

PRINCIPLES OF UNITED STATES AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT

PSCI 2301-005

Fall 2012

9:00-9:50 AM MWF

BA 243

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Office hours: 2-4 T; 3:30-4:30 W and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is a survey of the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in the United States and Texas. Topics considered include constitutionalism, federalism, ideology, pluralism, political culture and socialization, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, republicanism, and voting and electoral politics.

The specific purpose of this course is to provide you with a working knowledge of the important components and processes of both the United States and Texas governments. My goals for this course are twofold. First, I seek to provide you with a strong factual background on important political institutions and processes at both the national and state level of government. A basic working knowledge of government is an important for instrumental reasons (your academic achievement) as well as for intrinsic reasons (being a good citizen). My second goal is to introduce you to the “scientific” side of political science. Notably, I want you to understand how political scientists seek to develop and test theories of the principles of American political system and political behavior and events. Your textbook does a wonderful job of developing a theoretical frame with which we can use to think about politics in a focused manner. Ultimately, I seek to provide you with the tools to use as both citizens and scholars.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course

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.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

The following books are required for the course. Please make sure that you get the proper edition. I have included the ISBN number in case you would like to purchase the book online.

Lowi, Theodore J., Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2012. *American Government: Power and Purpose* (Core 12th Edition, without policy chapters). New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (ISBN: 978-0-393-91209-8).

Halter, Gary M. 2011. *Government and Politics of Texas: A Comparative View* (8th Edition). New York: McGraw-Hill. (ISBN: 978-0-07-337914-2).

Additional readings may be supplied on the web or in class.

CLASSROOM CIVILITY

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment which is conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from using electronic devices, challenging instructor's authority, eating or drinking in class, coming in late or leaving early, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class. No student should expect to raise his or her hand more than three times during any class period. This policy is to ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate. To this effect, no student will be allowed to "dominate" any class period.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Please arrive at class on time and mute (or switch off) cell phones, pagers, and alarms during class. You may only use the laptop to take notes in a word processing program. No surfing or instant messages are allowed. Any student who uses the laptop for any purpose other than taking notes will not be allowed to use that laptop in my class for the rest of the term.

Tape recorders, camera and video phones, and all other visual and auditory recording or retention devices, are strictly prohibited in this class. Please do not bring or use those devices.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. For example, forgetting to cite an author and page number with a quote is plagiarism, as is direct copying and pasting from a website. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and notification to the Dean of Students. Plagiarism is often a result of improper citation and/or acknowledgement of sources; therefore, we will be going over plagiarism in class so you can avoid common pitfalls (and an F!). If a student needs additional assistance, please consult me during my office hours.

GRADING

The final grade will be determined on the following basis:

Class Attendance	10%
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Quizzes	10%
Web Activities	10%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Final Exam	25%

Grading Scale

Excellent	A = 100-90
Good	B = 89.9-80
Average	C = 79.9-70
Below Average	D = 69.9-60
Unacceptable	F = 59.9-0

I will do my best to help students with any other needs they may have. Do not wait until the end of the semester to see assistance as that will be too late to make a difference. In all cases, it is necessary for the student to discuss their concerns with me as soon as possible after the concern develops. There is little that can be done at the end of the semester to compensate for earlier difficulties.

Note: I am not responsible for your scholarships, academic eligibility in extracurricular activities, or graduation eligibility. Do not come to me pleading that you “need” or “have to” get a certain grade. The grade you earn is the grade you will get. Under no circumstance will I arbitrarily change a grade, so do not ask. NO exceptions! Also, there will be NO extra project for this class regardless of the situation. Also, I am not allowed to dispense or discuss grades over the phone or via email, but grades will be posted on the class web.

ATTENDANCE

“Eighty five percent of success is merely showing up.” — Woody Allen —

Attendance is mandatory. Class attendance is crucial to your understanding of the concepts, issues, processes and not all of them will be covered in the assigned texts. Attendance is part of the course experience the same as lectures, texts, exams, and other course elements. Attending class can only help your grade so I strongly suggest you show up to class on a regular class.

Attendance is defined as being on time and being mentally as well as physically present. Students sleeping, talking, text messaging or otherwise not paying attention in class will be marked absent. Students may occasionally need to arrive a bit late or leave a bit early. This is not a problem. However students abusing this through a large number of late arrivals or early departures will have these counted as absences.

Class attendance counts 10% toward your final grade. Roll will be taken regularly. Repeated absence will be detrimental to your final grade, as will repeated tardiness, which is disruptive to your classmates. All excused (illness, University business) absences require documentation to verify the excuse. Documentation should be turned in on the final day of class. You are responsible for all work assigned for any class regardless of the number of absences, whether excused or unexcused. Ask your classmates for notes and other important information you miss

if absent. Please do not call or email me regarding absences. Your written documentation will suffice.

