequent efforts to guarantee civil liberties for additional minority groups.
9.e. Summarize areas of discontent in current civil rights policies.

10. Explain the election process in the United States.

Assessment Strategies

- 10.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 10.1. you explain the nomination process.
10.2. you explain the role of the electoral college.
10.3. you explain the general election process.
10.4. you identify the role of the citizen in the election processes.
10.5. you describe the campaign process.

Learning Objectives

- 10.a. Compare primary elections to caucuses as methods of selecting candidates for public office.
10.b. Summarize the forces which influence candidates for public office.
10.c. Discuss the methodologies of modern political campaigns.
10.d. Explain the operations and consequences of the Electoral College.
10.e. Analyze campaign finance laws and practices in campaign fundraising / spending.
10.f. Examine the behavior of the American voting public.

11. Explore the two-party system and the role of third parties in the United States.

Assessment Strategies

- 11.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 11.1. you provide the reasons for the entrenched two-party system.
- 11.2. you describe the roles of third/minor parties.
- 11.3. you compare characteristics of the Democratic and Republican parties.

Learning Objectives

- 11.a. Explore the function and history of the American two-party system.
- 11.b. Explain party organization, and analyze the distribution and balance of power within parties.
- 11.c. Contrast the characteristics of the two major political parties today.
- 11.d. Discuss the role of winner-take-all practices in the evolution of political parties.
- 11.e. Describe third parties, and dissect the failure of American society to develop viable alternatives to the two major parties.
- 11.f. Inventory characteristics of citizen participation in political parties.

12. Analyze the influence of media in the political process.

Assessment Strategies

- 12.1. through a test, written assignment or group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 12.1. you provide examples of how the media sets the agenda.
- 12.2. you identify examples of political "spin".

Learning Objectives

- 12.a. Summarize the role of the free press in democracy.
- 12.b. Examine the value of objectivity in the presentation of news.
- 12.c. Explore the agenda-setting function of the news media.
- 12.d. Discuss the influence of the news media over American political processes.
- 12.e. Explore the ideological range of American media outlets.
- 12.f. Analyze how the profit motive has affected political processes.

13. Explore the role of interest groups.

Assessment Strategies

- 13.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 13.1. you compare pluralist and power elite theories.
- 13.2. you identify types of interest groups.
- 13.3. you identify interest group actions to influence policy and election campaigns.
- 13.4. you explain citizens' roles in interest groups.

Learning Objectives

- 13.a. Trace the history of interest groups as partners of American political institutions.
- 13.b. Analyze the methodologies and objectives of interest groups.
- 13.c. Examine efforts to regulate interest groups through public law
- 13.d. Discuss the phenomenon of dark money in the context of US Supreme Court rulings since 2000.
- 13.e. Explain the nexus of Congressional committees, bureaucratic agencies, and interest groups.

14. Differentiate the types of public opinion in the American political process.

Assessment Strategies

- 14.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 14.1. you identify types of public opinion polls.
- 14.2. you describe characteristics of a push poll.

- 14.3. you describe examples of measures of public opinion polls.
- 14.4. you interpret public opinion polls.

Learning Objectives

- 14.a. Summarize how individuals form political opinion.
- 14.b. Explain the methodologies and integrity of public opinion polling.
- 14.c. Analyze how public opinion shapes political debate.
- 14.d. Examine the influence of group dynamics over political decision-making.
- 14.e. Discuss the gaps between factual knowledge and public opinion.

15. Summarize the structure, functions and responsibilities of Congress.

Assessment Strategies

- 15.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 15.1. you analyze the structure of Congress.
- 15.2. you trace how a Bill becomes law.
- 15.3. you identify examples of differences between the Senate and House.
- 15.4. you describe types of representation.

Learning Objectives

- 15.a. Outline the evolution of the national legislature from the First Continental Congress to the modern era.
- 15.b. Discuss the bicameral structure and responsibilities of the House and the Senate.
- 15.c. Explain the functional operation of the House and the Senate.
- 15.d. Analyze apportionment, redistricting, and gerrymandering.
- 15.e. Examine the role and effects of partisanship in the Congress.

16. Summarize the organization, functions and responsibilities of the Executive Branch.

Assessment Strategies

- 16.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 16.1. you summarize the powers and responsibilities of the President.
- 16.2. you describe the organizational structure of the Executive Branch.
- 16.3. you describe the expansion of presidential powers.

Learning Objectives

- 16.a. Analyze the multiple roles and responsibilities of the President.
- 16.b. Differentiate between the head of state and the head of government.
- 16.c. Explain the constitutional and non-constitutional ways in which Presidents exercise their power.
- 16.d. Discuss the expansion of presidential power since the era of Theodore Roosevelt.
- 16.e. Examine the functions, objectives, and structure of the federal bureaucracy.

17. Summarize the organization, functions and responsibilities of the federal judiciary.

Assessment Strategies

- 17.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 17.1. you describe the structure of the Federal court system.
- 17.2. you describe the nature and historical evolution of judicial review.
- 17.3. you explain the process of a federal judicial appointment.
- 17.4. you analyze the judicial process.

Learning Objectives

- 17.a. Discuss types of law.
- 17.b. Describe the federal court system.
- 17.c. Evaluate the process of appointment and confirmation to the federal bench.

- 17.d. Explain judicial review.
- 17.e. Evaluate the influence of ideology on court rulings.
- 17.f. Discuss specialized courts and customs of prosecution.
- 17.g. Analyze the three major historical phases of the US Supreme Court (federalism, regulation/federal responsibility for public welfare, civil liberties).

18. Differentiate among federal, state and local government functions and responsibilities.

Assessment Strategies

- 18.1. through a test, written assignment or a group project

Criteria

You will know you are successful when

- 18.1. you describe the dual aspect of American Government (federal and state).
- 18.2. you identify examples of federal powers versus state's rights.
- 18.3. you describe the characteristics of Wisconsin State Government.
- 18.4. you identify examples of collection and distribution of funding sources.

Learning Objectives

- 18.a. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of federalism.
- 18.b. Summarize the power-sharing relationships among the levels of government.
- 18.c. Discuss the issue of states' rights in American history and in today's federalism.
- 18.d. Explain full faith and credit, devolution, the commerce clause, and national supremacy.
- 18.e. Analyze the role of funding as an incentive in federal-state issues.