

United States and Texas Government: Institutions and Policies
[PSCI 2302 US/TX Gov; INSTS & POLS]
Fall 2012
Tuesdays/Thursdays (3:30pm-4:45pm)
BA 243

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Office Hours: T/Th 1:45pm-3:30pm, or by appointment

Course Description:

Welcome to United States and Texas Government! The purpose of this course is to study the *political systems* in the United States and Texas. This course will introduce you to the formal and informal institutions of national and state governments and the roles they play in the creation and implementation of public policy. 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*.

First, we will examine the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the United States and Texas State Governments, in addition to federal and state bureaucracies. Then, we will spend a significant amount of time analyzing the formulation and implementation of public policies at the national and state levels. We will also discuss institutions and policies in the context of the 2012 presidential election that will take place this semester.

Format:

Each class session will involve lectures and discussions about the assigned readings. You will regularly be asked to contribute your opinions about the assigned topics and answer questions about the readings. In addition to the assigned readings listed in the syllabus, we will occasionally read short news articles and opinion columns in class and discuss them on the spot, since developments in American politics occur on a daily basis. *This syllabus is subject to change at any time at the professor's discretion.*

NO PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE ALLOWED IN CLASS AT ANY TIME.

THIS INCLUDES (BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO):

CELL PHONES,

LAPTOPS,

iPADS,

iPODS,

MP3 Players/Recorders,

VIDEO CAMERAS

OR ANY OTHER AUDIO AND/OR VIDEO RECORDERS OF ANY KIND

IF ANY OF THESE DEVICES ARE PRESENT IN CLASS YOU WILL BE ASKED TO STORE THEM OR LEAVE THE CLASS IMMEDIATELY.

Requirements/Assignments:

Examinations: In this course, **all students are required to take three exams**, each of which will consist of 50 questions in a multiple choice format. Together, these exams will comprise **75%** of your grade. **There is not a final exam in this course.**

If you miss an exam, you will receive 0% for that exam.

If you have a **legitimate reason** for missing an exam (e.g. severe illness or injury *requiring professional medical care*, emergencies in your *immediate* family, participation in *official* university activities, legal obligations) **AND** you have **supporting documentation** for your absence, then you may **request** taking the make-up exam, which will be **a comprehensive examination given during finals week.**

Requests for taking the make-up exam must be **submitted in writing and include documentation** explaining and substantiating why the absence was legitimate. An approval to take the make-up exam will be based solely upon the professor's evaluation of your request and supporting documentation. Your grade on the make-up exam may **only** be used to substitute **one** missed exam. Any other missed exams will receive 0% scores, irrespective of the circumstances.

Attendance: 10% of your grade is based on your class attendance. Students are required to attend class and attendance will be taken at the end of each class session using a sign-in sheet. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have signed in. Arriving late and/or leaving early will negatively impact your attendance grade. *Attendance is critical, discussions are irreplaceable, and course sessions cannot be "made up."* **I will not be managing any excuses for absences. You can miss up to **THREE** class sessions without penalty for any reason. More than three absences will result in a reduction in your grade, **REGARDLESS** of the reason (excused **OR** unexcused).**

The attendance grade scale appears below.

- *0 absences = you will get a bonus of 2% added to your grade*
- *1-3 absences= no penalty*
- *4 absences= -1% from your grade*
- *5 absences= -2% from your grade*
- *6 absences= -3% from your grade*
- *7-8 absences= -5% from your grade*
- *9-10 absences= -7% from your grade*
- *11 or more absences= -10% from your grade*

Participation: Your participation in this course is worth **5%** of your grade. Positive participation includes responding to my questions, asking your own questions, and contributing to class discussions. Your participation grade will be reduced if you use personal electronic devices in class, misbehave in class, or disrupt class in any way.

Pop Quizzes and Short Writing Assignments: These will be assigned randomly throughout the semester and will count for a total of **8%** of your grade. If you are *absent* when a short writing assignment or pop quiz is given, you **cannot** make it up, irrespective of the circumstances. Short writing assignments and pop quizzes will be graded on the basis of the content and clarity of your answers.

Global Class Project: All students in this class will be required to participate in a university sponsored global research project, or complete an alternative assignment on global studies. The easiest way to fulfill this requirement is to complete two online surveys (one at the beginning of the fall semester and a second survey at the end of the fall semester). Each survey should take less than 15 minutes to complete. I will email you the link to the survey at the beginning and at the end of the semester with dates/times of the deadlines to complete each survey.

If you would *not* like to participate in this research project you must complete an alternative assignment: Choose a film that focuses on an international political theme (or themes) and write a four-page research paper that focuses your evaluation of how the film depicts the political or historical reality of the case it is based upon. Legitimate Internet sources for citations are acceptable; academic journals and books are preferred. At least five sources must be cited in your paper. Papers must be submitted in electronic form (as an email attachment) AND as a hard (printed) copy on or before **the last day of class**.

Alternative assignment papers must be FOUR pages of text, not more, not less; typed 12-point Times New Roman font; double spaced; 1in. margins all around; and bibliographies are not included in that page count.) Late papers will NOT be accepted for ANY reason. (email me if you would like to do the alternative assignment).