QUIZZES

I will give random in-class quizzes in order to gauge student understanding and to promote student participation during lecture. In order to take a quiz, students are responsible for bringing scantron sheets to all classes. Questions for the quizzes will come primarily from previous lectures so it is important to attend class regularly and take good notes. No makeup quizzes will be given but I will drop one quiz with the lowest scores in calculating overall quiz scores. Quizzes count 10% toward your final grade.

WEB ACTIVITIES

There will be two web activities. Students should complete these two activities online and turn in their results before due. More specific information will be provided later.

EXAMINATIONS

There will be four exams (three midterms and a final). The exams will be primarily objective: multiple choice, true-false, or matching. The exams will cover material from the assigned readings, lectures, and class discussion. The exams will always include material from the readings that have not been discussed in lectures. Each exam is comprised of 40 multiple choice questions worth 100 points each. Bring scantrons and pencils. Store all materials beneath your seat during the exam. Once the first exam is turned in, no more exams will be distributed so show up on time.

Students must take the final exam at the date and time scheduled. The final exam is the cumulative exam that covers from the first to the last chapter discussed in this course. However, emphasis will be placed on the material covered following the third midterm.

Exams are the property of the instructor and will not be returned to the student. However, copies of each exam will be available in my office and for review at any appropriate time. Students are encouraged to review their exams after they have been graded. Such reviews should be soon after each exam. After each exam full grade information will be posted on the class web. This information will be updated after each exam and immediately before the final exam period. It is each student's responsibility to check this grade information after each exam and notify the instructor if s/he believes it contains any errors. Errors can be corrected if brought to the instructor's attention promptly. Do not wait weeks or until the end of the semester to discover or mention errors. By then it is probably too late.

MAKEUP EXAMS

I expect that students will take exams on the day that they are given. All students who missed any exam before the final will be required to take the makeup exam for that particular exam on December 7. Any absence on an exam day requires written documentation (doctor's note, sanctioned school function, etc) and I reserve the right not to permit you to take a makeup. If an exam is missed, you must contact the instructor within three days. It is your responsibility to provide me with documentation noting your absence and to notify me that you need to take a makeup exam on the day reserved (December 7). If you have an excuse that is documented and

have been verified by me and do miss the exam, all make up exams will be held on the last day of class (December 7) in this classroom during the scheduled class time. In addition, students will not be permitted to make up more than one exam on this day. If you fail to make up a missed exam after December 7 you will receive a zero on the exam. No makeup exam will be given for the final.

STUDENT CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

I expect all students to maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty which is discussed in Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12 Academic Honesty. “Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one’s own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material.”

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. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant penalties.

Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Failure to comply with the commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

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 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

INSTRUCTOR-STUDENT COMMUNICATION: OFFICE HOURS AND EMAIL

The best way to contact me is to stop by my office during office hours or to schedule an appointment. Outside of class email is also the dominant means of communication between the instructor and students. The instructor can usually be reached by email with little difficulty. Due to the vast increase in spam email, any email sent to me MUST include a subject line such as “PSCI 2301-005” identifying it as class related. Without such a subject line, it is likely to be deleted without being read.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses.

Aug. 27

Introduction, Overview, and Organizational Meeting

Aug. 29, 31, Sep. 5, 7, 10 & 12

Principles of Politics (Lowi Ch. 1)

Sep. 3

Labor Day

Sep. 14, 17, 19 & 21

US Constitution (Lowi Ch. 2)

Sep. 24

Texas Constitution (Halter Ch. 2)

Sep. 26

Exam 1

Sep. 28, Oct. 1, 3 & 5

Federalism (Lowi Ch. 3)

Oct. 8 & 10

Relationship between Federal and State Governments (Lowi Ch. 3)

Oct. 12, 15 & 17

Civil Liberties (Lowi Ch. 4)

Oct. 19 & 22

Civil Rights (Lowi Ch. 5)

Oct. 24

Exam 2

Oct. 26, 29 & 31

Political Parties (Lowi Ch. 12)

Nov. 2, 5 & 7

Interest Groups (Lowi Ch. 13)

Nov. 9

Texas Political Parties and Interest Groups (Halter Chs. 4 & 5)

Nov. 12

Exam 3

Nov. 14, 16 & 19

Public Opinion/Media (Lowi Chs. 10 & 14)

Nov. 21, 26, 28 & 30

Elections and Campaigns (Lowi Ch. 11)

Nov. 23

Thanksgiving Holiday

Dec. 3 & 5

Texas Elections (Halter Chs. 3 & 6)

Dec. 7

Special Reading

Makeup Exam for those who missed Exam 1, 2, or 3

Dec. 12 (Wed)

Final Exam, 8:00 a.m.—10:00 a.m.

IMPORTANT DATES

Sep. 26 (Wed) Exam 1

Oct. 24 (Wed) Exam 2

Nov. 12 (Mon) Exam 3

Dec. 7 (Fri) Makeup Exam for those who missed Exam 1, 2, or 3

Dec. 12 (Wed) Final Exam