

POLS 225
Constitutional Law
3 Credits

Community College of Baltimore County
Common Course Outline

Description

POLS 225 – Constitutional Law: examines the nature and development of the United States Constitution as interpreted by the Supreme Court. Students analyze the role judicial review, federalism, and Congressional and Presidential authority play in the system. Students examine the relationship between government accountability, the language in the Constitution, and role of the Supreme Court. Students review civil liberties and rights along with the limits on the government granted by the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Fourteenth Amendments. Students examine the political role of the confirmation process of judges.

Pre-requisites: POLS 101 or POLS 111 or CRJU 101 or permission of the program coordinator

Overall Course Objectives

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

1. explore the origins and concept of judicial review under the Constitution;
2. outline the structure of the federal court system;
3. explain the role of the Supreme Court in the judicial process;
4. analyze the conflict in Federalism between federal and state government authority;
5. discuss presidential authority and what the courts have offered the executive branch;
6. assess the Supreme Court's interpretation of First Amendment rights;
7. explain how the Supreme Court has expanded and contracted constitutional rights and why;
8. outline how the court has balanced the interest of business and commerce along with taxing power in the Constitution against the government wishes to regulate;
9. discuss the politics of the judicial confirmation process;
10. examine the Fifth Amendment due process rights of citizens accused of a crime;
11. explain the equal protection clause in the Fourteenth Amendment with whom it covers;
12. describe how the court balanced the Fourth Amendment and right to privacy against police and government needs;
13. identify the major Supreme Court cases that have dealt with government power and individual rights;
14. debate how the courts have used judicial activism and judicial restraint using a variety of technological resources; and
15. research and write legal briefs about major Supreme Court decisions finding, evaluating, using and citing academic sources based on criteria discussed in the course according to the timeliness, credibility, and reliability.

Major Topics

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

- I. The American Court System
 - a. History of the Supreme Court and the Constitution
 - b. Structure of the federal court system
- II. Sources of Constitutional Power
 - a. Judicial Activism v. Judicial Restraint
 - b. Marbury v. Madison- judicial review
 - c. The Bill of Rights
- III. Government and the Economy in the Constitution
 - a. Conflict: Congress and the President
 - b. Commerce clause and Article I of the Constitution
 - c. Federalism and the States
 - d. Voting and elections
 - e. National taxing and spending power
- IV. Civil Liberties, Equal Protection and the Constitution
 - a. First Amendment - Freedom of speech, press and religion
 - b. Fourth Amendment Right to Privacy
 - c. Fifth Amendment: due process and property rights
 - d. Fourteenth Amendment: equal protection under the laws
 - e. Security v. freedom in times of war

Course Requirements

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

- Class participation in at least five collaborations, debates, oral presentations and/or online discussion forums about current political events and topics
- Four examinations
- Four legal briefs about Supreme Court cases

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.

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