Political Science 2302
United States and Texas Government: Institutions and Policies

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Required texts:
Benjamin Ginsberg, et.al., *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 7th Essentials Edition* (W.W. Norton and Company)

In addition, you will be required to access the internet to read primary documents as assigned for a more complete understanding of the American political system. You will also need to have access to at least one major news source (i.e., *Dallas Morning News, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post*) to keep up with current events and fulfill the requirements of the course as there will be current events quizzes given. Your professor reserves the right to assign additional readings as required.

Course Description: This course is a survey of the institutions and policies of the American and Texas regimes. It is organized historically. That is to say that we cannot understand the way things are cannot be understood without some reference to the circumstances that have created and shaped the American republic.

Course Objectives: In addition to developing critical thinking skills, this course is designed to give you an understanding of the interaction between circumstance and institutions by which the American experiment in self government with justice occurs. It will also give you a broad overview of the historical events that have helped to shape the regime into what it is today in terms of public policy and the ends pursued by it.

The following general learning objectives will be achieved:

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and processes of the government of the United States.
2. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and processes of the state of Texas.
3. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the theories of federal policy development and implementation.
4. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the theories of Texas state policy development and implementation.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken daily and you would be well-advised to attend every class—if for no other reason than the fact that experience demonstrates that you will not do well if you are not here. Students who have more than two absences will have three points deducted from their final grade for each absence over two. You may use your two absences for any purpose you choose. When an absence happens to coincide
with an examination or quiz, that examination or quiz cannot be made-up. Furthermore, if you do miss class, it is your responsibility to prevail upon your classmates to share their materials with you.

Of course attendance is more than merely being in your seat on time (although timeliness is a virtue). You are expected to come to class prepared for class. Readings assigned for particular dates should be completed prior to coming to class. You will have quizzes over the readings and current events, so it is important that you arrive at class on time and that you have adequately prepared for class prior to attending.

You should not arrive late to class. Most importantly do NOT be late for exams! Tardiness for a quiz or exam will result in not receiving credit for it. Needless to say, this might have a deleterious effect on your final grade.

**Electronics Policy:** We are fortunate to live in a technologically advanced time. With that said, the following guidelines must be observed. First, laptop computers are wonderful things and I highly recommend their use. With that said, it is disrespectful to the class for you to cruise the internet, update your Facebook status, check your email, or engage in electronic conversations while class is in session. You will get one warning if you are engaged in such activities during class. After that, you will be asked to leave your computer at home. Do not, under any circumstances, engage in “social networking” during class.

The rule regarding messaging extends to the other ubiquitous electronic marvel, the cellular telephone. One person here has permission to leave his phone on during class—and it is not you. It is entirely possible that you will survive for the hour and forty-five minutes of class without using your telephone. Violations will result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. If your telephone rings during class your instructor reserves the right to answer it (and trust me, you don’t want this to happen). Texting during class is prohibited and will likewise result in the confiscation of the offending instrument.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in your being removed from the course at the discretion of your professor.

**Conduct:** “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” What this means in terms of our class is that from time to time we will discuss controversial issues. During these discussions, you are expected to conduct yourself with civility and politeness (remember, “politeness” is the first form of politics). A university education is a privilege and ought not be abused through disruptive and impolite behavior.

With this in mind, the following are not allowed in the context of this class:

- Sunglasses, Bluetooth earpieces, caps/hats, etc.
- Leaving class and then returning (if you have to go to the bathroom, do so before and/or after class)
- Eating during class
- Texting, or any other form of instant messaging
- Listening to your IPod or other media devices
Grading: Your grade will consist of the following elements:

- Exam One: 100 points
- Exam Two: 100 points
- Exam Three: 100 points
- Quizzes and Reaction Papers: 100 points

The grading scale for computation of final grades is as follows:

- A: 364-400 points
- B: 324-363 points
- C: 284-323 points
- D: 240-283 points
- F: 0-239 points

Course Calendar
(This calendar represents the best estimate of our progress. Your instructor reserves the right to edit the calendar as necessary. This would include adding or deleting readings as required by the exigencies of the class.)

July 9: Introduction to the Course
The Executive Branch in Texas and the United States
(U.S. Constitution, Article II; Ginsberg, Chapter 10; Halter Chapter 8)

July 10: The Executive and Legislative Branches in Texas and the United States
(U.S. Constitution, Articles I and II; Ginsberg Chapter 9; Halter, Chapter 7)

July 11: The Judiciary: Federal and State
(U.S. Constitution, Article III; The Federalist, No. 78; Joseph Story; Marbury v. Madison; Dickerson v. U.S.; Ginsberg, Chapter 12; Halter, Chapter 9)

July 12: The Courts and the Bill of Rights (U.S. Constitution, Article I, section 9; Article III; Amendments 1-5 and 13-15; Barron v. Baltimore; Slaughterhouse Cases; Gitlow v. New York; Ginsberg, Chapter 4)


July 17: The Bill of Rights, concluded

July 18: Exam One (first class hour)
Contexts of Civil Rights

July 19: The Problem of “Race” and the Struggle for Civil Rights (U.S. Constitution, Article I, section 2, section 9, Amendment 14; Scott v. Sandford; Plessy v. Ferguson; Alexis de Tocqueville)
**July 23:** Civil Rights and Wrongs (W.E.B. Dubois; Booker T. Washington; McClaurin v. Bd. of Regents; Brown v. Bd. of Education I; Brown v. Bd. of Education II)

**July 24:** Federalism and the Rise of the Nation State (Ginsberg, Chapter 3; Halter Chapter 2)

**July 25:** Domestic Public Policy and the Bureaucratic State (Ginsberg, Chapter 11; Halter, Chapter 8)

**July 26:** Domestic Public Policy continued

**July 30:** Exam Two (first hour of class)

**July 31:** Federalism and Public Policy

**August 1:** City, County and State: Texas (Halter, Chapter 11)

**August 2:** The Emergence Rise of the United States to Global Power (The Federalist, No. 75; Ginsberg, Chapter 14)

**August 6:** The American Century

**August 7:** The Struggle Against Extremism (readings to be announced)

**August 8:** The Prospects for the American Republic (Washington, “Farewell Address”)

**August 9:** Final Exam

**Desiderata:** Your professor reserves the right to edit or change this syllabus based upon the exigencies of the class. You will be notified in the event of any changes that are required.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Gee Library, Room 132; Phone (903) 886-5150
Student statement of understanding:

I, _________________________________ , have read the syllabus and understand the guidelines and policies therein. Furthermore, I understand my obligation to adhere to these guidelines and policies in this class and that failure to do so could result in my being dropped from the course.

X _____________________________________________

Date:_____________________________________________