PSCI – 2301.06E & 2301.07E
PRINCIPLES OF U.S. & TEXAS GOVERNMENT
COURSE SYLLABUS: FALL 2014

Instructor: Mr. Jesús A. Sosa
Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences, #128
Office Hours: MWF 8:00am – 8:50am & 10:00am – 10:50am, or by appointment
Office Phone: (903) 886-5317 (Departmental Office)
Email Address: **Jesus.Sosa@tamuc.edu**

COURSE INFORMATION

Textbook & Materials Required:
Shea, Green, and Smith, *Living Democracy: 2012 Election Edition*, 4th Edition, Pearson, ISBN-10: 0-205-88390-7 / ISBN-13: 978-0-205-88390-5

This textbook is MANDATORY and it is important that you have your own copy by September 3, 2014. The usage of eBooks during class will be allowed for discussion purposes only. (Please refer to the Laptops, Tablets, and Other Electronic Devices section of this syllabus for further explanation on this matter).

You will also need to purchase a pack of Scantrons (Form No. 882-E, Green Color)

I suggest you purchase a 3-ring binder/folder of your choice to keep all graded assignments organized, black/blue ink pens, #2 pencils for scantrons, and loose-leaf paper to write on. Any additional materials, such as reading materials, videos, etc… will be supplied by the instructor during class or electronically through eCollege.

Course Description
This course is an introductory examination of the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices in the governance of the United States and Texas. Specifically, this course will focus on introducing the historical, social, political, cultural, and global forces that continue to shape our understanding of the relationship between the people and government. Topics considered include civil liberties, civil rights, constitutionalism, federalism, ideology, pluralism, political culture and socialization, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, republicanism, and finally voting and electoral politics.

Please note that you will not be taught what to think about political issues in this course. Rather, you will be provided with the knowledge base to determine how to think about political issues for yourself.

Student Learning Outcomes

Critical Thinking
1. Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.

Communication

2. In written, oral, and/or visual communication, A&M-Commerce students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.

Personal Responsibility

3. Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.

Social Responsibility

4. Students will recognize and understand the roles of diversity in society.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance:

Your attendance in class is mandatory. Students are required to attend all scheduled classes, and therefore, attendance will be taken during every class. In accordance with University policy and procedures, students with more than three (3) absences may be administratively dropped from the course. "Excused" absences will be granted for official university activities and severe medical issues, assuming the student submits proper documentation within a timely manner.

After your third unexcused absence, I will deduct 4 points per missed class period (2 points from your attendance grade and 2 points from your participation grade).

Participation & Current Events:

Students should remain informed of current events throughout this course, especially in current political events involving the U.S. and/or Texas. We will be discussing current events in class and it helps when students are aware of these events. I will advise you to acquire your news from (mostly) unbiased news outlets such as BBC News, CSPAN, Reuters, and Al Jazeera America (all free online). TV News Networks such as CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News are fun to watch occasionally, but they are mostly entertainment shows about the news (just like The Daily Show, but without the comedy); please use caution and your best discretion when you view them.

Exams and Quizzes:

In this course, all students are required to take **four** (**4**) exams and **four** (**4**) quizzes . Each exam is worth 150 points and each quiz is worth 38 points out of a possible total of 1000 points for the overall class. There is NOT a final exam in this course. Any missed exams or quizzes will receive **zero** (**0**) points.

If you have a **legitimate reason** for missing an exam (e.g. severe illness or injury requiring professional medical care, emergencies in your immediate family, participation in official university activities, legal obligations) **AND** you have **supporting documentation** for your absence, then you may **request** to take that exam at a later date.

Requests for taking the exam due to an excused absence must be submitted electronically. You must submit documentation to me explaining and substantiating why the absence was legitimate. An approval to take the make-up exam will be based solely upon the professor's evaluation of your request and supporting documentation. You may only make up **one** (**1**) missed exam. Any other missed exams will receive scores of zero (0), irrespective of the circumstances.

Late or missed quizzes will not be accepted, irrespective of the circumstances.

Class Project (Essay):
There will be a class project which shall consist of a simulation of Congress and a research essay. I will provide you with specific instructions and further information about this later on in the semester.

