

**RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
ACADEMIC COURSE OUTLINE**

POLI 121 American Government and Politics

I. Basic Course Information

A. Course number and Title: POLI 121 Introduction to Political Science

B. New or Modified Course: Modified

C. Date of Proposal: Semester: Fall Year: 2023

D. Effective Term: Fall 2024

E. Sponsoring Department: Humanities, Social Sciences, Social Work & Education

F. Semester Credit Hours: **3**

G. Weekly Contact Hours: 3

Lecture: 3

Laboratory: 0

Out of class student work per week: 6

H. ☐ Prerequisite (s):

☐ Corequisite (s):

☒ Prerequisite (s) and Corequisite (s): Placement into ENGL 111 English Composition I with ENGL 070 English Composition I Workshop, or higher.

I. Additional Fees: None

J. Name and E-Mail Address of Department Chair and Divisional Dean at time of approval: Dr. Isabel Gutierrez-Bergman (Isabel.Gutierrez@raritanval.edu)
Dr. Patrice Marks (Patrice.Marks@raritanval.edu)

II. Catalog Description

Prerequisites/Corequisites: Placement into ENGL 111 English Composition I with ENGL 070 English Composition I Workshop, or higher.

The course examines the American Constitutional System in its historical development and contemporary applications. Topics and discussions will focus on basic institutions such as the President,

Congress and the federal judicial system, followed by elections, campaigns, political parties the role of the media, and the Bill of Rights.

III. Statement of Course Need

- A. This course serves as a basic component in undergraduate liberal arts education, and transfers as a General Education course to most four-year institutions. It is also a necessary primary source for students intending to pursue legal studies, business administration, government service or teaching careers. It is also of general interest to those interested in the foundations and processes of the American governmental system.
- B. No lab component
- C. Transferability
 - 1. The course transfers as a general education elective or requirement for various programs, such as pre-law or municipal government or teacher education
 - 2. This course transfers as a General Education social science elective
 - 3. This course is a requirement for the Education P-12A.A. Degree

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

- A. Free Elective
- B. This course serves as a General Education course in Social Sciences.
- C. To see course transferability: a) for New Jersey schools, go to the NJ Transfer website, www.njtransfer.org; b) for all other colleges and universities, go to the individual websites.

V. Outline of Course Content

- A. General introduction to study of the American Political System
- B. Acquaintance with historical development of the American Constitutional system
- C. Examination of current issues and controversies in comparative and historical perspective.
- D. Consideration of the theories of Plato, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke as part of the philosophical background of the Constitution
- E. Study of the Constitution's inception through extensive readings in the *Federalist Papers*, the most authoritative commentary on the Constitution and the intentions of its framers.
- F. Detailed examination of the three principal branches of government established by the Constitution, as well as the relationship between state and federal jurisdictions
- G. Examination of the development of political culture and political socialization and interest groups
- H. Examination of political parties in historical and contemporary perspectives
- I. Comparative study of political campaigns and elections
- J. Examination of the Bill of Rights, especially with regard to criminal procedure and First Amendment rights of free speech and press.

VI. A. Course Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Apply comparative methods in the introductory study of government and politics in the American system (GE 5 *)
2. Compare and analyze contrasting or conflicting theories in political philosophy, especially their influence on the Framers of the American Constitution (GE 1, 5 *)
3. Effectively communicate ideas in essays and research projects (GE 1)
4. Outline the basic vocabulary, philosophical questions and methods of analysis relevant to the study of American Government (GE 5)
5. Explain the structure of the Constitution and its underlying principle of separation of powers (GE 5)
6. Describe the inputs of various components of the American Political Process, including the pluralistic nature of American society, the interaction and competition among widely varied groups, political parties, the formation of public opinion, the role of the media, campaigns and elections (GE 5, 7, 8 *)
7. Outline the basic components of civil liberties as derived from the Constitution, especially the Bill of Rights, including judicial procedures in the 4th, 5th, and 6th amendments, and 1st amendment rights of free speech and free press (GE 5, ER)

* (Embedded Critical Thinking)

B. Assessment Instruments

1. lecture/discussion
2. small-group work
3. student oral presentations
4. essays
5. term papers
6. homework assignments from textbook
7. quizzes
8. participation

VII. Grade Determinants

- A. essays
- B. projects and/or research papers
- C. exams
- D. presentations
- E. article summaries
- F. discussion participation
- G. book review

Primary formats, modes, and methods for teaching and learning that may be used in the course:

- A. lecture/discussion
- B. small-group work
- C. student oral presentations
- D. student collaboration

VIII. Texts and Materials

1. Open Education Resources
2. Textbook – *American Government*, 13th edition, by Wilson and DiIulio
3. The *Federalist Papers*, by Hamilton, Madison and Jay.
4. Supplementary Materials, especially printed summaries of important Supreme Court cases.

(Please Note: The course outline is intended only as a guide to course content and resources. Do not purchase textbooks based on this outline. The RVCC Bookstore is the sole resource for the most up-to-date information about textbooks.)

IX. Resources

N/A

X. Honors Options [if relevant]

N/A