



**PLS 211/212, U.S. Government I & II**  
**Elite Learning—Spring 2019**  
**Supporting Colleges: MECC WCC VHCC SWCC**

**Southwest Virginia Education and Training Network**

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**Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Mrs. Amanda Lea Robinson, B.S., M.A., Ed.S.

**E-mail:** The best way to reach me is by sending a message within your Moodle course; however, my email address is [alrobinson@tazewell.k12.va.us](mailto:alrobinson@tazewell.k12.va.us). My email should only be used as a last resort. Students should expect to receive message responses within 24 hours. I will post if I will not be available in the Announcements, so be sure to read the Announcements! All announcements and communication will take place there. I STRONGLY advise you to use your time wisely as it is allotted to you during the school day. Time management in an online course is key.

Online hours responses will occur within 24 hours of emails sent M-F. Please note: weekend (Saturday/Sunday) email/contact may take longer.

**Course (Catalog) Description**

**VCCS Master Course Description (PLS 211 and PLS 212):**

Teaches structure, operation, and process of national, state, and local governments. Includes in-depth study of the three branches of the government and of public policy. Part I of II (3 credits) and Part II of II (3 credits)

**Prerequisite:** Placement tests may be required. Contact your school counselor for more information.

Students who are successful in this course will receive six college credits for PLS 211/212 as well as have a basic overview of United States Government and related topics.

**Course Materials**

Online book title: American Government, Glen Krutz (Content Lead), Sylvie Waskiewicz, (Lead Editor)

Good news: each chapter of the textbook is in the corresponding unit in Moodle in a PDF format. If you prefer, you can also visit the link below to the textbook. It is available to view as a web page, or various download options: <https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government>

**Time & Location of Class Meeting:**

This course is asynchronous, which means you will be able to access your course material at any time of the day or night. You should have a specific time in the day that you will be assigned to work on your assignments for this course at school. I STRONGLY advise you to use your time wisely as it is allotted to you during the school day. Time management in an online course is key to academic success.

**It is required for you to log into your course and work each school day.**

## **Technology Requirement:**

Students will be required to complete and submit assignments by using Moodle, the learning management system for Elite Learning. The course can be accessed at [www.svetn.org](http://www.svetn.org). Students will need use of the Internet for all coursework. Access to word processing software and slide-show software is also required. Microsoft Word and PowerPoint are preferred but not required.

## **Technical Support:**

Technical problems are not common but occur from time-to-time. To receive prompt support, students must submit a trouble ticket by going to [www.svetn.org](http://www.svetn.org) and then selecting the Contact tab. The trouble ticket Form will be distributed to the informational support team. You should receive a response within 24 hours (usually much sooner). After you have submitted the trouble ticket, please send me an email or message to let me know what problems you are having.

## **Teaching Methods:**

The teaching/learning method in this course will incorporate an online delivery through Moodle, with a focus on reading assignments from the textbook, augmented with videos and background documents. The learning environment will contain an active discussion forums and activities featuring constant interaction between the students as well as the instructor. All assignments in the course feature an emphasis on developing critical thinking and communication skills.

**Reading Assignments:** You are expected to read Chapters 1-17 in your textbook, as directed in the course. In addition, there will be some additional readings as part of several of the assignments.

**Other Assignments:** There are 17 units in the course divided into 5 modules. In each unit the student will complete a unit quiz, and at least one forum assignment and at least one unit activity. There is also a major exam with multiple choice and essays for each of the five modules. Finally, there is book review assignment.

## **Method of Evaluating Student Achievement**

Grading Policy & Scale--This course will be graded on a ten-point scale:

100-90 % = A      89-80 % = B      79-70 % = C      69-60 % = D      59 % or less = F

Grades are divided into categories:

U.S. Government I (PLS 211):  
Unit Forum Assignments= 20%  
Unit Quizzes= 10%  
Unit Activities= 20%  
Modules 1 and 2 Exams= 30%  
Video Summary Assignment=15%  
Book Selection and Novel Progress So Far= 5%

U.S. Government II (PLS 212):  
Unit Forum Assignments= 15%

Unit Quizzes= 10%  
Unit Activities= 20%  
Modules 3, 4, 5 Exams= 30%  
Video Summary Assignment=15%  
Book Review Paper= 15%

All grades will be reported by SVETN to each school with a numeric grade and a recommended letter, but assignment of a final letter grade will be at the discretion of the student's school.

