

Political Science 2301

United States and Texas Government: Principles of U.S. and Texas Government

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Office Hours: 8 a.m.-9:00 a.m. M-Th
and by appointment

Required texts:

Ackerman, Erin and Benjamin Ginsberg. *A Guide to the United States Constitution*, 2nd ed. Norton. ISBN: 9780393912883

Ginsberg, Benjamin et.al. *We The People: And Introduction to American Politics*, 8th Essentials Edition. New York. W.W. Norton [ISBN: 9780393935653]

Halter, Gary M. *Government and Politics of Texas: A Comparative View*, 8th Edition. New York. McGraw Hill [ISBN: 978007337898]

In addition, you will be required to access the internet to read primary documents as assigned for a more complete understanding of the American political system. You will also need to have access to at least one major news source to keep up with current events and fulfill the requirements of the course as there will be current events quizzes given. Your professor reserves the right to assign additional readings as required.

Course Description: This course is a survey of the institutions and policies of the American and Texas regimes. It is organized historically. That is to say that we cannot understand the way things without some reference to the circumstances that have created and shaped the American republic.

Course Objectives: In addition to developing critical thinking skills, this course is designed to give you an understanding of the interaction between circumstance and institutions by which the American experiment in self government with justice occurs. It will also give you a broad overview of the historical events that have helped to shape the regime into what it is today in terms of public policy and the ends pursued by it.

With this in mind, the following general learning objectives will be achieved:

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and processes of the government of the United States.
2. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and processes of the state of Texas.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken daily and you would be well-advised to attend every class—if for no other reason than the fact that experience demonstrates that you will not do well if you are not here. Students who have more than two absences will have five points deducted from their final grade for each absence over two. You may use your two absences for any purpose you choose. When an absence happens to coincide with an examination or quiz, that examination or quiz cannot be made-up. Furthermore, if you do miss class, it is your responsibility to prevail upon your classmates to share their materials with you.

Of course attendance is more than merely being in your seat on time (although timeliness is a virtue). You are expected to come to class prepared for class. Readings assigned for particular dates should be completed prior to coming to class. You will have quizzes over the readings and current events, so it is important that you arrive at class on time and that you have adequately prepared for class prior to attending.

You should not arrive late to class. Most importantly do NOT be late for exams! Tardiness for a quiz or exam will result in not receiving credit for it. Needless to say, this might have a deleterious effect on your final grade.

Finally, if you need to leave the class for any reason while it is in session, please make sure to take your belongings with you, as you will not be readmitted to class on that day. If you have to use the restroom you may do so before and after class, but not during. If you do have to leave class, you will, of course, be marked “absent” for that day.

Electronics Policy: We are fortunate to live in a technologically advanced time. With that said, the following guidelines must be observed. First, laptop computers are wonderful things—but their use is forbidden in this class during our time together. Do not, under any circumstances, engage in “social networking” during class.

With regard to cellular telephones: one person in this class has permission to leave his phone on during class—and it is not you. It is entirely possible that you will survive for an hour and half without using your telephone. Your instructor reserves the right to answer any telephone that rings during class (and trust me—you do not want him to do it). Repeat violations will result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Texting during class is prohibited and will likewise result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in your being removed from the course.

Conduct: “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” What this means in terms of our class is that from time to time we will discuss controversial issues. During these discussions, you are expected to conduct yourself with civility and politeness (remember, politeness is the first form of politics). A university education is a privilege and should not be abused through disruptive and impolite behavior.

Grading: Your grade will consist of the following elements:

Exam One:	100 points
Exam Two:	100 points
Exam Three:	100 points
Quizzes and Reaction Papers	100 points

The grading scale for computation of final grades is as follows:

A	364-400 points
B	324-363 points
C	284-323 points
D	240-283 points
F	0-239 points

Course Calendar

(This calendar represents the best estimate of our progress. Your instructor reserves the right to edit the calendar as necessary. This would include adding or deleting readings as required by the exigencies of the class.)

- June 2: Introduction to the Course
Thinking About Politics
- June 3: Human Nature and the Meaning of Politics (Plato, “Allegory of the Cave”, Aristotle selections, and Locke selections)
- June 4: The Colonial Experience (The Mayflower Compact, The Fundamental Orders of Connecticut)
- June 5: The Declaration of Independence
- June 9: Theories of the New Science
- June 10: The Articles of Confederation
- June 11: Exam One (first class hour) (Ginsberg, Chapter 1; Halter, Chapter 1)
- June 12: Constructing a New Order: The Federal Convention of 1787
- June 16: Publius and the Problem of Self Government with Justice (*The Federalist*, Number 10)
- June 17: Theories of Representation (readings from *The Federalist* and Edmund Burke, “Speech to the Electors of Bristol”
The Centrality of “The Law” (Aristotle, *Politics* and Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”)
- June 18: Framing the Regime: Structure, Form, and Human Nature (*The Federalist*, Number 51)
- June 19: The Democratization of the American Political System (Abraham Lincoln, “The Gettysburg Address”)
- June 23: Exam Two (first class hour) (Ginsberg, Chapters 2 and 3; Halter, Chapters 2 and 4)
- June 24: The Courts and the Development of Constitutional Order (*The Federalist*, Number 78; Marbury v. Madison)
- June 25: Parties, Media and Public Opinion (Ginsberg, Chapter 7)
- June 26: Pluralism and the Politics of Interest (Ginsberg, Chapter 8)

June 30: The Development of the Texas Constitution

July 1: The Texas Constitutional Order

July 2: Prospects for the American Experiment in Self Government with Justice

July 3: Exam Three (Ginsberg, Chapters 5 and 6; Halter Chapters 5 and 6)

Desiderata: Your professor reserves the right to edit or change this syllabus based upon the exigencies of the class. You will be notified in the event of any changes that are required.

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

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Summer I, 2014
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Student statement of understanding:

I, _____, have read the syllabus and understand the guidelines and policies therein. I understand that this contract is a condition of the course and that if I do not sign it and turn it in I will be dropped from the class or receive an “F” as my final grade. Furthermore, I understand my obligation to adhere to the guidelines and policies contained in the syllabus and that failure to do so may result in my being dropped from the course or receiving a grade of “F”.

X _____

Date: _____