I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the shortest written Constitution of any major government in the world. A mere 4,400 words have limited and expanded the role of government, defined the roles of the governmental branches and negotiated their interactions, established civil liberties, and regulated the largest economy in the world for over two centuries. Our goal will be to cultivate a general understanding of this document and its interpretation through the examination of leading Supreme Court opinions. But because the Supreme Court is also a political institution, we will consider how and to what degree constitutional decision-making resembles ordinary politics, including how the Court influences public policy, whether public opinion influences the Court, and how the other branches interact with the Court.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

GOAL A: Demonstrate an understanding of the historical origins of the Constitution and other significant human rights documents.

Learning Outcomes: The student will:
A-1 Explain the historical background and repercussions of the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and Articles of Confederation.
A-2 Describe the three sections of the United States Constitution
A-3 Identify the other sources of U.S. law
A-4 Define federalism, separation of power, and checks and balances and describe the authority given to each branch under the Constitution
A-5 Distinguish between inherent power and enumerated powers granted under the Constitution
GOAL B: Demonstrate an understanding of the constitutional protections of civil rights and liberties

Learning Outcomes: The student will
B-1 List the five rights included in freedom of expression
B-2 Describe the types of protected and unprotected speech
B-3 Describe the amendments in the Bill of Rights and that provide constitutional protection in criminal cases
B-4 Compare and contrast the Establishment Clause with the Free Exercise Clause
B-5 Apply the three-part test used by the Supreme Court to determine violations of the Equal Protection Clause
B-6 Explain the breadth and limitations of the Tenth Amendment
B-7 Explain the application of civil rights to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment
B-8 Identify some of the “fundamental rights” as established through constitutional interpretation
B-9 Identify the sources of due process protection
B-10 Examine the development of substantive and procedural due process
B-11 Describe the basic requirements for procedural due process whenever the government deprives a person of life, liberty, or property
B-12 Apply the standards used by the Supreme Court when it reviews for substantive due process violations
B-13 Examine personal privacy case and how the courts apply the Ninth Amendment

GOAL C: Demonstrate an understanding of federal executive powers

Learning Outcomes: The student will
C-1 Identify the various presidential powers and their sources
C-2 Explain the nature of presidential privilege, immunity, and impeachment

GOAL D: Demonstrate an understanding of federal legislative powers

Learning Outcomes: The student will
D-1 Describe the origins and parameters of the legislature’s taxation and spending powers
D-2 Describe the limits on the legislature’s power to regulate commerce through the commerce clause as it has been defined through significant Supreme Court cases
D-3 Describe the “dormant commerce clause”
D-4 Define “federal preemption” and its application to the states

GOAL E: Demonstrate an understanding federal judicial power

Learning Outcomes: The student will:
E-1 Identify Article III courts
E-2 Describe the concept of justiciability within a case or controversy
E-3 Describe the relationship between the federal and state courts
GOAL F: The student will use appropriate written and oral communication skills

Learning Outcomes: The student will:
F-1 Communication information orally in a logical and grammatically correct manner
F-2 Present written information using standard APA style
F-3 Write clearly, concisely, and appropriately using correct English grammar, punctuation, usage, mechanics, sentence structure, and vocabulary