



PLS 135: American National Politics

Elite Learning—Fall 2021

Supporting Colleges: MECC WCC VHCC SWCC

Southwest Virginia Education and Training Network

Contact Information

Instructor: Kyle Scanlan

E-mail: The best way to reach me is to message me in Canvas. You may also email me at kscanlan@mecc.edu. I will post an announcement when I will not be available, so be sure to read the Announcements!

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

Teaches the political structure, processes, institutions, and policymaking of the US national government. Focuses on the three branches of government, their interrelationships, and how they shape policy. Addresses federalism; civil liberties and civil rights; political socialization and participation; public opinion, the media; interest groups; political parties; elections; and policymaking. The assignments in the course require college-level reading fluency and coherent communication through written reports. This is a Passport Transfer course.

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

Students who are successful in this course will receive 3 college credits for PLS 135 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: You can access the textbook in Canvas in a PDF format. If you prefer, you can also visit the link below to the textbook. (Each module has links to the book as well) 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 in Canvas, which means you will be able to access your course material at any time. You should have a specific time in the school day to work on the assignments. It is expected that the student will follow the assignments as outlined in Canvas. The course is designed so the student will spend 60-90 minutes per week day on the readings and assignments.

It is required for you to log into your course and work each school day. I will be checking your activity in the course, and if you are not participating, I will message you and your counselor.

Technology Requirement:

Students will be required to complete and submit assignments by using Canvas, the learning management system for Elite Learning. The course can be accessed from www.learn.vccs.edu

Students will need use of the Internet for all coursework. Access to Microsoft Word and PowerPoint are required. The Virginia Community College System offers Microsoft Word for free to currently enrolled students. Students are eligible to install Office 365 on up to 5 devices at no cost. The Office 365 product

Prove You Can Apply=	25%
Class Participation =	5%
Midterm Exam=	15%
Final Exam=	15%

Students who simply follow all the guidelines for assignments earn grades of C. A grade of C is equivalent to “Average.” Those whose work and contributions to the class community are clearly more advanced than the majority’s earn grades of B, “Above Average,” whereas those who contribute less than the majority earn grades of D, “Below Average.” Work that is truly exceptional earns a grade of A, “Excellent,” whereas work that is substandard and unacceptable earns a grade of F, “Unsatisfactory.”

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 and in the Canvas calendar.

Late Work Policy

****All Work must be turned in by the dates listed in Canvas.****

If you do not turn in an assignment by the due date, you will be allowed to submit it with a point deduction for one week (exceptions may apply). For example: If assignment is due on August 10, you will have until August 17 to submit it for partial credit. There will be an automatic 25-point deduction for all late submissions---then the assignment will be graded.

It is your responsibility to be logged every school day. Students are expected to work on readings and/or course assignments for a minimum of 60 minutes per school day. If you are absent or unable to log on, please send a message explaining your absence as soon as possible. If you do not log on for more than three school days in a row, your guidance counselor will be contacted.

This is a college course, and you are expected to plan ahead for due dates and give yourself plenty of time to complete all work. DO NOT wait until the last minute. For example, if a writing assignment is open for an entire week, but you wait until ten minutes before the assignment closes and experience a technical problem, you will not be given an extension because ample time was provided for you to submit your work. Plan accordingly if you will be out of school on trips. All work must be completed before leaving for a school trip to prevent them from being late. Due dates are located on the calendar and throughout the course.

If you do not turn in an assignment on the deadline, you will be allowed to submit it with point deductions for one week (exceptions may apply). For example: If assignment is due on August 10, you will have until August 17 to submit it for partial credit. There will be an automatic 25-point deduction for all late submissions.

- Sue doesn’t turn in her work by the August 10 deadline. On August 11, the instructor posted the following into Sue grade book:
 - Example comment in gradebook: (8-11) *This assignment was due on August 10 but not submitted. You may submit the work until August 17 with a 25-point deduction. If there are*

extenuating circumstances that have prevented you from submitted this assignment, please contact me as soon as possible. The zero will be removed after the assignment if submitted.

