



**PRINCIPLES OF UNITED STATE AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT**  
PSCI 2301 02W  
Summer I 2014

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**Course Information**

**Course Hour and Classroom:** Web Based Class

**Textbook required:**

Lowi et al. 2013.

*American Government: Power and Purpose*

(Full Twelfth Edition, 2012 Election Update, with policy chapters).

New York: W.W. Norton & Company (ISBN: ISBN 978-0-393-92187-8).



Texas Politics Multimedia Textbook. <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu>.

Not necessary to purchase. Simply go to the website.

*Textbook Readings.* Given the vast amount of information available in the course, we will not have enough time to “cover” all of the readings in the assigned books—chapter by chapter. Consequently, this course will depend on you to **complete all assigned readings** and be prepared to discuss them in online class in a timely manner. Please note that all assigned readings are critically important for successfully completing exams and class activities.

**Course Description**

The specific purpose of this course is to provide you with a working knowledge of the important components and processes of both the United States and Texas governments. My goals for this course are twofold. First, I seek to provide you with a strong factual background on important political institutions and processes at both the national and state level of government. A basic working knowledge of government is an important for instrumental reasons (your academic achievement) as well as for intrinsic reasons (being a good citizen). My second goal is to introduce you to the “scientific” side of political science. Notably, I want you to understand how political scientists seek to develop and test theories of the principles of American political system and political behavior and events. Your textbook does a wonderful job of developing a theoretical frame with which we can use to think about politics in a focused manner. Ultimately, I seek to provide you with the tools to use as both citizens and scholars.

**Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this course

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.

## Course Policies and Procedures

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

1. Complete all course readings for each module of the course.
2. Regularly check the course site for announcement and updates.
3. Complete assigned readings.
4. Take each of the scheduled exams.
5. Participate fully in the class discussion.
6. Complete class activities.
7. 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.
8. 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. Violations of academic integrity/honesty while carrying out academic assignments may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a zero on the particular work in question, receive an "F" in the course and may result in significant administrative penalties.
9. Students will comply with any and all eCollege technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access.
10. Failure to complete two of any discussion, assignment, or activity will be considered "excessive" absenteeism and the student will be administratively dropped from the class.

## Technology Requirements

Because this is an online course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

1. Regular access to a good quality computer.
2. 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. It is strongly recommended that students perform a "Browser Test" prior to the start of this course. To launch a browser test, login in to eCollege, click on the 'myCourses' tab, and then select the "Browser Test" link under Support Services.
3. Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer and access to Microsoft Word or to word processing software that they can save files in "Microsoft Word" compatible style.
4. Students will need access to Adobe Acrobat Reader that can open and print documents in the form of pdf.

### 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 clicking 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.

### **Access and Navigation**

This course will be facilitated using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.tamuc.edu/>.

You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000 or by email [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

## **Student Conduct & Discipline**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. It is the responsibility of each student to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*).

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

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](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)

## **Communications**

It is very important to go to this online course 4-5 times each week to: (1) read new announcements, (2) check your university email, (3) review activities and assignments, (4) check the **Schedule of activities and assignments**, and (5) communicate as needed with your instructor and class members.

### **Submitting assignments**

You are responsible for attaching the correct assignment to the correct folder in the Dropbox. Once you submit your assignment, you should always click on the Outbox to make sure the assignment is there. You can tell if it is attached in at least two ways: (1) touch the little document icon (symbol for an attachment) with your cursor and the name of your document will appear or (2) click on the little icon and

actually open and view the document. Submitting an incorrect document, a blank document, or no document is counted as failure to complete the assignment on time.

Each assignment or work should include your name in the content. Also make your computer file name, when attaching to the Dropbox, using your last name and a specific assignment (i.e., Choi Activity1.docx).

### **Announcements**

Announcements are posted often in the course. When you go to the course, you should first read any announcements that have been posted since you were last in the class.

### **Email Correspondence**

Email from me is sent to your University email account. It is important to go to MyLeo mail regularly to check for messages.

If you need to contact me, email is the best way to reach me. Please end your message with your first and last name so I know who you are. Unless otherwise announced, I will do my best to respond within 48 hours except weekends.

## **Grading and Evaluation**

This course occurs in a digital learning environment designed in module format. Each module runs around a week during which time you will be expected to read assigned material, participate in discussions, complete class activities, and take midterm exams. Each module opens and closes on a certain date and once a module closes it will not be opened again. Therefore you need to demonstrate a level of time management that allows you to meet deadlines as posted.

### **Midterm Exams: 200 Points (50% of total course grade)**

#### **Exam Format**

Students will take two midterm exams that feature 50 multiple choice questions. 90 minutes are allotted for exam.

#### **Exam Times and Dates**

Midterm exams will be taken online and are scheduled on the dates listed below. The midterm exam will begin at **11:59 PM** on a Tuesday and will close 48 hours later at **11:59 PM** on Thursday.

