

BUTTE COLLEGE

COURSE OUTLINE

I. CATALOG DESCRIPTION

POS 16 - Vital Political Problems

3 Unit(s)

Prerequisite(s): NONE

Recommended Prep: Reading Level V; English Level IV

Transfer Status: CSU/UC

51 hours Lecture

This course examines major political problems in the United States today that challenge us to think more clearly and deeply about constitutional democracy. Democracy, freedom, and equality are ideals explored, contrasted, and discussed in this course. The extent to which free markets replace government or government replaces free markets is surveyed from both conservative and liberal perspectives.

II. OBJECTIVES

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

- A. recognize that free and fair debate is crucial to a democratic society. The values and aspirations that we share as a democratic people are evident in reasoned debate and good faith efforts to secure consensus in addressing vital political problems.
- B. examine the tensions between the Federalists and Anti-federalists at the Founding and the subsequent incorporation of the Bill of Rights in the first Congress.
- C. appraise federal-state relations and be able to discuss both the cooperation and conflict of states and the federal government. The devolution of authority from the federal government to state and local governments in some policy areas will also be investigated.
- D. assemble more advanced knowledge of Congress, elections, political parties, political participation, media, public opinion, the Presidency, bureaucracy, and judiciary.
- E. evaluate political culture, civil liberties, and the civil rights of citizens in our representative democracy.
- F. analyze and evaluate public policies, political philosophies, ideologies, institutions, processes, and human nature.
- G. recognize features of the free market economy, different ideologies regarding the role of government in regulating the economy, and income inequality among citizens in the United States.
- H. comprehend America's role in the global economy and its position as leader of the free world.

III. COURSE CONTENT

A. Unit Titles/Suggested Time Schedule

Lecture	
<u>Topics</u>	<u>Hours</u>
1. Constitutional Democracy in 1787 and Today	8.00
2. The New Federalism and Political Culture	4.00
3. The Free Market Economy and Income Inequality	6.00
4. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	6.00
5. Public Opinion, The New Media, and Political Participation	6.00
6. Congress, Elections, and Political Parties	6.00
7. The Presidency, Bureaucracy, and Judiciary	6.00

IV. METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

- A. Lecture
- B. Guest Speakers
- C. Homework: Students are required to complete two hours of outside-of-class homework for each hour of lecture
- D. Discussion
- E. Multimedia Presentations

V. METHODS OF EVALUATION

- A. Exams/Tests
- B. Quizzes
- C. Research Projects
- D. Class participation
- E. Students who successfully complete this course will comply with a 2500-word writing requirement. This requirement may be met in a variety of ways, including answering questions on quizzes, essay exams, or writing term papers.

VI. EXAMPLES OF ASSIGNMENTS

- A. Reading Assignments
 - 1. Read the article from your text that deals with Electoral College. What is your position? Why was such a system set up in the first place.
 - 2. Read the article that summarizes the Health Care debate. What role did the Heritage Foundation play in the formation of the Republican's approach to national healthcare.
- B. Writing Assignments
 - 1. Write a five page essay summarizing the "Gun Law(s)" debate. Don't take a side; summarize the prevailing views on both sides of the issue.
 - 2. Write a three page essay focusing on the Justice Roberts decision on President Obama's Healthcare program. A section of your paper should focus on why Justice Roberts made his decision.
- C. Out-of-Class Assignments
 - 1. Attend a meeting of the Diversity and Hiring Committee. Be prepared to summarize the meeting's discussion in our class. Some states have active affirmative action programs while others do not. What is California's current position on affirmative action and what proposals were being advanced by this college with regard to diversity in hiring?
 - 2. Attend the Occupy Chico and the Tea Party protests scheduled this weekend in downtown Chico. Report your observations to class. What differences between the two groups were expressed? How do these groups differ in terms of views on federal spending, national healthcare, and funding for education.

VII. RECOMMENDED MATERIALS OF INSTRUCTION**Textbooks:**

- A. Miroff, Bruce, Seidelman, Raymond, and Swanstrom, Todd. Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics. 7th Edition. Cengage Learning, 2011.
- B. J Martin, Rodolfo D. Torres. Savage State: Welfare, Capitalism and Inequality. Rowmann and Littlefield, 2000.

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