GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE PROPOSAL

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY

**AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS**

Area: **AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS (AI)**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_September 20, 2011\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

College: \_\_\_\_\_S&BS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Department: \_\_\_Political Science\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Catalog Abbreviation: \_\_POLS\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Catalog Title: \_\_American National Government\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Course Number: \_\_\_\_1100\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Credit Hours: \_\_(3)\_\_\_

Substantive: \_\_\_\_\_\_

New: \_\_\_\_\_\_

Revised: \_\_\_\_\_\_

Renewal \_\_X\_\_\_

Effective Date \_\_\_July 1, 2011\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Course description as you want it to appear in the catalog:

**POLS AI1100. American National Government (3)**

A study of American constitutional democracy at the national level, including political institutions, interests, ideals, and the processes through which policies are formulated and implemented.

**AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS (AI) GENERAL EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT**

*The mission of Weber State’s American Institutions (AI) requirement is to adhere to the Utah State Code, specifically 53B-16-103(b) which reads: "A student shall demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the history, principles, form of government, and economic system of the United States prior to receiving a bachelor’s degree or teaching credential." The overarching goal of this requirement is to have all students gain the basic knowledge necessary for informed and responsible citizenship.*

**AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS LEARNING OUTCOMES**

A student completing an American Institutions general education course should be able to demonstrate a reasonable understanding of the following core objectives.

*Provide a justification of how the proposed course prepares students to successfully demonstrate competency in* ***EACH*** *of the core objectives. Cite specific lecture topics, written assignments, and/or lab projects and explain how they address each of the core competencies. Refer to your attached syllabus as needed.*

*Objective 1:* The significant political, economic, and social changes in American history.

Justification:

All POLS 1100 (American National Government) faculty teach detailed chapters on the founding of the Constitution, Federalism, the Congressional, Presidential, and Judicial branches of government as well as the role of political parties, interest groups, political socialization, and elections in the American laboratory of democracy (see weekly topics). These institutions are inherently steeped in historical context and the coverage of them includes examples and detailed descriptions of social movements such as women’s suffrage, civil rights, the labor movement, gay rights, and a variety of current political social movements (see *American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings* assignments).

*Objective 2:* The major principles of American civilization, including the concepts of popular sovereignty, liberty, and equality.

Justification:

The unique American historical context in which our political and economic systems were established is located in the first chapter of virtually every college-level American National Government textbook (see Week 1). Theories of elite democracy, pluralist democracy, participatory democracy, and other political ideologies are often discussed with examples provided. The role of the people in a democracy is examined in chapters on public opinion, the role of the media, interest groups, civil rights and civil liberties and public policy debates (see weekly topic headings). For example, in authoritarian systems of government, the people are subjects, but in a democracy citizens are more than mere subjects. In a democratic system the people have a powerful role to play—they are citizens, and with citizenship, civil liberties and civil rights are accorded to the people so that rights as well as obligations are imposed. Democratic theory states that power is derived from the people—that the people are sovereign, that they must consent to be governed, and that the government must respond to their will (see Week 10). Divided government, political parties, separate institutions sharing power, elections, check and balances, federalism, demographic and regional differences are all examined in the context of sovereignty, liberty, and equality. Civic awareness and civic engagement are requirements for any successful modern democracy (see Week 11 and daily *New York Times* assignments).

*Objective 3:* The institutions and practices of the government provided for in the United States Constitution.

Justification:

Most professors begin their American National Government course with a detailed examination of the Constitution (see Weeks 1 and 2). Typically, students are required to know the seven articles and twenty-seven Amendments to the Constitution. The logic and history of the Founding Fathers are examined in detail and subsequent changes to the Constitution and a knowledge of the history of major Supreme Court cases are integral course features (see Weeks 3 and 4). Faculty usually contextualize this material through categorizing major Constitutional eras (e.g., Founding, Civil War Amendments, New Deal programs) and major approaches to interpreting the document (e.g., Originalism, Judicial Activism, Federalism).