Students should expect to receive feedback from the instructor on all discussion board posts within 48 hours. Because it takes much longer to grade papers, you can expect feedback within 7 days of your submission (usually sooner).

Due dates for all assignments are listed in each unit in Moodle.

**\*\*All Unit work (Activities, Quizzes, Forums) as well as the Module Exams and Book Review must be turned in by the dates listed in Moodle.\*\***

**Late Work Policy:** Please be aware that this is a rigorous college course which requires disciplined work habits and the meeting of deadlines. Due dates are located on the calendar and throughout the course. You should give yourself plenty of time on assignments and don't wait until the last minute. For example: An assignment has been open for an entire week. You don't attempt the quiz until 30 minutes before it closes but then you have technical problems. You will not be given an extension because ample time was given on the quiz. I will not extend deadlines unless I am contacted by your school with an approved excuse. I will not reopen an assignment after it has closed. Plan accordingly if you will be out of school on trips, out of town, etc.

NOTE: Late submissions may be permitted with appropriate documentation of a medical or dire emergency. Documentation should be sent to me by your guidance counselor or proctor.

### **Attendance Policy:**

Regular class attendance is required. Specific attendance requirements are explained in the syllabus for each course. When absence from a class is necessary, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the instructor prior to the absence. The student is responsible for the subsequent completion of all work missed during an absence. The Virginia Community College System is committed to academic quality and student success. Elements that support both of these values are regular attendance and participation in class. The college policy states that regular class attendance is required.

**The policy in this class is: At least once every school day, you are required to log into MOODLE and perform three tasks:**

- 1) Check your inbox for new messages.
- 2) Check for new course announcements under "News Announcements"
- 3) Check the upcoming units to see what work is due. You should then proceed to work on the assignments within the current unit.

The high school and/or parents will be notified if a student has not logged into their course for a three day period. Contacts will also be made if a student is logging into their course with only a minimum amount of work each day. Expect no less than 60-90 minutes of work each day.

## **Students with Disabilities:**

Disabilities Students who participate in this class are also high school students. Each high school has resources available for students with disabilities (IEP). Please contact the guidance counselor at your school to request academic accommodations. Each community college also has the Office of Student Services, which may be able to provide additional services. A representative from your school (guidance counselor) may make a request for services at the college. That office will evaluate the request and make recommendations for appropriate and reasonable accommodations, which the student will provide to the instructor. Please contact your guidance counselor or SVETN for more information.

## **Emergency Policy:**

Follow all emergency policies for your home school.

## **Academic Integrity:**

Academic work is evaluated on the assumption that the work presented is the student's own, unless designated otherwise. Anything less is unacceptable and considered academically dishonest. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication facilitating academic dishonesty.

Each student will be bound by the academic codes of their school. Any violations will be reported to the student's school for appropriate disciplinary action. Cheating will not be tolerated. Because these courses are considered college courses, each student is considered a responsible adult. It is assumed that students will maintain standards of conduct appropriate to membership in Elite Learning as well as the community college. Emphasis is placed on standards of student conduct rather than on limits or restrictions. Guidelines and regulations governing student conduct are developed by the Elite Learning faculty, staff, and administration. More detailed information is found in the Elite Learning Student Guide.

## **Honor Code:**

All local (and Elite Learning) Honor Codes are in place in this course, and are expected to be followed at all times. The said Honor Code will be enforced and abided to in this course.

It is critical that all students read the Elite Learning Guide for Students. This guide is located at [www.svetn.org](http://www.svetn.org) as well as within your course. Contact Dawn Stafford, SVETN Executive Director, if you have questions or concerns.

Course syllabus and schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

## **How do I complete this course?**

All Assignments under each bolded category are expected to be completed by the due date given by the instructor (via Moodle). Under each category you will find readings, resources, and presentations. For best results complete all work assigned, all readings and all supplementary assignments, not merely graded work. This will help you to grasp the material in an online environment, interact with your peers as well as prepare you for each topic examination. There will be an assessment at the end of each topic, occasional project assignments (weighted as tests), a midterm multiple choice exam and a final multiple choice exam.