#### Midterm Exam #1

Opens 6/10

Due 6/12

Covers Chapters 1, 2, 3, Media (Texas) The Constitution

#### Midterm Exam #2

Opens 6/24

Due 6/26

Covers Chapters 12, 13, 11, Media (Texas) Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Voting, Campaign, and Elections

**Technical Issues:** Students will take two midterm exams via the course page. Students are responsible for testing the compatibility of their own computers and software prior to starting the exam and must be sure to have a high speed internet connection to eliminate the chance of technical problems. Exams are timed and can only be taken once. Once the exam has begun, the allotted time will begin counting down and students will not be able to “pause” or put the exam time on hold, even if they disconnect from the course site or exam. Students should save their answers frequently by clicking on the “Save Answers” button. Students should not click the “Submit Test” button until they have completed the exam as it will not be possible to re-enter the exam once the test has been submitted. Students who encounter technical

problems as a result of failing to comply with these guidelines will not be given an opportunity to re-take or re-access an exam. Any technical problems should be immediately referred to the help desk.

### **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 2 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. Technical problems with accessing the course will not be considered a valid excuse for missing an exam unless it can be shown that the problem is the fault of the eCollege platform. *Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given.*

Make-up exams will be exclusively *essay format*.

### **Class Discussion: 100 Points (25% of total course grade)**

This is the second graded component of the course and will consist of four discussions. Topics for the discussion will be posted on **Friday each week at 9 AM**. Each discussion thread will close at **11:59 PM on Thursday next 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.

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 (one original post requiring 150 words in length). Second, students are expected to respond to the posts of other students in their discussion group (two peer responses requiring 100 words each in length). 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. These posts should not be made all on the same day during the final hours of the discussion time line.

Students will receive a grade 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 fully 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. **Discussion Posts cannot be made up. No late work accepted.**

- o Post your discussion answers to respond to the discussion questions  
[Possible points (15 points x 4 Modules) = 60 points]
- o Respond to classmates' postings  
[Possible points ((5 points x 2 responses) x 4 Modules) = 40 points]

See the Guidelines/Rubric for Discussion Answer and Guidelines/Rubric for Responding Peer's Posting for the evaluation criteria (Will be placed in Doc Sharing under Course Document).

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.

### **Class Activities: 75 points (19% of total course grade)**

You will have an opportunity to do a variety of class activities which will include the best practices in American and Texas politics areas. More specific information will be provided later.

- o Complete class activity [Possible points (25 points x 3 Modules) = 75 points]

## Summary of Assignments and Grading

Assignments	How Many	Point Value	Total Possible	Percent of Total
Midterm Exams	2	100	200 points	50%
Class Discussion	4	25	100 points	25%
Class Activities	3	25	75 points	18.8%
Self-Assessment	5	5	25 points	6.2%
Total			400 points	100%

## Grading Scale

Points	Grade	Standard
360-400	A	Superior
320-359	B	Above Average
280-319	C	Average Performance
240-279	D	Below Average
239 and Below	F	Unsatisfactory

### Late Work

**No late work accepted and work cannot be made up.** Technical difficulties of the student's equipment or internet provider are not excused. When such difficulties occur, students are expected to locate an alternative source for submitting assignments, e.g., neighbor, work place, public library, etc. Technical difficulties caused by the University or eCollege can be excused provided the student obtains documentation from technical support. Students should always have a back-up in mind for unexpected glitches in technology.

## Course Schedule

### Module 1 (June 2 – June 5)

Course Introduction  
Principles of Politics (Lowi Ch. 1)

Class Activity #1

### Module 2 (June 6 – June 12)

Foundations of the US and Texas  
US Constitution (Lowi Ch. 2)  
Federalism (Lowi Ch. 3)  
Texas Constitution (Media Textbook: The Constitution)

Exam #1  
Discussion #1

### Module 3 (June 13 – June 19)

Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Elections  
Political Parties (Lowi Ch. 12)  
Interest Groups (Lowi Ch. 13)  
Elections and Campaigns (Lowi Ch. 11)

Class Activity #2

Discussion #2

**Module 4 (June 20 – June 26)**

Texas Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Elections

Texas Political Parties (Media Textbook: Political Parties)

Interest Groups (Media Textbook: Interest Groups)

Texas Elections (Media Textbook: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections)

Exam #2

Discussion #3

**Module 5 (June 27 – July 2)**

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

Civil Liberties (Lowi Ch. 4)

Civil Rights (Lowi Ch. 5)

Class Activity #3

Discussion #4

√ Many class activities, discussions, and exams are due at 11:59 PM on Thursday, **EXCEPT Module 5**. They are due by 11:59 PM **on Wednesday**.

√ 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.