United States and Texas Government: Institutions and Policies
[PSCI 2302 US/TX Gov; INSTS & POLS]
Spring 2013
Tuesdays/Thursdays (3:30-4:45pm)
BA 243

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Office Hours: T/Th 1:00pm-2:00pm, W 3:45pm-4:45pm 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 recent 2012 elections.

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,
Translation Devices
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 81% of your grade (each exam is worth 27%). 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. **Signing in a student who is not present or a asking a student to sign you in when you are absent constitutes academic dishonesty (see p.3).** 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 4% 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.
Grades:
Your grade in this course will be determined by the criteria listed below. The following scale will be used to determine your grade:

- Exam #1 (February 14): 27%
- Exam #2 (March 28): 27%
- Exam #3 (May 2): 27%
- Attendance: 10%
- Participation: 5%
- Pop Quizzes/Short Writing Assignments: 4%

   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), signing the attendance sheet for a student who is absent (or asking another student to sign you in when you are absent), 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:

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and policy development and implementation of the government of the United States.

2. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and state policy development and implementation of the state of Texas.

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, Translation devices, 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@tamu-commerce.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  
January 15, 17  
Read:  
  - *Buy your books*  
  - *We the People, Chapter 12*

**Week 2**  U.S. Congress  
January 22, 24  
Read:  
  - *We the People, Chapter 12*

**Week 3**  Texas Legislature  
January 29, 31  
Read:  
  - *Lone Star Politics, Chapter 3*

**Week 4**  U.S. Bureaucracy  
February 5, 7  
Read:  
  - *We the People, Chapter 14*

**Week 5**  U.S. Bureaucracy; Exam 1  
February 12, 14  
Read:  
  - *We The People, Chapter 14*  
  - *Exam #1 will take place at the beginning of class on THURSDAY, the 14th of February. You will have the entire class period to complete it. The exam will cover:*  
    - *We The People, Chapter 12 and 14*  
    - *Lone Star Politics, Chapter 3*

**Week 6**  U.S. Presidency  
February 19, 21  
Read:  
  - *We The People, Chapter 13*

**Week 7**  U.S. Presidency; Texas Governor  
February 26, 28  
Read:  
  - *We The People, Chapter 13*  
  - *Lone Star Politics, Chapter 4*
Week 8  Texas Bureaucracy  
March 5, 7  
Read:  
• Lone Star Politics, Chapter 4

Week 9  SPRING BREAK (No Classes)  
March 12, 14  
Read:  
• Nothing.

Week 10  U.S. Judicial Branch  
March 19, 21  
Read:  
• We The People, Chapter 15

Week 11  U.S. Judicial Branch; Exam 2  
March 26, 28  
Read:  
• We The People, Chapter 15  
• Exam #2 will take place at the beginning of class on THURSDAY, the 28th of March. You will have the entire class period to complete it. The exam will cover:  
  o We The People, Chapters 13 and 15  
  o Lone Star Politics, Chapters 4

Week 12  Texas Judicial Branch  
April 2, 4  
Read:  
• Lone Star Politics, Chapter 5

Week 13  Texas Judicial Branch; Texas Policy  
April 9, 11  
Read:  
• Lone Star Politics, Chapter 5  
• Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9

Week 14  Texas Policy  
April 16, 18  
Read:  
• Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9
Week 15  U.S. Domestic Policy
April 23, 25
Read:
  • Readings will be emailed to the class.

Week 16  U.S. Foreign Policy
April 30, May 2
Read:
  • Readings will be emailed to the class.
Prepare for Exam # 3.
  • Exam #3 will take place at the beginning of class on THURSDAY, the 2nd of May. You will have the entire class period to complete it. The exam will cover:
    o Lone Star Politics, Chapters 5 and 9
    o Readings that were emailed to the class

Finals Week  Make-Up Examination
May 6-10 (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 January 15-April 30. You will have one hour and fifteen minutes to complete it.