Module Descriptor

Title	America: Democracy in Crisis?		
Session	2025/26	Status	
Code	PLTC09019	SCQF Level	9
Credit Points	20	ECTS (European Credit Transfer Scheme)	10
School	Education and Social Sciences		
Module Co-ordinator	C Bradshaw		

Summary of Module

TThis module is designed to offer students the chance to engage critically with a variety of ideas, institutions and issues in the contemporary United States. The course will begin with a consideration of the Constitution of the United States, and the separate institutions which comprise the federal political structures; specifically, the Presidency, Congress and the Supreme Court. This deliberation will be taken in order to examine how the United States operates at a federal level, both in terms of constitutional, political, policy and public expectations, as well as actuality.   We shall consider the framework of each aspect of the federal system and how it connects together, institutionally and in reality. A mixture of lectures and seminars will allow us to examine, together, key aspects of the system in America today.   The course also includes analysing the powers of both governmental and non-governmental institutions, elections and voting behaviour, as well as policymaking. Attention is also played to the debates surrounding specific policy issues and the idea of American exceptionalism.

Overall, the module will therefore examine the outcomes and interplay between the institutions, elected politicians, the policy process and the public to examine the nature of the United States of America today. We shall consider whether the ideals of American democracy are still in place and whether they can be, and are being, realized in contemporary social and political outcomes.

Module Delivery Method	On-Campus[1]	Hybrid[2]	Online[3]	Work -Based Learning[4]

[1] Where contact hours are synchronous/ live and take place fully on campus. Campus-based learning is focused on providing an interactive learning experience supported by a range of digitally-enabled asynchronous learning opportunities including learning materials, resources, and opportunities provided via the virtual learning environment. On-campus contact hours will be clearly articulated to students.

[2] The module includes a combination of synchronous/ live on-campus and online learning events. These will be supported by a range of digitally-enabled asynchronous learning opportunities including learning materials, resources, and opportunities provided via the virtual learning environment. On-campus and online contact hours will be clearly articulated to students.

[3] Where all learning is solely delivered by web-based or internet-based technologies and the participants can engage in all learning activities through these means. All required contact hours will be clearly articulated to students.

[4] Learning activities where the main location for the learning experience is in the workplace. All required contact hours, whether online or on campus, will be clearly articulated to students

	☒	☐	☐	☐
Campuses for Module Delivery	☐ Ayr ☐ Dumfries	☒ Lanarkshire ☐ London ☒ Paisley	☐ Online / Distance Learning ☐ Other (specify)	

Terms for Module Delivery	Term 1	☒	Term 2	☐	Term 3	☐
Long-thin Delivery over more than one Term	Term 1 – Term 2	☐	Term 2 – Term 3	☐	Term 3 – Term 1	☐

Learning Outcomes	
L1	Demonstrate a broad knowledge and understanding of key aspects of US politics and policy and the constitutional and ideological underpinnings of the system.
L2	Deploy a variety of theoretical approaches and concepts to engage in critical analysis of events, institutions and ideas in the United States of America.
L3	Analyse a contested issue in US politics and policy making effective use of a variety of printed and electronic sources.
L4	Present the results of self-directed study and analysis clearly and concisely in written form.
L5	

Employability Skills and Personal Development Planning (PDP) Skills	
SCQF Headings	**During completion of this module, there will be an opportunity to achieve core skills in:**
Knowledge and Understanding (K and U)	**SCQF 9** Students will have the opportunity to: See the study of politics as exemplifying the embeddedness of social science knowledge in the main theories, concepts and principles of social science disciplines; See the changing nature of politics as exemplifying the changing nature of knowledge in the social sciences as a whole; Develop their understanding of the difference between evidence-based and other explanations within the social sciences.
Practice: Applied Knowledge and Understanding	**SCQF 9** Present and evaluate information, ideas and arguments, including suggestions for reform and improvement within the political systems

Generic Cognitive skills	SCQF 9
	Develop and improve their grasp of the main processes and conventions of essay writing;
	Learn how to make use of constructive criticism in subsequent work;
Communication, ICT and Numeracy Skills	SCQF 9
	Students will: Become acquainted with the use of a VLE to access learning materials, module information and guidance, and to participate in on-line seminar discussion.
Autonomy, Accountability and Working with Others	SCQF 9
	Exercise a significant degree of initiative and independence in managing their own work

Prerequisites	Module Code	Module Title
	Other	
Co-requisites	Module Code	Module Title

Learning and Teaching
In line with current learning and teaching principles, a 20-credit module includes 200 learning hours, normally including a minimum of 36 contact hours and maximum of 48 contact hours.

The lecture/workshop format will be structured in a way that facilitates research-led teaching and learning and will utislise a team of politics specialists from across the Social Sciences division. Through undertaking a range of inquiry-based and problem solving activities, students will be encouraged to become active participants in their own learning experience.