- Sue turns in her work three days late. After grading the assignment, her instructor believes it is quality work. He assigns her a 90 BUT he then deducts 25 points because the assignment was late. Sue will see a 65 in the grade book. Students will be made aware of the last day to submit the assignment within the grade book.
- If Sue doesn't turn in her assignment by the final deadline, she will see an additional statement in her grade book. *(8-18) This assignment is now closed. It was not submitted by the final deadline. You may longer submit this assignment for a grade.*

Exceptions to the late work policy will only be allowed IF a documented excuse is provided by your school's guidance counselor or administrative staff (illness, family emergency, etc.). Email the teacher if problems occur so they can be handled on a one-on-one basis. Please be aware that SVETN's schedule requires that we adhere to deadlines, even when schools are closed. If you have internet access at home, continue to log in and participate in class even if your school is closed. If you do not have home internet access, it is your responsibility to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

Attendance Policy:

Regular class attendance is required. 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 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 Canvas 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 as well as within your course. Contact Dawn Stafford, SVETN Executive Director, if you have questions or concerns.

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

Civic Engagement is the ability to contribute to the civic life and well-being of local, national, and global communities as both as social responsibility and a life-long learning process. Degree graduates will demonstrate the knowledge and civic values necessary to become informed and contributing participants in a democratic society.

Critical Thinking is the ability to use information, ideas and arguments from relevant perspectives to make sense of complex issues and solve problems. Degree graduates will locate, evaluate, interpret, and combine information to reach well-reasoned conclusions or solutions.

Professional Readiness is the ability to work well with others and display situationally and culturally appropriate demeanor and behavior. Degree graduates will demonstrate skills important for successful transition into the workplace and pursuit of further education.

Quantitative Literacy is the ability to perform accurate calculations, interpret quantitative information, apply and analyze relevant numerical data, and use results to support conclusions. Degree graduates will calculate, interpret, and use numerical and quantitative information in a variety of settings.

Scientific Literacy is the ability to apply the scientific method and related concepts and principles to make informed decisions and engage with issues related to the natural, physical, and social world. Degree graduates will recognize and know how to use the scientific method, and to evaluate empirical information.

Written Communication is the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience. Degree graduates will express themselves effectively in a variety of written forms.

Course Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Course Goal: To enable students to demonstrate a well-rounded knowledge of American government and politics; demonstrate an understanding of how political scientists analyze and interpret the foundations, institutions, processes, and actors that constitute American government and politics; and, demonstrate critical thought about American government and politics.

Specific Course Level Objectives (PLS 135)

General Learning Outcome Topics *	Specific Student Learning Outcomes The student will be able to:
Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the importance of citizen engagement, ways Americans can influence and become engaged in government, and factors that might affect people's willingness to become engaged in government.
Critical Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiate between the concepts of democracy, direct and representative democracy, and several of the philosophical concepts that contributed to the development of U. S. democracy. • Describe the origin and history of the U. S. Constitution and how the Constitution has adapted to our changing society. • Explain the concept of Federalism and how the distribution of power between the national and state governments affords possibilities for conflict or cooperation. • Describe the application of civil liberties and the central role of the Supreme Court in its interpretation of these rights. • Describe the application of civil rights and the central role of the Supreme Court in its interpretation of these rights. • Identify/discuss individual and group participation in government and why such participation is vital to a free political system. • Identify/discuss how public officials, the media, and interest groups compete for setting the political or public agenda. • Describe the structure and function of the three branches of American Government. • Explain the influence of the bureaucracy on American politics. • Explain the policy and budget-making processes. • Explain ideologies underlying U.S. foreign policies throughout history. • Compose a major essay, using peer-reviewed sources, critically evaluating a contemporary political issue being debated in America differentiating various points of view, and proposing an equitable resolution.
Professional Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in collaborative assignments and presentations in the classroom or online. • Adhere to classroom attendance and behavior requirements. • Timely submission of assignments. • Identify career opportunities within the federal government.
Quantitative Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpret and communicate quantitative information using language appropriate to the context and intended audience. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Use appropriate quantitative methods to analyze voter turnout data; generally, assess polling information; and assess budget goals and proposals vs. costs and actual spending. • Read and interpret graphs and descriptive statistics.
Scientific Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the role of Enlightenment philosophers and their use of scientific reasoning in proposing political theories as well as their influence on the core values of American political thought.
Written Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compose a major essay and/or multiple smaller essays, using peer-reviewed sources, critically evaluating a contemporary political issue being debated in America differentiating various points of view, and proposing an equitable resolution. • Written short essays addressing the topics addressed in the Critical Thinking section.