## **Course Information**

### U.S. Government I:

- Unit 1: American Government and Civic Engagement
- Unit 2: The Constitution and Its Origins
- Unit 3: American Federalism
- Unit 4: Civil Liberties
- Unit 5: Civil Rights
- Unit 6: The Politics of Public Opinion
- Unit 7: Voting and Elections
- Unit 8: The Media
- Unit 9: Political Parties
- Unit 10: Interest Groups and Lobbying
- Final Exam

### U.S. Government II:

- Unit 11: Congress
- Unit 12: The Presidency
- Unit 13: The Courts
- Unit 14: State and Local Government
- Unit 15: The Bureaucracy
- Unit 16: Domestic Policy
- Unit 17: Foreign Policy
- Novel Project
- Final Exam

### **Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives**

#### **Goals:**

- Students will use a critical analysis approach to examine, discuss and write about social and political issues as they relate to the political process.
- Students will be able to recognize the value of dissent and the preciousness of consensus within our system and why some methods work while others are less effective.
- Students will understand how conflict has defined and shape America society.
- Critical thinking skills will be honed through exploring past policies and views compared and contrasted with present issues and policies.
- Students will critically analyze primary source documents and writings within their historical context and critically read secondary sources (historical and other scholarship) and be able to identify an author's thesis and main points
- Students will write logical and coherent papers and exams with an argument of your own.

#### **General Objectives:** Under examination conditions and with a 60% accuracy, the student should be able to:

- Grasp the historical background of the American political system and understand the current political basis of the United States.
- Delineate and explain the differences in federal, state and local governmental structures and powers.
- Know major case law (such as Marbury vs. Madison, etc.) and be able to explain in writing the legal doctrines articulated therein.
- Know and understand common political and legal terms such as Stare decisis, quid pro quo, etc.
- Understand the people and politics of American Government.
- Discuss the role of public opinion, the mass media, and interest groups influence on American Government
- Discuss the concepts of majority rule and minority rights, federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, and power in representation.

- H. Explain how political parties, voting and elections, and the campaign process affect policymakers, politics, and policies.
- I. Know and understand foreign and domestic policy

**Core Competencies:** This course satisfies VCCS Core Competencies in the following categories:

1. Written Communication: Students will demonstrate clear and effective writing skills in a variety of contexts.
2. Critical Thinking: Students will exhibit identified critical thinking skills to pose questions, process information, and make decisions.
3. Quantitative Reasoning: Students will compute, analyze, and communicate quantitative data using mathematical and logical methods to solve problems (e.g., tables, graphs, formulas, or other relevant formats).
4. Information Literacy: Students will effectively gather, organize, apply, and evaluate information with an understanding of its origin and the technologies used.
5. Cultural and Social Understanding: Students will demonstrate an awareness of creative expression in human society, as well as an understanding of the historical and contemporary impact that society and social institutions have on individuals and cultures
6. Soft Skills: Students will demonstrate soft skills such as: strong work ethic/integrity, organization, time management, and consistent attendance.

### **Specific Course Level Objectives (PLS 211)**

The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking and responsible citizenship by

- A. completing projects that require synthesizing information from diverse primary and secondary sources;
- B. comparing and contrasting historical, cultural, and political perspectives;
- C. evaluating critically the quality, accuracy, and validity of information to determine misconceptions, fact and opinion, and bias;
- D. constructing informed, analytic arguments, using evidence from multiple sources to introduce and support substantive and significant claims;
- E. explaining how cause-and-effect relationships impact political events;
- F. taking knowledgeable, constructive action, individually and collaboratively, to address school, community, local, state, national, and/or global issues;
- G. applying civic virtues and democratic principles to make collaborative decisions.

The student will apply social science skills to understand the political philosophies that shaped the development of United States constitutional government by

- A. describing the development of Athenian democracy and the Roman republic to differentiate between a democracy and a republic;
- B. explaining the influence of the Magna Carta, the English Petition of Rights, and the English Bill of Rights;
- C. evaluating the writings of Hobbes, Locke, and Montesquieu;

The student will apply social science skills to understand the concept of democracy by

- A. recognizing the fundamental worth and dignity of the individual;
- B. recognizing the equality of all citizens under the law;
- C. recognizing what defines a citizen and how noncitizens can become citizens;
- D. recognizing majority rule and minority rights;
- E. recognizing the necessity of compromise; and
- F. recognizing the freedom of the individual.



