

PSCI 511 Seminar in American Political Institutions

Professor Contact Information

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Fall 2013
Thurs: 1:00p-3:50p
SS-141

Office Hours

T 12:45-2:45
W 10-1

Course Description

This course is a seminar on the important research and methodological approaches to studying American political institutions. Specifically we consider the major three branches of government, Congress, the Executive, and the Judiciary, as well the important relationships between these institutions. Furthermore, we will consider the important theories pertaining to institutional analysis as well as review the methodological approaches used to study political institutions.

Learning Objectives

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding American political institutions.
2. Students will understand how to initiate an original research project on American political institutions.

Required Textbooks and Materials

1. Arnold, R. Douglas. 1992. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
2. Neustadt, Richard. 1991. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*. New York: Free Press
3. Segal, Jeffrey, and Spaeth, Harold. 2002. *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Shepsle, Kenneth and Bonchek, Mark. 1997. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions*. W. W. Norton & Company.
5. Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*.

Students will also receive a number of assigned articles to read each week. These readings will all be available online through the course site.

Course Requirements

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

1. Complete all course readings for each section of the course.
2. Regularly check the course site for announcement and updates.
3. Participate in class discussions
4. Participate in “Discussion Leader” assignments
5. Completes the Research Design paper and presentation.
6. Students will respect their fellow classmates and the instructor. This includes treating everyone with courtesy and respect in any and all correspondence for the course. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
7. 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. Any act of plagiarism on a midterm exam will result in score of 0 for the exam. Any act of plagiarism on a paper will result in on the paper. Instances of academic dishonesty may also be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant administrative penalties.
8. Students are expected to attend class regularly. Students who miss more than 2 course meetings will be administratively dropped from the class.
9. Students will comply with any and all eCollege technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access.
10. 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

Technology Requirements

Because this is 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 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 click 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.

Grading and Evaluation

Student performance will be based upon 3 categories of graded elements: midterm exams, discussion leader, and a research paper.

Exams: There are two scheduled midterm exams. These exams will be take home exams and due within 5 days of being assigned. Students will submit both a hard copy and electronic to the instructor of their answers. Each exam is worth 35% of the final grade.

Discussion Leader: Students will be assigned as discussion leaders during the semester for that week's assigned readings. Students will need to formulate discussion questions for the days assigned (these questions must be submitted in advance to the instructor). Each student likely will lead class discussion at least two times. A handout will be given to students detailing the expectations of this assignment during the second week of the semester. This task will be worth 10% of the final grade.

Research Design Paper: Students will create an original research design for an empirical project that fits within the field of American political institutions. This paper will include a literature review and research design for a topic of the students choosing. (Students do not necessarily have to execute the actual project for their paper). Students will present their research designs on the last day of class. This task will be worth 20% of the final grade.

Grade Break Down

Exam 1	35%
Exam 2	35%
Discussion Leader	10%
Research Paper	20%
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Final Grade	100%

Grading Schedule

Final grades will be based on a 100-point scale, using the following conversion.
A: 100-90 B: 89-80 C: 79-70 D: 69-65 F: Below 65

Additional Course & Instructor Policies

Make-up exams: If a student misses an exam, that student will receive a grade of 0 for the exam. Make-up exams will only be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Any request for a make-up exam must be in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence was legitimate. Such a request must be received within 5 calendar days of the missed exam date, unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and legal obligations. *Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given.*

Student Conduct & Discipline

The University has rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of business. It is the responsibility of each student to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations that govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the student handbook.

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.

Telephone and Email Use

The University prefers electronic mail as the primary means of communication between faculty, staff and students. Please use the e-mail address & telephone number provided on this syllabus for any and all correspondence. Questions about specific grades should be made in person during office hours.

Reading Assignments Calendar

Below is a general list of the reading topics for the semester. A detailed reading schedule will be made available on the class eCollege page.

Week	Topic
8/29	Introduction to the course
9/5	Studying institutions
9/12	methodologies
9/19	Congress: Elections
9/26	Congress: Process, committees and parties
10/3	Congress: Decision making & policy (Exam 1 Released)
10/10	President: Leadership
10/17	President: Process and Actions
10/24	Bureaucracy
10/31	Executive-Congressional Relations
11/7	Courts
11/14	Courts
11/21	Separation of Powers
11/28	No Class
12/5	Research Presentations

Please note that the instructor reserves the right to change any part of this syllabus as needed over the course of the semester. Any and all changes will be announced in class.