

# **PSCI 2301-01E: Principles of United States and Texas Government**

## **Fall 2013**

### **Instructor Contact Information:**

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Office Hours: Mon 1:00 to 3:00pm,  
Tuesday 3:00 to 4:30pm, Wed 1:00 to  
3:00pm or by appointment  
Classroom: BA 257  
Time: MWF 10:00-10:50am

### **Required Texts:**

Lowi, Theodore J., Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere.  
*American Government: Power and Purpose*, Full 12<sup>th</sup> edition with 2012 Election Update.  
New York: W.W. Norton.

ISBN: 978-0-39-392187-8

Halter, Gary M. *Government & Politics of Texas: A Comparative View*, 8th Edition. New York:  
McGraw-Hill.

ISBN: 978-0-07-337914-2

### **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 civil liberties and civil rights, constitutionalism, federalism, ideology, pluralism, political culture and socialization, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, republicanism, and voting and electoral politics.

### **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.

## Course Requirements:

This course consists of a series of lectures, readings, discussions, activities, and assessments which will assist you in achieving the learning objectives outlined above. The following requirements are designed to create a learning environment that will be conducive to the purpose of the course.

1. Students are required to attend all scheduled classes. Attendance will be taken every class. In accordance with University policy and procedures, students with more than 3 absences may be administratively dropped from the course. "Excused" absences will be granted for official university activities and medical issues, assuming the student submits the proper documentation (in person) within three days of the absence.
2. Students are required to complete all reading assignments and be prepared to discuss the readings in class.
3. Students are required to complete all assignments by the due date. Specific instructions for these assignments will be covered in class. Late assignments will not be accepted.
4. Students are required to complete two midterm examinations and one final examination. Specific dates for these examinations can be found in the course calendar at the end of this document.
5. This is a web enhanced class. Please see the section of this document entitled Technology Requirements.
6. Students are required to refrain from distracting behavior. Such behavior includes eating in class, arriving late for class, leaving during class, and being disrespectful to other students or the instructor. During class meetings, the use of electronic devices (i.e. cellular phones, recording devices, and etc.) will not be necessary or beneficial in pursuing the overarching objectives of the course. The use of these devices will also be considered distracting behavior; therefore, electronic devices must be put away during class meetings (exceptions may be granted for note taking with laptop computers). For further information concerning acceptable conduct and behavior, please see the University's rules and regulations explained in the student handbook. Failure to comply with behavioral requirements may result in referral to the Department Chair and/or the Dean for possible disciplinary action.

## Grading and Evaluation:

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Grades		Grading Scale	
Attendance	5%	90-100	A
Quizzes – Average of All	15%	80-89	B
Analytical Activities	15%	70-79	C
Exam 1	20%	60-69	D
Exam 2	20%	Below 60	F
Final Exam	25%		

## **Grading and Evaluation: (continued)**

- Attendance:** Attendance will be taken at every class meeting. Performance in this area is calculated as 5% of the student's final grade.
- Quizzes:** Quizzes will feature questions over the assigned readings for the corresponding week. Quizzes will be unannounced, and the number of quizzes administered will be at the instructor's discretion. Students should expect True/False questions, multiple choice questions, and/or short answer questions as the format. There will be no make-up quizzes. At the end of the semester, the lowest quiz grade for each student will be dropped. The final quiz average will be calculated as 15% of the student's final grade.
- Analytical Activities:** Students will be assigned three analytical activities (writing assignments) throughout the semester. These assignments require the student to apply one of the theoretical perspectives outlined in the textbook to current events concerning US or Texas politics. Students will select and analyze a report from the website of a credible news source and explain how the story relates to topics covered in class. Students must write at least 300 words for each activity; detailed instructions will be covered in class. Average performance in this area is calculated as 15% of the student's final grade.
- Midterm Exams:** Students will complete two midterm examinations, each consisting of 50 multiple choice and true/false questions. Performance on each midterm exam is calculated as 20% of the student's final grade.
- Final Exam:** Students will complete one final examination consisting of 50 multiple choice and true/false questions. Performance on the final exam is calculated as 25% of the student's final grade.

## **Academic Honesty Policy:**

Students are expected to follow the norms and rules that govern academic integrity. No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Students will be held accountable according to University policies on this matter. Texas A&M University-Commerce (Procedures A13.12) defines academic dishonesty as follows: "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." All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported. Be aware that failure to comply with the University's academic honesty policy may result in significant penalties.

