

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: SB 1670
 SPONSOR: Senator Argenziano
 SUBJECT: Community College Students/Courses
 DATE: February 26, 2004 REVISED: 03/17/04 _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Woodruff</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/3 Amendments</u>
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

The bill provides that at least one of the courses a community college associate in arts degree seeking student must take to satisfy the social sciences requirement of the general education curriculum must include civics instruction that focuses on North American national government. This requirement would be in effect for all students enrolling for the first time in the fall semester of 2004 and thereafter.

This bill substantially amends section 1001.02 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Present language requires no more than 36 semester credit hours in general education courses in the subject areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. No specific curriculum or course is required within any of the five content areas. All courses in the associate degree program must be in the Florida common course numbering system.

All twenty eight community colleges offer a course in American Government which is in common course numbering. Three community colleges require that students take at least one course in American government/political science to fulfill their social science requirement. When such a course is not required by the college, students often choose one of these courses to fulfill their social science requirement on their own. The Department of Education reports that during the 2002-03 academic year, 31,881 community college students enrolled in at least one political science course. In addition, 39,920 community college students enrolled in at least one American History course.

In addition to the variety of American Government/Political Science/U.S. History courses being offered at all community colleges, American government is a requirement for high school graduation in Florida (s. 1003.43(1)(g), Florida Statutes). Every student who obtains a standard (24 credit) high school diploma must complete at least one semester (.5 credits) in American Government. Students can also take more courses in this area as high school electives.

Section 1003.42, Florida Statutes – Required Instruction – addresses civics requirements that must be included in the K-12 curriculum. These include:

The content of the Declaration of Independence and how it forms the philosophical foundation of our government;

The arguments in support of adopting our republican form of government, as they are embodied in the most important of the Federalist Papers;

The essentials of the United States Constitution and how it provides the structure of our government;

The elements of civil government, including the primary functions of and interrelationships between the Federal Government, the state, and its counties, municipalities, school districts, and special districts.

Due to the specificity of K-12 requirements relating to civics education, many students who have studied American Government/political science extensively in K-12 may choose to explore other social science areas in college.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

At least one of the courses a community college student must take to satisfy the social sciences requirement for an associate in arts degree will have to include civics instruction that focuses on North American national government.

The effect of the proposed change will only impact the social science courses offered by community colleges. Either a new required course will have to be created or the content of some or all of the existing social science courses will have to be revised to include civics instruction that focuses on North American national government. A corresponding change is not made to university course requirements.

To the extent that individual colleges choose to place this required content within an existing course or courses, that course will need to be evaluated to determine if the course must be reclassified for the common course numbering system.

College catalogs will need to be revised to include the new requirement. This could be a logistical problem because the bill is effective for students beginning in the fall semester of 2004; however, catalogs for fall 2004 may have already been finalized and printed. For those colleges which print a new catalog each year, catalogs are usually finalized in late fall/early spring for the following academic year.

The bill will restrict the choices that students can make with regard to which social science courses they take to meet their general education requirement.

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2004.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

To the extent that a new or revised course curriculum is required to be developed, there will be an expense for each college. This may include the need to hire additional faculty with expertise in North American government instead of other social sciences. There will also be expenses related to revising the college catalog, website information, counseling material and evaluations of common course number content. Because the content is required to be offered within the existing requirement for social science courses, other costs, although unknown, should not be significant.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

The bill's sponsor has indicated the intent of the bill is to require a course in American Government as part of the social science curriculum. Inadvertently, the phrase North American Government was incorporated into the bill's text. An amendment would correct this issue.

VIII. Amendments:

#1 by Education Committee deletes the word “North” from the description of the required course students must take to fulfill their social science requirements.

#2 by Education Committee changes the date after which students enrolling at a public community college must take a course which includes civics instruction in order to fulfill their social sciences requirements. Students entering a public community college in the winter semester of the 2004-2005 academic year will have to complete this requirement.

#3 by Education Committee deletes the word “national” from the description of the required course students must take to fulfill their social science requirements.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill’s sponsor or the Florida Senate.
