

PRINCIPLES OF UNITED STATES AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT

PSCI 2301 01E
Spring 2013
9:30-10:45 AM T/Th
SS 134

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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, institutions of government, and the US Constitution.
2. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding political behavior, interaction between citizens and institutions of government in Texas, and the Texas constitution.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

The following book is required for the course.

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).

Texas Politics Multimedia Textbook. <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu>. Not necessary to purchase. Simply go to the website.

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

Switch off (or mute) personal electronic devices (cell phones, smartphones, iPads, iPods, mp3 players, and any kind) during class. If any of these devices are present in class, you will be asked to store them or leave the class immediately. Also 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.

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 this course for the rest of the term.

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%
Assignments	10%
Class Discussion	10%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%

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 basis.

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 (May 2). 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.

ASSIGNMENTS

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

CLASS DISCUSSIONS

The class discussion component comes from your overall involvement in discussion during the semester. You will have several opportunities to participate in class discussion. I will provide discussion questions and we will set aside classes for discussions.

EXAMINATIONS

There will be three exams. There is not a final exam in this course. 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 50 (or 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.

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. 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. It is the responsibility of the student to tell the instructor as soon as possible. It is also the responsibility of the student to make arrangements to take a make-up exam

within four days of the date the exam was missed. Make-up exams, at the discretion of the instructor, may be in a complete essay format or a short identification format.

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

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Because this is a web-enhanced course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

Regular access to a good quality computer

Regular, high-quality Internet access, specifically, a high-speed internet connection, not dial-up or a cellular phone. Students should use the eCollege tutorial to test the quality and speed of their browser and ensure that it is compatible with the system. Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.

Access and Navigation

Student will access this course using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students can access their online courses using through the myLeo portal or directly from the URL <http://online.tamuc.edu>. In order to login, students will need both their CWID and password to access the myLeo site. If you do not know what your CWID or password is, please contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000 or by e-mail, helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

eCollege Student Technical Support

Technical support for eCollege is provided around the clock (24 hours a day/7 days a week) so if students experience technical issues with the class page itself they should contact the student help desk for assistance. Students can access support through one of three following methods:

1. Chat support: Students can access real-time chat support from within the course page by clicking on “Tech Support” in the tool bar and then clicking on “Chat Online.”
2. Phone: Students can access phone support by calling the toll free phone number for eCollege, 1-866-656-5511.
3. E- mail: Student can request assistance by e-mail eCollege directly at helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. Please note that you might not receive a response for 24 hours if you use the e-mail option.

eCollege also has extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the ‘Help’ button on the toolbar.

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 2301-01E” 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.

Jan. 15

Introduction, Overview, and Organizational Meeting

Jan. 17, 22, 24 & 29

Principles of Politics (Lowi Ch. 1)

Jan. 31, Feb. 5 & 7

US Constitution (Lowi Ch. 2)

Feb. 12

Texas Constitution (Media Textbook: The Constitution)

Feb. 14 & 19

Federalism (Lowi Ch. 3)

Feb. 21

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

Feb. 26

Exam 1

Feb. 28 & March 5

Civil Liberties (Lowi Ch. 4)

March 7

Civil Rights (Lowi Ch. 5)

March 12 & 14

Spring Break

March 19, 21 & 26

Political Parties (Lowi Ch. 12)

March 28

Exam 2

April 2 & 4

Interest Groups (Lowi Ch. 13)

April 9

Texas Political Parties and Interest Groups (Media Textbook: Political Parties and Interest Groups)

April 11 & 16

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

April 18 & 23

Elections and Campaigns (Lowi Ch. 11)

April 25

Texas Elections (Media Textbook: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections)

April 30

Special Reading

May 2

Exam 3

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb. 26 (Tue) Exam 1

March 28 (Thr) Exam 2

March 29 (Fri) Last day to drop the class

May 2 (Thr) Exam 3