

# **PSCI 2302 US & Texas Government: Institutions and Policies**

## **Section 05E**

### **Professor Contact Information**

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Spring 2014  
Location: SS-134  
Time: 11:00a-12:15p TTh

### Office Hours

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

### **Course Description**

This course is an examination of the United States and Texas political systems with emphasis on both political institutions and the roles they play in the creation and implementation of public policy. Topics considered include the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; bureaucracies; and public policies.

### **Learning Objectives**

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.

### **Required Textbooks and Materials**

The required text is *We the People*, 9th Texas Edition, by Lowi, Ginsberg, Weir, Tolbert. While earlier editions of this text are available, this is the required edition.

## **Course Requirements**

All students are required to meet the following expectations.

1. Students are expected to attend class having completed course readings for each class meeting, as assigned in this syllabus, and prepared to discuss the readings.
2. Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis. Attendance will be taken during each class meeting, beginning on the second day of class. Students who are marked absent for more than 3 class meetings will be administratively dropped from the class. There will be no “excused” absences aside for official university activities or documented medical issues. It is the student’s responsible to provide documentation for such absences within 2 days of the absence.
3. This course is a blended course which means that some assessment and supplemental reading assignments will be distributed online through eCollege. Students are expected to regularly check the course site to keep up to date.
4. Students are expected to participate fully in the discussion assignments.
5. Students are expected to complete all of the assigned quizzes.
6. Students are expected to take each of the scheduled Midterm Exams.
7. Students should be respectful of their fellow classmates and the instructor by refraining from distracting behavior such as talking, eating, passing notes or using cell phones/pagers. Students who choose to use laptops in class should only use them for class related purposes such as note taking. For a first offense of these policies, students who display unruly behavior will be asked to cease and desist. For a second, the offending student will be asked to leave the classroom for the remainder of the day. For additional offenses, students will be referred to the Department Chair and/or Dean for possible disciplinary proceedings. These expectations regarding respectful behavior also extend to both correspondence on the eCollege site and e-mail. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
8. Students are expected to 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 academic dishonesty on a midterm exam or quiz will result in a score of 0 for the exam or quiz. Any act of academic dishonesty on a Discussion Assignment will result in a 0 for the entire semester's Discussion Assignment grade. Instances of academic dishonesty may also be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant administrative penalties.
9. Students are expected to 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
- Students may need access to word processing software such as MS Word.
- Note that is the student's responsibility to ensure they meet these requirements. Aside from when the eCollege system is down, technical issues will not be accepted as a reason for failing to complete any course work.

## **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.org>. 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](mailto: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](mailto: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, quizzes and discussion assignments.

Exams:

Three midterm exams are scheduled below. All exams will include material from both the textbook and lecture and the scheduled dates for the exams are listed below on the calendar. Exams may include multiple choice and essay questions and will be taken in class. Students who arrive more than 10 minutes after the exam has started may be denied admittance to the exam or required to take an essay make-up exam at a later date. Each exam will count for 25% of the final average. Students will need to bring scantron forms, Form No. 2052, to all three exams, use a #2 pencil.

Quizzes:

Students will take weekly quizzes throughout the semester online. The final quiz average will count for 10% of the final average.

Discussion Assignments:

Students will participate in weekly discussion assignments using eCollege. More information about these assignments is listed below. Missed discussion assignments cannot be made up. Collectively these assignments are worth 15% of the final grade. The lowest single discussion assignment grade will be dropped.

Syllabus "Quiz"

Students can earn up to a 3 bonus points toward their final average by taking a syllabus quiz. This quiz is designed to ensure that students familiarize themselves with the requirements and expectations of the syllabus. It will open during the second week of the semester.

## **Grade Break Down**

Midterm Exam 1	25%
Midterm Exam 2	25%
Midterm Exam 3	25%
Discussion Assignments	15%
Quizzes	10%
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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

## **Midterm Exams**

Exam Format: Students will take three midterm exams that feature 50 multiple choice questions. 75 minutes are allotted for exam.

