Module Descriptor

Title	American Politics: Democracy in Crisis		
Session	2026/27	**Status**	
Code	PLTC09019	**SCQF Level**	9
Credit Points	20	**ECTS (European Credit Transfer Scheme)**	10
School	**Education and Social Sciences**		
Module Co-ordinator	M Leith		

Summary of Module

This module is designed to o:er 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**	**Hybrid**	**Online**	**Work -Based Learning**
	☒	☐	☐	☐

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 e:ective 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 di:erence 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 utilize 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.

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: Duncan, R. and Goddard, J. (2024) *Contemporary America*. 7th edn. London: Red Globe Press. Greenhouse, L. (2012) *The U.S. Supreme Court: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Jacobson, G.C. and Carson, J.L. (2024) *The politics of congressional elections*. 11th edn. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. McKay, D., Morriss, F., Curnow, J. and Newton, J. (2024) *American politics and society*. 11th edn. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell. Wasserman, G. and Fuller, E. (2023) *The basics of American politics*. 17th edn. 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:**

The university is committed to providing a supportive learning environment that actively facilitates student success. In this module, there is a high degree of student-led flexibility. You are academically engaged if you are regularly engaged with scheduled live sessions on-campus. You should also undertake work in your own time, including engaging with seminar exercises and Group Work in preparation for seminar discussion, course-related learning resources, and with timely completion and submission of assessments.

Whilst we understand that there may be times when conflicting priorities make participation challenging, for you to gain the most from this module it is recommended that you participate in all scheduled live classes and complete your self-directed learning activities in a timely manner.

It may be difficult to pass the assessment associated with this module if you are not regularly engaging with the module work and live classes. We may reach out to check how things are going and offer support if we observe that you have not been attending sessions or completing online activities.

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. The module content is directly relevant to Equality, Diversity and Human Rights, as the case studies examine how the achievement of these values is conditioned by within American Democracy system and practice. Some of the module material could be potentially upsetting, so all students will be briefed in good time about this and engagement will be supported sensitively. In line with current legislation (Equality Act, 2010) and the UWS Equality, Diversity, and Human Rights Code, our modules are accessible and inclusive, with reasonable adjustment for different needs where appropriate. Module materials comply with University guidance on inclusive learning and teaching, and specialist assistive equipment, support provision and adjustment to assessment practice will be made in accordance with UWS policy and regulations
(N.B. Every e]ort 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	G Coia
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**
Title change, indicative resources updated	Feb	G Coia/Emilia Pietka-Nykaza