

## **AMERICAN CIVILIZATION**

### **SEMESTER 1**

## **UNDERSTANDING US POLITICS**

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

American Politics and its various aspects and operational layers within and outside the US system of government constitute one the basics in the study of United States (civilization, history, and society). The course introduces the basics of the US system of government to Master 1 students of Anglophone Studies specialized in Literature and Civilization. The course covers the first semester of the Master programme and consists of two sessions: one lecture and one tutorial per week. The lecture is devoted to an overall introduction to the different concepts, individual and collective actors, institutions, procedures, and mechanisms that govern American politics. The tutorials are devoted to class discussions based on students' compulsory weekly in-depth readings of primary and secondary sources.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

The course aims at providing Master 1 students of Anglophone Studies, option Literature and Civilization, with the key elements to comprehend American Politics, its philosophical foundations, and the mechanisms and the main intellectual, social, and political movements and ideas that shaped 20th and early 21<sup>st</sup> Century America at home and its behavior abroad. Some key issues in US society are also to be dealt with. Students will be provided with basic knowledge through the study of secondary and primary sources. The final aim is to enhance students' ability to get autonomy in critical reading, analysis, and synthesis of relevant historical and political material.

#### **CONTENTS**

- 1. The Idea of Democracy**
- 2. The Historical Origins of the US System of Government, 1**
- 3. The Historical Origins of the US System of Government, 2**
- 4. The Historical Origins of the US System of Government, 3**  
**The Making of the US Constitution**
- 5. The Three Branches and the Mechanism of Checks and Balances**
- 6. The Law-making Process**

- 7. Electoral Campaigns and Elections**
- 8. Direct Partisan Participation: Presidential Elections**
- 9. Interest Groups**
- 10. Schools of Thought in US Politics**