PSCI 2301.004: Principles of United States and Texas Government

Fall 2012 – TR (12:30 – 1:45) BA 257

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TR 10:00am – 11:30am, or by appointment

*The Instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus at any time*

**Required Texts:** Both will be used.

ISBN: 978-0-393-91207-4

*American Government; Power & Purpose.* 12th ed.
NOTE: This text is also available for purchase as an ebook at nortonebooks.com.


*Lone Star Politics; Tradition and Transformation in Texas.* 2nd ed.
Collier, Ken and Steven Galatas, Julie Harrelson-Stephens

**Course Description:**

The purpose of this course is to study the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in the United States and Texas. This course will introduce you to the historical, social, political, cultural, and global forces that formed the foundations for the American political system and continue to effect national and statewide political activity. Please note that you will not be taught what to think about political issues in this course. Rather, you will be provided with the knowledge base to determine how to think about political issues for yourself.

After a brief examination of early U.S. and Texas political history and political culture, we will examine the formation of the federal and state constitutions. Then, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities granted by federalism and republicanism in the United States and Texas.
Subsequently, we will spend a significant amount of time analyzing civil liberties and civil rights. We will discuss campaigns, voting, and elections in the context of the upcoming 2012 Presidential election. We will conclude the course by examining the roles that public opinion, the media, political parties and interest groups play in U.S. and Texas politics.

**Format:**

Each class session will involve lectures and discussions about the assigned readings. You will regularly be asked to contribute and discuss your understanding about the assigned topics and answer questions about the readings.

**Course Learning Objectives:**

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding political behavior and interaction between citizens and institutions of government.
2. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding political behavior and interaction between citizens and institutions of government in Texas.
3. Students will understand and employ important theoretical and analytical approaches to explain US constitutional development.
4. Students will understand and employ important theoretical and analytical approaches to explain Texas constitutional development.

**Grading Scale**

Final grades will be based on a 100-point scale, using the following letter/number conversion.

- A = 90-100  
- B = 80-89  
- C = 70-79  
- D = 65-69  
- F = Below 65

**Grades:**

Your grade in this course will be determined by the criteria listed below. Writing assignments will be announced during the course of the semester and the number of which may vary.
depending on the amount of class participation/discussion. The following scale will be used to determine your grade:

- Exam 1 = 25%
- Exam 2 = 25%
- Final = 25%
- Attendance and Participation: 15%
- Pop Quizzes/Short Writing Assignments*: 10%
- **NO EXTRA CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN!!!**

*Papers submitted must be a hard copy and be double-spaced, Times New Roman font with a size of 12pt.

**Make Up Exams:**

No Make Up Exams will be given during the course of the semester. Any Make Ups will be given on December 6 during regular class time. This means that if you took both exams, then this is a free study day for the Final. No more than one (1) make up exam will be permitted.

Any request for a make-up exam must be made in writing via **E-mail**.

**Requirements:**

Each student will be expected to:

1. Complete the assigned readings on time and come to class prepared to engage in class discussions.
2. Keep up with current issues and activities in American and Texas government and integrate this information into class activities. Current events will come up in class lectures and discussions and it is advisable to have a passing familiarity with the issues.
3. **CLASS ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY**, be on time, and participate in class discussions.
4. Use laptop computers only for taking notes.
5. Do not carry on private conversations during class.
6. **Respect the political opinions of your classmates, but do not be afraid to engage in discussion.**
**Slacker Clause**

You will find, if you have not done so already, that taking university courses and making time for life within the context of work, family, and our other daily issues is difficult to manage. However, to that end a person must learn to effectively use their time for leisure, work, family, their issues, and also make room for their class assignments. In an effort to reinforce that idea, and ensure that you receive a quality learning experience in this course, all assignments listed and that you receive during the time of this course must be completed. If you fail to complete one or more assignments, you will automatically fail this course.

**Plagiarism:**

All students will maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty. Academic dishonesty affects all individuals at the University and accordingly will not be tolerated. For this class, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. In particular, passing off work as your own that was written by someone else, without proper citation or attribution, on either exams or discussion assignments will be considered an act of plagiarism. This holds true whether material comes from the textbook, another publication, an internet source, or another student.

**Students are expected to comply with the policies and procedures outlined in the Student Guidebook, which can be found at:**


**Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. This guarantee requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. If you believe that you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services, Gee Library, room 132, (903) 886-5835/5150. They are also available via email at StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu.

***Thanks to Drs. Chad King, Robert Rodriguez, Charles Elliot, Ricky Dobbs and Professor Angela Shaddox for their contributions to this syllabus.***
**Tentative Readings and Course Schedule**

August 28 – August 30; Chapter 2 US, Chapter 1 TX and the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation (located in the back of US book)

September 4 – September 6; Chapter 3 US, Chapter 2 TX (39-59) – Foundations of Government

September 11; Chapter 4 US – Civil Liberties

September 13; movie – “The Big Buy; How Tom Delay Stole Congress”

September 18 – September 20; Continued

September 25 – September 27; Chapter 5 US – Civil Rights

October 2; Continued

October 4 - **EXAM I**

October 9 – October 11; Chapter 10 US – Public Opinion

October 16 - Continued

October 18 – Guest Lecture; Local Government, read Commerce City Charter

October 23; Chapter 11 US, Chapter 7 TX (189-209) - Elections

October 25; No class!!

October 30 – November 1; Continued

November 6 – November 8; Chapter 14 US - The Media

November 13 – November 15; Continued

November 20 - **EXAM II**

November 27; Chapter 13 US – Groups & Interests

November 29 - December 4; Chapter 12 US, Chapter 8 TX – Political Parties

December 6 – Make up Exams

December 10 – December 14; **Final (non-comprehensive; see Exam schedule.**