



Course Description

POS2041 | American Federal Government | 3.00 credits

In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American constitutional republic operates. It covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government, including but not limited to the declaration of independence, the United States Constitution and all its amendments, and the Federalist Papers. The course examines the branches of government and the government's laws, policies, and programs. It also examines the ways in which citizens participate in their government and ways their government responds to citizens. Student learning outcomes: students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of America's constitutional republic; students will demonstrate knowledge of the nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, and the Federalist Papers; students will demonstrate knowledge of landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions; students will demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the American federal government and its impact on law and society; students will demonstrate an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates; and students will demonstrate the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

Course Competencies:

Competency 1: The student will demonstrate an understanding of democracy by:

1. Identifying the Greek, Roman, Judeo-Christian, German, and English contributions to its evolution.
2. Describing the contributions of the Enlightenment, Liberalism, and modern secular and egalitarian movements to its development.
3. Discussing its characteristics and various forms.

Competency 2: The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the foundations of American Government by:

1. Studying the principal colonial, political, and economic institutions and analyzing the causes of the American War of Independence.
2. Analyzing the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation.
3. Discussing the reasons for the Philadelphia Convention and its many controversies and political compromises.

Competency 3: The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the Constitution of the United States by:

1. Reading the articles of the Constitution as well as its amendments.
2. Defining its main characteristics, including federalism, separation of powers and checks and balances.
3. Reasoning why the Bill of Rights and other amendments were added to the Constitution.

Competency 4: The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the relations linking people with their governments by:

1. Discussing the nature of public opinion and political socialization.
2. Analyzing the role of the mass media, the factors which influence its coverage, and its impact on society.
3. Describing the socio-economic, political, and ideological factors which affect voting.
4. Explaining the functioning of political parties and interest groups.
5. Knowing how federal elections take place in the United States.

Competency 5: The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the structure of the central government by:

1. Describing the functions, organizations, powers and limitations of the Congress, the Presidency, the Judiciary, and the Bureaucracy.
2. Discussing the many ways in which the citizenry can impact on these institutions.

Competency 6: The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of civil liberties and civil rights by:

1. Learning about the Bill of Rights and Supreme Court decisions that protect civil liberties from government intrusion.
2. Identifying amendments to the Constitution and legislation to protect the citizenry.
3. Studying the differences between conservative and liberal interpretations of the Constitution.

Competency 7: The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the making of public policy by:

1. Analyzing the political process of making economic, domestic, and international policies.
2. Studying the many points of view, including libertarian, anarchist, conservative, liberal, socialist, and autocratic, held by the American people and how they lead to political tension and compromise.
3. Describing the many issues that face Americans and others in the United States, including abortion, education, health care, fiscal policies, immigration, monetary policies, social security, and others.

Learning Outcomes

- Communicate effectively using listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills
- Solve problems using critical and creative thinking and scientific reasoning
- Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate, and apply information