

POLS 121
Introduction to Law
3 Credits

Community College of Baltimore County
Common Course Outline

Description

POLS 121 – Introduction to Law: Describe the institutions and profession of law in America, for students considering further study or a career in law. Examines the legal system in terms of its role in society, its organization, the training and profession of its members, and the basic substance and procedures of civil and criminal law.

Pre-requisites: ACLT 052 or ACLT 053; MATH 081

Co-requisites: Remove if empty

Overall Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the meaning and attributes of “law” and its functions in a society;
2. Describe the principal historical and modern philosophies of law;
3. Compare and contrast the nature of systems of law in different kinds of states: e.g., primitive, developing, modern, religious, secular, socialist, capitalist;
4. Describe the origins and development of the American legal system;
5. Describe the structure and functions of American courts;
6. Describe the origins and development of the profession of lawyer in America;
7. Describe the education, certification, and employment of American lawyers;;
8. Describe the occupation of judges, including their selection and work;
9. Describe the nature and procedures of civil law actions in the U.S.;
10. Describe the major legal rules governing contracts, equity, domestic and tort law;
11. Describe and evaluate the major criticisms of American civil law;
12. Describe the nature of criminal law actions in the U.S.;
13. Compare the different major theories on the root causes of crime in modern society;
14. Identify the principle categories of crime in the United States;
15. Describe the American criminal justice process, including investigation, arrest, pre-trial action, the trial process, sentencing and corrections; and
16. Describe and evaluate the major criticisms of the American criminal justice systems.

Major Topics

- I. The Nature and Function of Law
 - a. The essence of Law: maintaining order and making fair decisions
 - b. Philosophies of Law: Ancient to Modern
 - c. Comparative legal systems
- II. The American Legal System
 - a. Origins and development of the American legal system

The Common Course Outline (CCO) determines the essential nature of each course.
For more information, see your professor’s syllabus.

- b. Structure and functions of American courts
 - c. Origins and development of the legal professions in America
 - d. Education, certification, and employment of American lawyers
 - e. Selection and occupation of judges
- III. Settling Civil Disputes
- a. Nature and procedures of civil law actions in the U.S.
 - b. Principles of civil law: contracts, equity, domestic law, and torts
 - c. Evaluation of the American system of settling civil disputes
- IV. Criminal Justice
- a. The American system of criminal justice
 - b. Root causes of crime in American society
 - c. Principle categories of crime in American law
 - d. The American criminal justice process, including investigation, arrest, pre-trial actions, the trial process, sentencing and corrections
 - e. Evaluation of the American criminal justice system

Course Requirements

Grading will be determined by the individual faculty member, but shall include the following, at minimum:

- Two or more extensive in-class examinations, including analytical essay questions
- Additional written or oral exercises (e.g., quizzes, reports, term papers) at the instructor's discretion

Written assignments and research projects: Students are required to use appropriate academic resources in their research and cite sources according to the style selected by their professor.

Other Course Information

This course is a Social and Behavioral Science Elective. Regular attendance and participation in class is a requirement of this course. Students will be expected to have regular access to a required text and such additional learning materials as an instructor may assign. The instructor, at his/her discretion, may arrange for guest lecturers, audio/video presentations and/or attention to current events as part of the course content. The instructor will be available to assist students through regular office hours, telephone and in some cases voicemail and internet email.

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