This module will support the acquisition and development of graduate attributes including employability, lifelong learning and citizenship competencies by:

1) Ensuring skills and competencies learners are developing are made explicit and allow learners to evidence the development of these skills and competencies;

2) Supporting learners in the development of digital literacies through, for example, the use of online research engines and electronic tools;

3) Providing learners with the opportunity to work with peers in order to develop leadership and negotiation skills and support the development of diversity awareness and interpersonal sensitivity;

4) Supporting learners in the development of self-reflection and evaluation skills and competencies through the explicit focus on personal development planning and the production of a reflective portfolio.

Student contact will primarily take place through a series of lectures and seminar classes. A range of learning and teaching strategies will be deployed throughout the duration of the

module in order to reflect the range of learning styles of students, with opportunities for assessment based on online contributions, oral and written presentation of academic work.

A key focus will be placed on the encouragement of students to develop graduate attributes including reading, writing and analytical skills through engagement with a variety of sources and academic texts relating to politics. These skills will be developed through the production of the written work required for the coursework and in terms of presenting and recalling information within the seminar environment and through online engagement.

Learning Activities During completion of this module, the learning activities undertaken to achieve the module learning outcomes are stated below:	Student Learning Hours (Note: Learning hours include both contact hours and hours spent on other learning activities)
Lecture / Core Content Delivery	24
Tutorial / Synchronous Support Activity	12
Independent Study	164
n/a	
n/a	
n/a	
TOTAL	200

Indicative Resources
The following materials form essential underpinning for the module content and ultimately for the learning outcomes: McKay, David (2017) American Politics and Society, 9th Edition, Wiley-Blackwell Duncan, Russell and Joseph Goddard (2018) Contemporary United States, 5th Edition, Palgrave Jacobson, Gary C., and Jamie L. Carson. (2016) The Politics of Congressional Elections. 9th ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Greenhouse, L. (2012) The US Supreme Court - a very short introduction. Oxford University Press Wasserman, Gary and Fuller, Elliot (2023) The Basics of American Politics, 17th Edition, New York, Routledge
(N.B. Although reading lists should include current publications, students are advised (particularly for material marked with an asterisk*) to wait until the start of session for confirmation of the most up-to-date material)

Attendance and Engagement Requirements
In line with the Student Attendance and Engagement Procedure, Students are academically engaged if they are regularly attending and participating in timetabled on-campus and online teaching sessions, asynchronous online learning activities, course-related learning resources, and complete assessments and submit these on time. **For the purposes of this module, academic engagement equates to the following:**

All fulltime students are required to attend all scheduled classes and participate with all delivered elements of the module as part of their engagement with their programme of study. Consideration will be given to students who have protection under the appropriate equality law. Please refer to UWS Regulations, Chapter 1, 1.64 – 1.67, available at the following link: http://www.uws.ac.uk/current-students/rightsand-regulations/regulatory-framework/

Equality and Diversity
The University's Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Procedure can be accessed at the following link: UWS Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Code. Please ensure any specific requirements are detailed in this section. Module Coordinators should consider the accessibility of their module for groups with protected characteristics.
(N.B. Every effort will be made by the University to accommodate any equality and diversity issues brought to the attention of the School)

Supplemental Information

Divisional Programme Board	Social Sciences
Overall Assessment Results	☐ **Pass / Fail** ☒ **Graded**
Module Eligible for Compensation	☐ **Yes** ☒ **No** **If this module is eligible for compensation, there may be cases where compensation is not permitted due to programme accreditation requirements. Please check the associated programme specification for details.**
School Assessment Board	Social Sciences
Moderator	M. Leith
External Examiner	J. Halsall
Accreditation Details	
Module Appears in CPD catalogue	☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**
Changes / Version Number	1

Assessment (also refer to Assessment Outcomes Grids below)
Assessment 1
Class test
Assessment 2
Essay (2000 words)
Assessment 3
(N.B. (i) Assessment Outcomes Grids for the module (one for each component) can be found below which clearly demonstrate how the learning outcomes of the module will be assessed. (ii) An indicative schedule listing approximate times within the academic calendar when assessment is likely to feature will be provided within the Student Module Handbook.)

Component 1

Assessment Type	LO1	LO2	LO3	LO4	LO5	Weighting of Assessment Element (%)	Timetabled Contact Hours
Class test	☒	☒	☒	☐	☐	30	1

Component 2							
Assessment Type	LO1	LO2	LO3	LO4	LO5	Weighting of Assessment Element (%)	Timetabled Contact Hours
Essay	☒	☒	☒	☒	☐	70	

Component 3							
Assessment Type	LO1	LO2	LO3	LO4	LO5	Weighting of Assessment Element (%)	Timetabled Contact Hours
	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐		
Combined total for all components						100%	hours

Change Control

What	When	Who
New template, title change, indicitative resources updated	Mar 25	C Bradsha