Course Major Topics**	Specific Student Content Learning Outcomes for Topic/Unit The student will be able to:
American Government and Civic Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what the government is and why it is necessary. • Identify the type of government in the U.S. compared to other government types. • Describe pluralist theory, elite theory, and the pluralism-elitism debate. • Explain the importance of citizen engagement in a democracy and various methods of engagement.
Constitution and its Origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify pre-US philosophical theories and ideas that influenced the Founders and the creation of the US Constitution, including relevant ancient and Enlightenment ideas. • Explain Revolutionary ideas and actions that led to the Articles of Confederation and US Constitution. • Identify US Constitutional structure and ratification process and arguments on its path to becoming the supreme law of the land. • Consider the major controversies that have come from the Constitution and the creation of the US Bill of Rights.
Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the concept of federalism. • Describe how federalism has evolved in the United States. • Compare different conceptions of federalism. • Explain how federal intergovernmental grants have evolved. • Identify the types of federal intergovernmental grants. • Discuss the advantages of federalism. • Explain the disadvantages and controversies of federalism.
Civil Liberties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define civil liberties and civil rights. • Describe the development of civil liberties in the U.S. context and the conflicts that have been involved.
Civil Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the concept of civil rights. • Discuss the development of relevant concepts and controversies through American history, and the roles that various institutions and actors have played in this history. • Consider the efforts of various groups to appeal for recognition of equality in America.
Public Opinion and Political Socialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define public opinion and political socialization. • Explain the process and role of political socialization in the U.S. political system. • Compare how citizens learn political information. • Explain how information about public opinion is gathered. • Identify factors that change public opinion. • Compare levels of public support for the branches of government.
Voting and Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the factors that influence Americans to vote as they do or why they chose not to. • Describe important processes and terms in the process of electoral campaigns.
The Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what the media are and how they are organized. • Describe the main functions of the media in a free society. • Compare different media formats and their respective audiences. • Discuss the history of major media formats. • Consider various controversies that surround the media today.
Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe political parties and what they do. • Explain the development of the two-party system in America. • Consider the issues and controversies that surround the current party environment.
Interest Groups and Lobbying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how interest groups differ from political parties. • Evaluate the different types of interests and what they do.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the important terms associated with interest groups, including various theories on how they influence the policy process, and the differences citizens have in access to interest groups and the entities they try to influence.
Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the role of Congress in the U.S. constitutional system. • Define bicameralism. • Explain apportionment and related controversies. • Discuss representation. • Explain legislative leadership and the role of parties in Congress. • Analyze the legislative process.
The Presidency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the formal and informal powers presidents bring to their roles in American government and how these powers and roles developed over time. • Consider unique and controversial aspects of presidential elections.
The Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define bureaucracy and bureaucrat. • Describe the evolution and growth of public administration in the United States. • Explain the relationship of the bureaucracy to other government entities.
The Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain the role of the judiciary in the US Constitution and how it has evolved. • Describe the federal court system and the path(s) of cases through the courts. • Discuss the US Supreme Court and the different theories that guide Court decision-making.
Domestic Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe significant aspects of economic, welfare, and educational policies in the American federal system. • Consider those entities of the American political system likely to be involved in these issues.
Foreign Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain important concepts in US foreign and national security policy. • Describe the government entities likely to play a dominant role in these policy areas.

Course syllabus and schedule is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor. It is critical that all students read the Elite Learning Guide for Students. This guide is located at www.svetn.org as well as within your course. Contact Dawn Stafford, SVETN Executive Director, if you have questions or concerns.