Midterm Exam One: 2/18

Covers Chapters 1, 2, 12, 13, 14 and Appendix Readings

Midterm Exam Two: 3/27

Covers Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18

Midterm Exam Three: 5/1

Covers Chapters 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

## Make-up Exams

If a student misses a midterm 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 made in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence was legitimate. Such a request must be received within 3 calendar days of the missed exam date, unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request during that time period. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and/or legal obligations. *Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given.*

Make-up exams will be exclusively essay format.

## **Quizzes**

Students will take weekly quizzes throughout the semester (except the week of exams) via the eCollege platform. These quizzes will feature 6-8 multiple choice and/or True/False questions and students will have 10 minutes to complete them. These quizzes will always open on Fridays at 9 AM and remain open for 24 hours. The lowest single quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

## **Discussion Assignments**

This graded component of the course will consist of 15 weekly discussions completed via the eCollege platform. Topics for the discussion assignments will be posted on Sunday each week at 9 AM. Each discussion thread will close at 11:30 PM on Friday that week. Regardless of the reason, there will be no make-up opportunities for discussion assignments and students will not receive any credit for posts made after the deadline.

Each student will randomly be assigned to a discussion group for the duration of the course. The instructor will create a discussion thread topic for each discussion group to which students are expected to compile a response.

Students will be graded upon two criteria. First, students are expected to submit an original response to the topic posted, answering all parts of the topic. Second, students are expected to respond to the posts of other students in their discussion group. Students should engage in conversation with their group members in a thoughtful discussion about the topic as well as their individual responses to the topic. Students should make a minimum of 5 posts during the week and these posts should not be made all on the same day during the final hours of the assignment time line.

Students will receive a grade between 0-3, with 3 being the highest, on each discussion assignment. (Students who do not participate will receive a 0) Grades will be based both upon the quality of the content of a student's posts, as well as the student's engagement with other students by responding to posts in the student's group. Posts that do not full answer the questions or do not respond posted will not receive full credit. Students who wait until the end of the time frame may receive a grade penalty

All content submitted for discussion assignments must be a student's original submission. Any material taken from another source, including the textbook, should include a proper citation. Material which is copied or pasted from any source will be considered plagiarism as discussed above in the Course Policies and Procedures section.

When the discussion assignment average is computed at the end of the semester, the student's lowest individual assignment score will be dropped. If a student completes all 15 assignments, the lowest score will be dropped. For students who do not complete all of the assignments, one score of 0 for a missing assignment will be dropped. The discussion assignment average will be a ratio of the number of points earned on each assignment divided by 42 (3 points X 14 assignments)

## **Additional Course & Instructor Policies**

Extra Credit: Aside from the Syllabus Quiz, there are no extra credit opportunities in this class.

## **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 E-mail 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 and Examination Calendar

Date	Topic	Readings (Chapter)
<i>January</i>		
14	Introduction to the Course & American Political Culture	1
16	Foundations and the Constitution	2, A1-A24
21	Foundations and the Constitution	2, A1-A24
23, 28, 30	The Congress	12
<i>February</i>		
4, 6	The Presidency	13
11, 13	The Bureaucracy	14
18	<b>Midterm Exam One</b>	
20, 25	The Judiciary	15
27	Economic Policy	16
<i>March</i>		
4	Economic Policy	16
6	Social Policy	17
10-14	<b>Spring Break</b>	
18	Social Policy	17
20, 25	Foreign Policy	18
27	<b>Midterm Exam Two</b>	
<i>April</i>		
1	Texas Constitution	20
3	Texas Legislature	23
8	Texas Legislature	23
10	Texas Executive	24
15	Texas Executive	24
17	Texas Judiciary	25
22	Texas Judiciary	25
24	Local Government in Texas	26
29	Public Policy in Texas	27
<i>May</i>		
1	<b>Midterm Exam Three</b>	

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**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.**