*Objective 4:* The basic workings and evolution of a market economy in the United Sates.

Justification:

During the sections on the Presidency (see Week 6), the Congress (see Week 5), and the Bureaucracy (see Week 13), major government agencies that impact the budget and regulate the economy are addressed (e.g., Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and the Federal Reserve). The financial crisis of 2008, the TARP program, and an understanding of economic indicators provide common current events discussion topics. The study of policy issues contrasts the assumptions of market capitalism with New Deal policies and Keynesian economic theory (see Week 15). Most faculty highlight the electoral emergence of the "Tea Party" and its impact on the U.S. debt crisis, in tandem with the current controversies regarding federal Health Care as well as problems with funding Social Security and Medicare, and the Medicaid burden on state governments (see Weeks 10 and 15).

**COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING**

1. Has this proposal been discussed with and approved by the department?

Yes.

2. List those general education courses in other departments with similar subject matter and explain how this course differs.

Only POLS 1100 provides students with an overview and detailed examination of the American political system. While the History and Economic departments provide general education courses that provide in-depth coverage of concepts like the American Revolution or market capitalism, only the Political Science department frames these concepts in terms of U.S. political institutions.

3. If the proposed new general education course affects course requirements or enrollments in other departments, list the departments and programs involved and attach comments from each.

NA.

4. Attach a syllabus of the course. Include the number of contact hours per week and the format of

these hours (e.g., lecture, lab, field trip, etc.).

**New Courses Only:**

5. Discuss how you will assess student learning outcomes associated with this course.

NA.

**Current General Education Courses and Existing Courses Seeking General Education Status:**

6. Discuss how you have assessed the applicable or identified student learning outcomes associated with this course.

Whether or not students have obtained a good working understanding of the history, principles, and form of government in the United States is revealed by the general regimen of tests, quizzes, class debates, written assignments, oral reports, and class participation grades that appear on faculty syllabi. Many faculty give class credit for attending events on campus (such as Deliberative Democracy, Constitution Week, or guest lecturers). Students’ post-American National Government involvement as election poll-workers or exit interviewers, and as successful Interns in federal, state, and local governments further testify to its success. The department systematically uses the U.S. Citizenship exam as a way of testing pre-class and post-class knowledge by reporting scores on this exam at the beginning and end of the introductory courses at least once a year. In addition to formal evaluations, most professors also interview their classes informally near the end of the semester to gain feedback regarding the usefulness of textbooks, lectures, videos, supplementary reading materials, speakers, class projects, and campus events.

7. How has this assessment information been used to improve student learning?

These results verify which theories, controversies, and information has been successfully absorbed by students, and indicate where a greater emphasis or different approach to the subject is required. In some cases, adjusting the syllabus sequence, adding a reading assignments, or providing an opportunity for fuller discussion can obtain a better outcome. The improved scores on the citizenship test that confirm a significantly enhanced knowledge base for course graduates, when combined with active citizenship which sustains a genuine and thriving democracy, is the ultimate goal of American National Government.

**American National Government**

**POLS 1100: Fall 2011**

# MWF 8:30-9:20

## Dr. Gary Johnson

### Phone: 626-6697

Email: garyjohnson@weber.edu

Office: SSI, Room 288

Office Hours: MWF 7-7:30, 9:30-10:30

**Purpose:** This course provides a rudimentary understanding of American politics and political institutions by broadly surveying the political landscape of United States government. We will focus primarily on the national government; however we will also cover issues of federalism, the Founding, the variety of political institutions that have emerged throughout our nations’ history, and the ways in which citizens are engaged in the political process. Whenever possible I will establish connections between the course material and contemporary political events. Because we are meeting three times a week, we will be covering a lot of ground quickly. All reading assignments need to be completed on the Monday of the week they are listed on the syllabus.