If you do not complete both surveys you will be required to complete the alternative assignment. Thus, if you do not complete the first survey you will automatically be required to do the alternative assignment to fulfill this portion of the class. The global class requirement is worth **2%** of your grade.

Grades:

Your grade in this course will be determined by the criteria listed below. Final course grades may be curved at the professor's discretion. The following scale will be used to determine your grade:

- Exam #1 (September 27): 25%
- Exam #2 (November 1): 25%
- Exam #3 (December 6): 25%
- Attendance: 10%
- Participation: 5%
- Pop Quizzes/Short Writing Assignments: 8%
- Global Studies Survey/Alternative Assignment Paper (May 2): 2%

A 90-100%; B 80-89.9%; C 70-79.9%; D 60-69.9%; F Below 60%

Notes on Academic Dishonesty of ANY kind: Any student who is caught committing any kind of academic dishonesty will receive an “F” in this course and will be reported to the University administration. “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” (Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12). If you have any doubt as to what may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me prior to submitting any assignments.

Learning Outcomes:

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

In order to maximize your performance in this course, you must:

- ***TURN OFF ALL PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES BEFORE CLASS BEGINS. THIS INCLUDES (BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO): CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, iPADS, IPODS, MP3 Players/Recorders, VIDEO CAMERAS, OR ANY OTHER AUDIO AND/OR VIDEO RECORDERS OF ANY KIND***
- ***IF ANYONE IS FOUND TO BE TEXTING OR ANSWERS A PHONE CALL DURING CLASS, THE ENTIRE CLASS WILL TAKE A *POP QUIZ* ON THE SPOT.***
- Attend each class session AND arrive ON TIME (the classroom door will not be opened for late arrivals 15 minutes after class starts; Notify the professor in advance if you need to arrive late or leave early (this may affect your attendance grade);
- Read the assigned material before class;
- Be prepared to discuss the topics presented in class;
- Refrain from reading materials or working on other homework during class;
- Do NOT get up in the middle of class to go to the bathroom unless absolutely necessary;
- Be courteous to -and respectful of- your fellow students and professor.

Code of Student Conduct: *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 Code of Student Conduct and commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class, being immediately dropped from the class, and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

Note to 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 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Required Readings:

There are **two required texts** for this course. *MAKE SURE TO PURCHASE THE CORRECT EDITIONS:*

- **We the People: An Introduction to American Politics (Shorter 8th Edition, 2011, W.W. Norton and Co.)**
by Benjamin Ginsberg , Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir
ISBN: 978-0-393-93524-0
- **Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas (Second Edition 2012, CQ Press) by Ken Collier, Steven Galatas, Julie Harrelson-Stephens** **ISBN: 978-1-60426-638-2**

ELECTRONIC BOOKS (e-books) ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR THIS COURSE

Course Schedule:

Week 1 Introduction to Course; U.S. Congress

August 28, 30

Read:

- *Buy your books*
- We the People, Chapter 12

Week 2 U.S. Congress

September 4, 6

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 12

Week 3 Texas Legislature

September 11, 13

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 3

Week 4 U.S. Bureaucracy

September 18, 20

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 14

Week 5 Texas Bureaucracy; Exam 1

September 25, 27

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 4 (pages 120-129 ONLY)
- ***Exam #1 will take place at the beginning of class on THURSDAY, the 27th of September. You will have the entire class period to complete it. The exam will cover all of the material presented from the 28th of August through the 25th of September.***

Week 6 U.S. Judicial Branch

October 2, 4

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 15

Week 7 Texas Judicial System

October 9, 11

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 5

Week 8 Texas Governor

October 16, 18

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 4 (pages 101-120 ONLY)

Week 9 U.S. Presidency

October 23, 25

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 13

Week 10 U.S. Presidency; Exam 2

October 30, November 1

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 13
- *Exam #2 will take place at the beginning of class on THURSDAY, the 1st of November. You will have the entire class period to complete it. The exam will cover all of the material presented from the 2nd of October through the 30th of October.*

Week 11 U.S. & Texas Elections – Results and Implications

November 6, 8

Read:

- Readings will be emailed to the class. November 6 is Election Day. We will discuss the policy implications of the national and state election outcomes.

Week 12 Texas Policy

November 13, 15

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9

Week 13 Texas Policy; Thanksgiving Break

November 20 (Nov. 22 Thanksgiving Break)

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9

Week 14 U.S. Domestic Policy

November 27, 29

Read:

- Readings will be emailed to the class.

Week 15 U.S. Foreign Policy

December 4, 6

Read:

- Readings will be emailed to the class.

Prepare for Exam # 3.

- *Exam #3 will take place at the beginning of class on the 6th of December. You will have the entire class period to complete it. The exam will cover all of the material presented from the 6th of November through the 4th of December.*

Finals Week Make-Up Examination

December 10-14 (Exam date and time TBA)

- *If you have been approved to take the Make-up Exam, it will take place at the scheduled final exam date and time for this course. The make-up exam is comprehensive, covering material presented from August 28-December 4. You will have one hour and twenty minutes to complete it.*