## **Additional Policies:**

- Make-up Exams:** If a student misses an exam, the resulting grade will be 0 for that particular exam. In accordance with the attendance policy and the documentation required to obtain an “excused” absence, students may be given the opportunity to complete a make-up exam at the discretion of the instructor. Students requesting the opportunity to take a make-up exam must do so in writing within 3 days of the missed exam. This statement does not guarantee the opportunity to take a make-up exam. If a make-up exam is approved, it will be given during finals week. No opportunity will be given to make up quizzes.
- Extra Credit:** Students may be given opportunities to earn extra credit points. If offered, these opportunities will be discussed in class. Extra credit opportunities to accommodate student specific circumstances will not be offered. Do not ask for extra credit opportunities.
- Changes/Amendments:** The instructor reserves the right to amend any part of this syllabus as needed throughout the course of the semester.

## **Technology Requirements:**

This is a web-enhanced course, meaning that this course uses components of eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University – Commerce. This also means that this is **not** an “online course,” but that some procedures are facilitated through the eCollege system. To access this course using eCollege go to <http://online.tamuc.edu>. You will need your CWID and password. If you do not know your CWID and password contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000, or email [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

The specific components of the eCollege system utilized in this class are:

- Gradebook – students will be able to track their progress in the eCollege “gradebook.”
- Dropbox – students will submit activities through the eCollege “dropbox.”
- Announcements – important announcements and communication will be posted through the eCollege “Announcements” component, as well as in class.
- Descriptions of assignments, a copy of this syllabus, and study guides will also be posted in eCollege.

### **Technology Requirements: (continued)**

The following information has been provided to assist you in preparing to use technology successfully in this course. Please note that these resources are available for use at the library. You will need:

- Internet access/connection – high speed recommended (not dial-up)

### **Technical Support:**

The instructor is not responsible for technical support or technical difficulties.

The University provides technical support in the use of eCollege through the student help desk which may be contacted 24 hours a day and seven days a week by the following:

- Phone: 1-866-656-6511
- Email: [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu)
- Also students may find assistance through the ‘Help’ or ‘Tech Support’ links on the course home page.

### **Student/Instructor Communication:**

Outside of class, the preferred mode of communication is in person (during office hours or by appointment) or through e-mail. All correspondence concerning grades must take place in person during office hours. All contact information is listed on the front page of this syllabus.

### **Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for person 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 132**

**Phone (903)886-5150 or (903)886-5835**

**Fax (903)468-8148**

**[StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)**

**Reading Assignments and Course Calendar:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assigned Reading/Reference</b>
1	1/13-1/17	Introduction to the Course - Making Sense of Government and Politics	Lowi Ch 1
2	1/20-1/24	Making Sense of Government and Politics (Continued)	Lowi Ch 2
3	1/27-1/31	U.S. Founding and Constitution <b>(First Activity Assigned)</b>	Lowi Ch 3
4	2/03-2/07	Federalism and the Separation of Powers	Lowi Ch 4
5	2/10-2/14	Civil Liberties	Lowi Ch 5
6	2/17-2/21	Civil Rights	Lowi Ch 10
7	2/24-2/28	Discussion and Review <b>Exam 1 (Friday 2/28)</b>	Lowi Ch 14
8	3/03-3/07	Public Opinion, Ideology, and Media <b>(Second Activity Assigned)</b>	Lowi Ch 11 and 12
9	3/10-3/14	<b>Spring Break</b> (No Class)	
10	3/17-3/21	Elections and Participation	Lowi Ch13
11	3/24-3/28	Political Parties and Interest Groups	
12	3/31-4/04	Discussion and Review <b>Exam 2 (Friday 4/04)</b>	Halter Ch 1
13	4/07-4/11	Intro to Texas Government <b>(Third Activity Assigned)</b>	Halter Ch 2
14	4/14-4/18	Texas Constitution & Texas in the American Federal System	Halter Ch 3 and 4
15	4/21-4/25	Political Parties and Interest Groups (Texas)	Halter Ch 5 and 6
16	4/28-5/02	Elections, Participation, and Campaigns (Texas)	
17	5/05-5/09	<b>Final Exam</b> (see university final exam schedule for date and time)	