The student will apply social science skills to understand the Constitution of the United States by

- A. examining the ratification debates and The Federalist Papers.
- B. evaluating the purposes for government stated in the Preamble.
- C. examining the fundamental principles upon which the Constitution is based, including the rule of law, consent of the governed, limited government, separation of powers, and federalism;
- D. defining the structure of the national government outlined in Article I, Article II, and Article III; and
- E. analyzing and explaining the amendment process.

The student will apply social science skills to understand the federal system of government by

- A. evaluating the relationship between the state government and the national government;
- B. analyzing the ongoing debate that focuses on the balance of power between state and national governments;

The student will apply social science skills to understand local, state, and national elections by

- A. describing the nomination and election process;
- B. describing the organization and evolving role of political parties;
- C. analyzing the influence of media coverage, campaign advertising, public opinion polls, social media, and digital communications on elections;
- D. analyzing voter turnout in local, state, and national elections.

The student will apply social science skills to understand civil liberties and civil rights by

- A. examining the Bill of Rights, with an emphasis on First Amendment freedoms;
- B. analyzing due process of law and equal protection of the law expressed in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments;
- C. investigating and evaluating the balance between individual liberties and the public interest; and,
- D. examining how civil liberties and civil rights are protected under the law.

The student will apply social science skills to understand that in a democratic republic, thoughtful and effective participation in civic life is characterized by

- A. exercising personal character traits such as trustworthiness, responsibility, and honesty;
- B. obeying the law and paying taxes;
- C. serving as a juror;
- D. participating in the political process and voting in local, state, and national elections;
- E. performing public service;
- F. keeping informed about current issues;
- G. respecting differing opinions and the rights of others;
- H. practicing personal and fiscal responsibility;
- I. demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that foster the responsible and respectful use of digital media; and,
- J. practicing patriotism.

### **Specific Course Level Objectives (PLS 212)**

The student will demonstrate skills for historical thinking and responsible citizenship by

- A. completing projects that require synthesizing information from diverse primary and secondary sources;
- B. comparing and contrasting historical, cultural, and political perspectives;
- C. evaluating critically the quality, accuracy, and validity of information to determine misconceptions, fact and opinion, and bias;

- D. constructing informed, analytic arguments, using evidence from multiple sources to introduce and support substantive and significant claims;
- E. explaining how cause-and-effect relationships impact political events;
- F. taking knowledgeable, constructive action, individually and collaboratively, to address school, community, local, state, national, and/or global issues;
- G. applying civic virtues and democratic principles to make collaborative decisions.

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- J. practicing patriotism.

The student will apply social science skills to understand the organization and power of the executive branch by

- A. examining the constitutional and political powers of the presidency;
- B. analyzing the relationships of the three branches in a system of checks and balances and separation of powers; and
- C. investigating and explaining the ways individuals and groups exert influence on the national government, and
- D. examining the electoral college and the method of electing the president.

The student will apply social science skills to understand the organization and power of Congress by

- A. examining the constitutional and political powers of the Congress;
- B. analyzing the relationships of Congress to the presidency and the federal judiciary;
- C. investigating and explaining the ways individuals and groups exert influence on Congress;
- D. examining the terms of office, constituencies, and methods of electing members of the House and Senate.

The student will apply social science skills to understand the federal judiciary by

- A. describing the organization, jurisdiction, and proceedings of federal courts;
- B. evaluating how the Marshall Court established the Supreme Court as an independent branch of government through its opinion in *Marbury v. Madison*.
- C. describing how the Supreme Court decides cases;
- D. comparing the philosophies of judicial activism and judicial restraint; and
- E. investigating and evaluating how the judiciary influences public policy by delineating the power of government and safeguarding the rights of the individual.

The student will apply social science skills to understand the process by which public policy is made by

- A. defining public policy and determining how to differentiate between public and private action;
- B. describing how the national government shapes public policy in selected areas that may include social welfare, health care, environmental, education, and/or national security policy.



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