

**PSC 1387: The U.S. Constitution, Its Interpretation, and the American Political Experience**  
**Common Course**

Description

A study of the philosophic and historical background, development, and content of the United States Constitution and its interpretation by the Supreme Court in a complex and ever-changing multi-ethnic, multi-racial, and multi-religious society.

Core Curriculum Objectives

1. It is self-evident, one might argue, that “civic learning is the first and necessary step of civic engagement,” and that the “character of human beings is improved by a better understanding of the nature of the political community in which they live.” (Oversight-Integration Working Group). Thus, PSC 1387 will provide students the essential knowledge and skills to understand and nurture the U.S. Constitution, American democracy, and the major values and ideals (liberty, equality, justice, rule of law) that undergird our political and social order.
2. The course will help students to understand the different standards used by the Court in constitutional interpretations and their implications for the moral and ethical responsibilities and rights of students and American citizens.
3. PSC 1387 addresses the fundamentals of the American Constitution and its interpretation by the Supreme Court, American federalism, and separation of powers. Within the context of this constitutional perspective, the course also examines major political issues and concerns, such as equal protection and due process of law (voting, marriage, education), racial and gender equality, freedom of religion, speech and press, and the rights of the accused. Among other cases, ones that illustrate America’s ethnic, religious, and moral diversity may be examined.
4. As a result, PSC 1387 will help to enhance students’ appreciation of the virtues of justice, humility, prudence, and charity and challenge them to find their role in civic responsibility and engagement. This in turn will provide students with a heightened ethical and moral consciousness and respect for their fellow citizens and humanity.
5. The course will serve as a foundation for the expansion of civic engagement opportunities across departmental and disciplinary boundaries. Perhaps the basic knowledge provided by PSC 1387 “could be further explored in sophomore, junior, and senior-level core courses taught in many departments so that the core fully realizes the call for civic engagement.”

Criteria

- Credit Hours: 3
- Course Level: 1387
- Department responsible for teaching course: Political Science

Justification

- A&S Core Curriculum Vision Part I, Preamble: “The College of Arts & Sciences core curriculum is the foundation for a degree from Baylor University; it serves to educate men and women to become informed and productive citizens of a democracy and servant leaders of faith communities.” (page 1). And to that end (as noted above) this course will aim to provide



students with the knowledge and skills needed to understand the U.S. Constitution and participate actively in the American democratic process.

- A&S Core Curriculum Vision Part II, C: “As citizens of local, national, and global communities, students must be equipped for informed and constructive civic engagement. Students will become familiar with the U.S. Constitution and understand the broad trajectories of national and world history alongside the development of contemporary world systems. The core curriculum will empower students to engage with current social and political issues intelligently ... These fundamental and transferable skills will require students to reevaluate their own assumptions. They will also gain a deeper understanding of and empathy for people from other societies, races, genders, ethnicities, and socio-economic statuses. In this way, students will be able to articulate and practice compassion and justice in the pursuit of peace.” (page 2).