Course Proposal for Revised General Education Course  
PLS 1153G: American Government and the Constitution

1. Catalog Description
   a. PLS 1153G
   b. American Government and the Constitution
   c. 3-0-3
   d. F, S
   e. Amer Govt
   f. An introduction to the principles of the U.S. Constitution and political system, with an emphasis on the role citizens play in government and politics. Topics covered include the Constitution, civil rights and civil liberties, government institutions, political parties, voting and elections.
   g. No prerequisites
   h. Writing active

2. Student Learning Objectives
   a. General Education and University-Wide Assessment Goals:
      i. Students will complete exams or writing assignments requiring them to identify, analyze, and evaluate:
         (1) how major political philosophers and the Constitution’s framers shaped the U.S. Constitution.
         (2) the articles and amendments of the Constitution, and the evolution of federalism in the U.S.
         (3) trends, court rulings and laws about civil rights and civil liberties.
         (4) the roles political parties and interest groups play in U.S. policy-making and elections.
         (5) U.S. voting behavior, including public opinion, ideology, and political socialization.
         (6) the U.S. electoral system, including campaign finance, the presidential nomination system, and the Electoral College.
         (7) the institutions of government—Congress, the President, the Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary.
      These objectives are associated with the goals of critical thinking, writing, and citizenship.
      ii. Students will participate in class discussions about current problems in American government, and ideas for solving those problems. (speaking, critical thinking, citizenship)
      iii. Students will complete writing assignments requiring them to develop, defend, and evaluate their opinions about American government, political issues, and political problems. (critical thinking, writing, citizenship)
   b. Additional learning objectives:
      By completing this introductory course, students will gain background needed for
taking advanced courses in Political Science and other related disciplines.

3.  **Course Outline**

**Section 1:**  Foundations of American Government and Politics

a.  Week One:  American Democracy
   i.  The political origins of American democracy
   ii.  Characteristics of democracy
   iii.  Contemporary theories of American democracy

b.  Week Two:  Origins of the American Constitution
   i.  The Constitution’s framers and their role in the creation of the U.S.
   ii.  Events leading up to the constitutional convention
   iii.  Declaration of Independence and Articles of Confederation
   iv.  Constitutional convention
   v.  Fundamental disputes and compromises that shaped the Constitution.

c.  Week Three:  The Constitution and Amendments
   i.  An examination of the basic features of the Constitution
   ii.  Overview of the powers of Congress, the President, and the Judiciary
   iii.  Overview of the amendments

d.  Week Four:  Federalism and the Growth of Government
   i.  Unitary, federal and confederate forms of government
   ii.  Centralized vs. decentralized government
   iii.  National v. state powers
   iv.  Grant in aid programs
   v.  Unfunded mandates

e.  Week Five:  Civil Liberties
   i.  The Constitution and the Bill of Rights
   ii.  Freedom of religion, speech, and the press
   iii.  Rights of criminal defendants
   iv.  Right to privacy

f.  Week Six:  Civil Rights
   i.  The 14th Amendment and the equal protection clause
   ii.  Race, the Constitution, and public policy
   iii.  Women, the Constitution and public policy
   iv.  The civil rights umbrella
   v.  Affirmative action

g.  Week Seven:  Congress
   i.  Organization and leadership
   ii.  Representation and Congress
   iii.  The job of a representative
   iv.  Congressional elections and incumbency
v. The legislative process

h. Week Eight: Presidency
   i. Evolution of the office and the powers of the presidency
   ii. Domestic and foreign policy powers
   iii. Presidential character
   iv. Evaluating presidents
   v. Relationship between the President and Congress

i. Week Nine: Bureaucracy
   i. Organization of the federal bureaucracy
   ii. Policymaking role
   iii. Civil service reform
   iv. Problems with the bureaucracy

j. Week Ten: Judiciary
   i. Examination of the scope of judicial power
   ii. Judicial review
   iii. Judicial activism and judicial restraint
   iv. Structure and composition of the federal courts

Section 3: People and Politics

k. Week Eleven: Public Opinion and Political Socialization
   i. Examination of public opinion and policy
   ii. Political ideology
   iii. How Americans learn to participate in politics

l. Week Twelve: Political Parties
   i. Historical development of the two party system
   ii. Role played by third parties and independent candidates
   iii. Party identification
   iv. Declining role of political parties in the U.S.
   v. Primaries and caucuses

m. Week Thirteen: Campaigns
   i. Discussion of the nomination process
   ii. Campaign strategy
   iii. Media and politics
   iv. Campaign finance laws and campaign finance reform

n. Week Fourteen: Elections and Voting Behavior
   i. Examination of the voter registration system
   ii. Voters and nonvoters
   iii. How Americans vote
   iv. Electoral College
o. Week Fifteen: Interest Groups
   i. Examination of the role played by interest groups in the political process.
   ii. Increasing power of interest groups
   iii. Types of interest groups
   iv. Interest group strategies and activities
   v. PACs

4. Evaluation of Student Learning
   a. Evaluation will be based primarily on exams and writing assignments. Exams may consist of objective or essay questions. Writing assignments will produce approximately 10 pages of written work, and may include assignments such as position papers, policy research, journal writing, and homework assignments. Critical thinking and writing skills will be evaluated through these exams and writing assignments. Also, the exams and writing assignments will evaluate students’ abilities to gather and present information about the U.S. government, and understand the role politics and government play in their lives. Grades will be based on:

      Exams                                     65%
      Writing assignments               25%
      Class Participation                 10%

   b. A variety of writing assignments will be used in this course. These assignments are designed primarily to assist students in mastering course content, and secondarily to strengthen their writing skills. Therefore, this course should be considered writing active.

5. Rationale
   a. As a Political Science course, American Government and the Constitution is taught from the perspective of social science, and therefore, belongs in the Social and Behavior Science/Constitution segment of the general education program. As noted in the outline, American Government and the Constitution focuses on developing students’ critical thinking and writing skills to analyze the U.S. government and political system. The course has a strong focus on understanding the social and historical context of American government, as well as political behavior and political institutions. Furthermore, the course concentrates on students’ responsibilities as citizens, providing students with the tools to understand and develop their own ideas and opinions about politics.
   b. This is an introductory course; therefore there are no prerequisites.
   c. This course is a revision of PLS 1153C and should maintain the same curriculum i.d. as PLS 1153C.
   d. This course is required for majors in Political Science and Social Science Teacher Certification. Students enrolled in teacher certification programs are required to
take either PLS 1153G or HIS 3600G. This course is an elective for the Pre-Law Studies minor.

6. **Implementation**
   a. Any qualified member of the Department of Political Science may be assigned this course.
   b. One of the following textbooks will be used:
   c. No additional costs
   d. Spring 2001

7. **Community College Transfer**
   A community college course may be judged equivalent to this course.

8. **Date approved by the department:** 3/22/00

9. **Date approved by the College Curriculum Committee:** 4/7/00

10. **Date approved by CAA:** 10/19/00

    **Department contact person:** Melinda Mueller
    **Campus phone:** 3022
1. Catalog Description
   a. PLS 1193G
   b. American Government and the Constitution, Honors
   c. 3-0-3
   d. F, S.
   e. Amer Govt Hnrs
   f. An introduction to the principles of the U.S. Constitution and political system, with an emphasis on the role citizens play in government and politics. Topics covered include the Constitution, civil rights and civil liberties, government institutions, political parties, voting and elections.
   g. Admission to the University Honors Program
   h. Writing active