

## **COURSE SPECIFICATION DOCUMENT**

**Academic School/Department:** Social Sciences and Humanities

**Programme:** American Studies  
International Relations  
Political Science

**FHEQ Level:** 5

**Course Title:** Politics and Elections in the USA

**Course Code:** AMS 5100

**Total Hours:** 120

Timetabled Hours: 45

Guided Learning Hours: 0

Independent Learning Hours: 75

**Credits:** 12 UK CATS credits  
6 ECTS credits  
3 US credits

### **Course Description:**

Examines the nature of politics and elections in the United States of America. The course considers political processes and the implementation of policy. Constitutional mandates and constraints on the different branches of government are addressed, along with the impact of these on policy making processes. Elections and the processes that guide electoral politics in the USA are given special attention. The course then examines and explores post-war policy practices, considering both internal and external influences on political processes, including elections, in the USA.

### **Pre-requisites:**

GEP 4180 Research and Writing 2

### **Aims and Objectives:**

- To understand the nature, origins and development of the American political system, its institutions, and electoral processes
- To provide a framework for understanding both internal and external drivers of change in the American political system
- To provide a background for eventual careers in fields which require articulate, clear-thinking individuals with a grasp of American Studies
- To foster the acquisition, development, and consolidation of a variety of interdisciplinary and transferable skills through the study of particular themes in American Studies
- To promote critical engagement with a wide range of primary and secondary historical sources, and the development of both a succinct writing style and the ability to present complex arguments orally

## **Programme Outcomes:**

American Studies: 5A(i); 5B(i); 5C(i); 5C(ii); 5C(iii); 5D(i); 5D(ii); 5D(iii)

International Relations: B(I), C(I), C(ii), C(iii), D(I), D(ii), D(iii)

Political Science: B(I), C(I), C(ii), C(iii), D(I), D(ii), D(iii)

A detailed list of the programme outcomes is found in the Programme Specification. This is maintained by Registry and located at:

<https://www.richmond.ac.uk/programme-and-course-specifications/>

## **Learning Outcomes:**

At the end of this course, the students will have achieved the following learning outcomes.

- Demonstrates a detailed understanding of US political institutions, practices and systems including electoral processes
- Demonstrates a critical and theoretical engagement with core problems and issues in US Politics
- Demonstrates a detailed understanding of the continuities and transformations evident in US Politics
- Demonstrates the necessary IT skills, and the ability to adapt writing and presentation skills to different contexts, audiences and degrees of complexity, to produce well- developed work that will translate into the workplace
- Completes assigned work with a degree of autonomy, clarity, technical competence, capacity for self-evaluation and critical thinking appropriate for a 5000-levelcourse

## **Indicative Content:**

- USA Constitution, Founding Principles and Debates
- USA political institutions
- US elections
- Policy making and processes in the USA
- Key issues in politics in the USA
- Key debates in political science in the context of the USA
- Key developments in ideology and practice in US politics

## **Assessment:**

This course conforms to the University Assessment Norms approved at Academic Board and located at: <https://www.richmond.ac.uk/university-policies/>

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**Teaching Methodology:**

This course will be taught through a combination of lectures and seminar-type activities, including group work, sub-group activities, classroom discussion, and the showing of documentaries. The general approach to classes is informal, and discussion is viewed as an essential part of an interactive and participatory learning program. Audio-visual aids, study materials and electronic learning resources will be used as appropriate.

Lectures provide a framework for the course and are designed to ensure students have an overview of main issues and concerns on a particular topic, receive clarification on the major points of debate, understand the broad dimensions of core problems, and are aware of relevant literature in the specific area of concern. It is essential that lectures are supplemented with assigned readings; together, the readings and the lectures are designed to provide guidance for seminar discussion.

Seminar classes are based on the principle of active and student-directed learning, and are designed to be Safe, Enjoyable, Managed, Inclusive, Necessary, Academic, Respectful & Stimulating. The seminars provide an opportunity for discussion of contentious issues, addressing questions and exploring academic debates in more depth, group, and sub-group discussion. They are encouraged to share their opinions freely but must also maintain respect for the opinions of others. It is expected that students will participate regularly in discussions in a creative, competent, and critical way, as the formulation of their own thoughts and clarification of their assumptions, often in contradiction to other students' thoughts and assumptions, form a crucial part of the learning process. Students are expected to come to seminar classes prepared.

**Indicative Texts:**

Barbour, Christine and Gerald C. Wright. 2019. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. CQ Press.

Change Log for this CSD:

| Nature of Change                                   | Date Approved &<br>Approval Body<br>(School or LTPC) | Change<br>Actioned<br>by<br>Academic<br>Registry |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| Various updates as part of the UG programme review | AB Jan 2022                                          |                                                  |
| Revision – Annual Update                           | May 2023                                             |                                                  |
| Total Hours Updated                                | April 2024                                           |                                                  |
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