**Discriminatory Harassment Statement:** Weber State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of discrimination based upon race, color, ethnic background, national origin, religion, creed, age, lack of American citizenship, disability, status of Veteran of the Vietnam era, sexual orientation or preference or gender, including sexual/gender harassment. Such an environment is a necessary part of a healthy learning and working atmosphere because such discrimination undermines the sense of human dignity and sense of belonging of all people in the environment. Thus, students in this class should practice professional development, and avoid treating others in a manner that is demeaning or derisive in any respect.

While diverse viewpoints and opinions are welcome in this class, in expressing them, we will practice the mutual deference so important in the world of work. Thus, while I encourage you to share your opinions, when appropriate, you will be expected to do so in a civil and respectful manner towards your fellow students and myself, even when you disagree with them.

If you have questions regarding the University’s policy against discrimination and harassment you may contact the university’s AA/EO office.

**Policies:**

1. Attendance will be taken and is included in your final course grade. Excused absences will be granted only for exceptional circumstances or documented medical emergencies. No incompletes will be given. When communicating with me via email you must use a weber.edu email address.
2. Anyone who has a disability that hinders their ability to demonstrate mastery of the course material should contact me in the first week of the semester so that arrangements can be made.
3. Exams must be taken on the day and time listed in the syllabus. There are no makeup exams or quizzes. Woody Allan says 80% of success is showing up—in this course it’s more like 90%.
4. Cheating will result in a failing grade for the course. Cheating includes cheating on exams, copying from another student, or not documenting sources used in written work.
5. More than three unexcused absences will lower your participation grade.
6. Everyone is required to take the final exam.
7. The use of cell phones during class is prohibited.

# Required Textbooks

*Keeping the Republic; Power and Citizenship in American Politics,* 4th edition, Christine Barbour, Gerald Wright. CQ Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-87289-935-3.

*American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, Cigler and Loomis, 7th edition, (C&L). This book is not required but recommended.

I also expect you to read a national newspaper every day. *The New York Times* is free at the entrance to the building.

**Grading:** There will be four exams given throughout the semester; together, they account for 60% of your final grade. Your three highest exam grades count towards your final course grade. Your lowest exam score will be thrown out. Therefore, if you miss an exam or get a poor grade on one exam it will not be calculated into your final grade. Because I allow you to delete your lowest exam score, no make-up exams will be given. Each exam is worth 20% of your grade. A comprehensive final exam will be given. The final counts for 25% of your final grade and will cover material throughout the course. The final is scheduled for Monday December 5, at 7:30-9:20, here in room 278. Everyone is required to take the final exam. Anyone who does not take the final exam will receive an “F” in the course. Bonus (i.e., extra credit) points will be given for insightful participation in class discussions. Four unannounced quizzes will be given throughout the course of the semester covering the reading assignments that are due for that class period. Each quiz is worth 2.5% of your total grade.

**Expectations:** Obtaining an “A” in this course is reserved for exceptional work. It is distinguished from “B” work by demonstrating more effort, understanding, thoughtfulness, creativity, and critical reasoning. Achieving a “B” is indicative of regular class attendance and participation, a thorough understanding of the material and consistently high quiz and exam scores. To achieve an “A” or a “B” reading assignments must be completed on time and your exams will demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the material. “C” work is characterized by spotty attendance, poor preparation evidenced by lack of class participation and mediocre to low quiz and exam scores. While basic understanding of the material is necessary to receive a “C” in the course, the complexity of the subject is unappreciated. The designation of a “D” or an “F” is almost always due to irregular attendance. Basic themes are little recognized, much less understood. Exams, particularly on the essay portion, demonstrate little effort or thought. Cheating will always result in an “F” for the course.

**Attendance:** Attendance will be factored into your participation grade. Excused absences will be granted only for exceptional circumstances or documented medical emergencies. Throughout the semester you have the luxury of three, and only three, unexcused absences without lowering your participation grade. Beware, quizzes can come at any time, cannot be made up, and constitute 10% (2.5% each) of your total grade. Any time you miss class you run the risk of missing a quiz and losing 2.5% of your total grade.

