PSCI 2301.001: Principles of United States and Texas Government

Spring 2013 – MWF (10:00 – 10:50) BA 257

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Office Hours: MWF 12:00am – 1:00am, 2:00 – 3:00 or by appointment

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

Required Texts: Both will be used. Reserved copies available in the library.

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, elections and the economy. 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, 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.

**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 = 20%
- Exam 2 = 20%
- Exam 3 = 20%
- Attendance and Participation: 10%
- Presentation = 15%*
• Pop Quizzes/Short Writing Assignments**: 15%
• NO EXTRA CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN!!!

*Guidelines for Presentations will be given in class.

**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 May 3 during regular class time. This means that if you took both exams, then this is a free study day for the Third Exam. 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 BEFORE the last week of classes.

**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. **DO NOT USE PHONES, IPODS, ETC DURING CLASS!!!**
7. **Respect the political opinions of your classmates, but do not be afraid to engage in discussion.**

*Random quizzes will be given at the Instructors discretion for violations.

**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**

January 14 - 18; Chapter 2 US, Chapter 1 TX and the Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation (located in the back of US book)

January 21 - 25; Chapter 3 US, Chapter 2 TX (39-59) – Foundations of Government

January 28 – February 1; Chapter 4 US – Civil Liberties

February 4 - 8; Continued

February 11 – 15; Chapter 5 US – Civil Rights

February 18 - 20; Continued

February 22 - **EXAM I**

February 25 – March 1; Chapter 10 US – Public Opinion

March 4 – 8; Continued

March 11-15; **SPRING BREAK!**

March 18 – 22; Chapter 13 US – Groups & Interests

March 25 – 29; Chapter 14 US – The Media

April 1 - 5; Continued – movie “Patriocracy”

April 8 – 10; **Exam II**

April 12; – **NO CLASS!**

April 15 – 17; **Presentations!!**

April 22; – Guest Lecture; Local Government, read Commerce City Charter

April 24 – 26; The Economy

April 29; – May 1; Chapter 12 US, Chapter 8 TX – Political Parties

May 3; – Make up Exams

May 6 – 10; **Exam III (non-comprehensive; see Exam schedule.**