Raritan Valley Community College
Course Outline

POLI 101 – Introduction to Political Science

I. Basic Course Information
   A. Course number and Title:   POLI -101 – Introduction to Political Science
   B. New or Modified Course: Modified
   C. Date of Proposal: Semester: Spring Year: 2015
   D. Effective Term: Spring 2016
   E. Sponsoring Department: Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education
   F. Semester Credit Hours: 3
   G. Weekly Contact Hours: 3 Lecture: 3 Laboratory: 0
   H. Prerequisites: Placement into ENGL 111 English Composition I with ENGL 070 English Composition I Workshop, or higher
   I. Laboratory Fees: None
   J. Name and telephone number or email address of department chair at time of approval: Stephen Kaufman; steve.kaufman@raritanval.edu

II. Catalog Description

   Placement into ENGL 111 English Composition I with ENGL 070 English Composition I Workshop, or higher

As a general introduction to the study of politics and government, the course first considers the ideas of four major political philosophers and their contrasting views of the nature and purpose of government. Additional topics to be examined include the basic institutions of government, such as executives, legislatures and courts, followed by political culture, parties, electoral systems, participation, the role of various media nationalism and revolution.
III. Statement of Course Need

A. This course serves as a basic component in undergraduate liberal arts education and is a key element of the college’s offerings in the area of political science. It is one of two introductory level courses in Political Science, and is a prerequisite for further study in that field and the other social sciences.

B. This course transfers as a General Education course to most four year institutions.

IV. Place of Course in College Curriculum

A. Free Elective
B. This course serves as a General Education course in Social Science.
C. This course meets a program requirement for the Social Science option, Associate of Arts degree.
D. 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 government and politics
B. Acquaintance with development of political systems historically
C. Examination of current issues and controversies in comparative and historical perspective.
D. Consideration of the theories of Aristotle, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Edmund Burke and Karl Marx
E. Comparative study of the basic and most common institutions of governments, such as chief executives, legislatures, judicial and legal systems and bureaucracies.
F. Introduction to the basic terms and concepts most commonly used in the study of government and politics.
G. Examination of the development of political culture and political socialization
H. Examination of political culture, political socialization and revolution
I. Multiethnic and religiously pluralistic societies and the influence of nationalism

VI. General Education Goals and Course Learning Outcomes

A. General Educational Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the course, students will be able to:
1. Employ comparative methods for the introductory study of government and politics (G.E. 4)
2. Compare and analyze contrasting or conflicting theories in political philosophy (G. E.1)
3. Write clearly and precisely in assigned essays and research projects during the entire semester (G.E.2)

B. Course Learning Outcomes

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

1. Identify and evaluate the basic vocabulary, philosophical questions and methods of analysis in the field of political science
2. Examine contemporary political problems, controversies and conflicts in a larger historical perspective, including recurrent questions of who should rule, how power is best distributed, and the principles which should underlie the just political society.
3. Identify various political systems and perspectives outside of the United States, such as Britain, France, Russia or Nigeria. Why does constitutionalism succeed in some cases and fail in others?
4. Evaluate and identify enduring and recurring political processes and phenomena beyond the contemporary world with which they are familiar, such as the conflicts in multiethnic societies, ethnocentrism in ancient or non-western areas and conflicts or the pursuit of power in ethnically homogenous countries.

C. Assessment Instruments

A. Lecture/discussion
B. Supplementary reading and writing assignments, beyond text readings
C. Semester project, research paper or book review

VII. Grade Determinants

A. Three regular hour exams during the semester
B. Two-hour final exam
C. Written project, either research paper or book review, subject to the instructor’s approval
D. Performance on supplementary written work
E. Average of exam grades
F. Semester project
G. Consideration of supplementary written work

H. Attendance and class participation

VIII. Texts and Materials


(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 – not applicable at this time

A. Library