**GRADING**

Attendance and Participation 5%

Quizzes (4)@ 2.5% each 10%

Exams (3 out of 4) @20% each 60%

Final Exam 25%

100%

#### Class Topics and Reading Assignments

### Week 1: Course Introduction: *The Constitution of the United States of America*

Readings: Text pp. 521-535.

*Background and Context of the Constitution*

Text: Chapter 1, 2

C&L: 1.4 Federalist #51, 1.2 The Founding Fathers: An Age of Realism

Week 2: *Constitutional Tragedies, Constitutional Stupidities*

C&L: 2.1 James Madison, Federalist #39

*Issues of Federalism, Relationship Between the Branches*

Text: Chapter 3

C&L: 1.1 “A Tradition Born of Strife,” 1.3 “A Reform Caucas in Action”

2.3 “The Katrina Breakdown”

Week 3: *Judiciary*

Text: Chapter 9

C&L: 2.2 *McCulloch* and, 3.4 *Griswald v. Connecticut*

*McCulloch v. Maryland*, *Marbury v. Madison*

C&L: 13.2, *Marbury v. Madison* and, 13.4 “The Kennedy Court”

Week 4: *Civil Liberties*

Text: Chapter 4,5 *The Amendments to the Constitution of the United States of America: Appendix A*

C&L: 3.3, *Gideon v. Wainwright* and, 3.7 *Brown v. Bd of Education*

**Friday, September 23: EXAM #1**

Week 5: *Congress*

Text: Chapter 6

10.1 “Broken Branch”

10.3 “The New World of Senators” and 10.5 “Where the Reps Went Astray”

Week 6: *The Presidency*

Text: Chapter 7

C&L: 11.1 The Power to Persuade” and, 11.2 “Myth of the Presidential Mandate,” 11.3 “Power Surge”

Week 7: *Between the Branches: Congress and the Presidency*

### **Friday, October 21:** **EXAM #2**

Week 8: *Public Opinion*

Text: Chapter 10

C&L: 4.1 “Is Popular Rule Possible?” and 4.2 “Can We Trust the Polls?” 4.3 “The Iraq Syndrome”

Week 9: *Public Opinion and Voter Turnout*

Text: Chapter 12

C & L: 5.1 “Finding the Lost Voters”, 5.2 “Voting Rites” 5.3 “Bowling Alone”

Week 10: *Elections and the Media*

Text: Chaps 12, 13

C&L: 7.4 “Race for the Nomination” 7.3 “Attack Ads are Good For You”

Week 11: *Political Socialization and Participation*

C&L: 5.4 “Politics and the ‘Dot Net’ Generation”

C&L: 8.1 “Lowering the Political Hero,”

12.2 “Constraints of Public Managers”

12.4 “The True Size of Government”

Review for Exam #3

**Friday November 18**: **EXAM #3**

Week 12: *Interest Groups*

Text: Chapter 13

C&L: 9.1 “Federalist #10”

*Interest Groups 2:*

C&L: 9.3 “Associations without Members”

9.4: “Drugmakers Go Furthest to Sway Congress”

Week 13: *Bureaucracy*

Text: Chapter 8

C&L: 12.1 “Political Hacks versus Bureaucrats: Can’t Public Servants Get Some Respect?”

12.3 “Why the Bad News Doesn’t Travel Up”

Week 14: *Political Control of the Bureaucracy and* *Political Parties*

Text: Chapter 8

**Monday, November 28:** **EXAM #4**

Week 15: *Political Parties*

*Text: Chapter 11*

C&L: 6.1 “The Case for the Importance of Political Parties” and 6.2 “A Tale of Two Electorates”

### *Policy Issues*

Text: Chapters 14

Review for Final

**FINAL EXAM :Monday, December 5, 7-9:20**