Grading Rubric:
Exams: 600 points (4 exams, each one worth 150 points)
Project: 150 points (Attendance of simulation and research essay)
Quizzes: 150 points (4 quizzes, each one worth 38 points)
Attendance: 50 points
Participation: 50 points

TOTAL : 1000 points

The grading scale used for this course is as follows:

A = 895 - 1000 points
B = 795 - 894 points
C = 695 - 794 points
D = 595 - 694 points
F = 594 points or less

NOTE: Point values are final and final grades will not be rounded or "bumped" even if a student is one (1) point away from the next grade level. Here is a chart you can use to help you keep track of your points earned in class. Add them all up at the end to find out your expected final grade in the class.

Quiz 1:	**Quiz 2:**	**Quiz 3:**	**Quiz 4:**
Exam 1:	**Exam 2:**	**Exam 3:**	**Exam 4:**
Project:	**Attendance:**	**Participation:**	**Bonus:**
			TOTAL POINTS: _____

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS, ACCESS, AND NAVIGATION

Word Processing Program:
You will need regular access to a computer equipped with a reliable word processing program such as Microsoft Office Word or Apple's Pages. You may also use free internet programs such as Open Office, though those are not recommended. If you do not have any software readily available on a computer of your own, please make use of our library computer lab or purchase a copy of the program at a discount from the school bookstores. Any assignments submitted MUST be saved in Rich Text Format (.rtf) or Word Document.

University Email:
Be sure that you can access the email account the university has on record for you. It is the primary means by which I will communicate last-minute class information and updates with you.

eCollege:
Please make sure you have access to eCollege. This service will be used to disseminate documents and to post grades on assignments so that you have the most up to date calculations on your current grade in the course.

Since this is a web-enhanced course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

1. Have regular access to a good quality computer.
2. Have regular high-quality Internet access (specifically, a high-speed internet connection), not dial-up or on 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.
3. Students will need access to an Internet browser that meets eCollege qualifications

Access and Navigation:
Student will access the web-enhanced portion of this course using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students can access their online courses through the myLeo portal or directly from the URL: **http://online.tamuc.edu** 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 four 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 at 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.
4. **eCollege**: eCollege will also have extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the 'Help' button on the toolbar.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Please feel free to stop by my office during office hours should you need to speak with me on a one-on-one basis to discuss your grades or clarification of the material in the course. You may also send me an email or leave me a message at the Department of Political Science's Main Office (located in Ferguson Social Sciences #152). If you cannot make my in-person office hours but wish to set up an appointment to do so, please send me an email so we can arrange a time and date that is mutually acceptable for both of us to meet on. My contact details can be found at the beginning of this syllabus.

Students must understand that if they have difficulties in the course, I will do my best to help them; however, if you do not approach me about your difficulties, I will assume everything is fine and you are satisfied with your earned points to date. It is necessary that students inform me of any concerns or questions immediately after these develop. If you wait until an assignment is due or towards the end of the semester to seek assistance, there is little that can be done to compensate for your earlier difficulties.

CLASS AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Cell Phones, Laptops, Tablets, and Other Electronic Devices

Remember that when you enter my classroom, you will be there to enhance your knowledge about our course and nothing else. I will allow the usage of electronic devices such as laptops, tablets, and eReaders in my classroom so long as you ONLY use it for class relates purposes (such as taking lecture notes or viewing your textbook if you are using an electronic copy).

Students should also know that it is **unacceptable** in this classroom to do the following:

- Use laptops/notebooks for purposes other than those related to this course.
- Students may not use any type of recording devices during class to record class lectures.
- Place one's head on the desk to rest or sleep. If a student feels ill then he/she should excuse himself/herself from the classroom.
- No headphones!
- Use profanity during class, class related events, or within any class assignments
- Make or receive cell phone calls, text messages, or engage in any sort of outside social communication during class. All phones, messaging devices, and mp3 players need to be placed on "silent" mode or turned off and put away during class.
    - If someone should fail to place their devices on silent and he/she causes a disruption during class, the entire class will take a pop quiz.
    - If I catch a student using the devices permitted in class for any purpose other than those class-related, he/she will lose these privileges for the remainder of the semester and will be asked to leave the class with an absentee mark!

The professor reserves the right to ask a student to leave the classroom for violating any of the provisions listed above or for causing a disruption to the class.

Student Conduct & Civility

All students are expected to observe basic tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive leaning environment (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct). Violation of the conduct policy will not be tolerated. All students are to respect the opinions and ideas of their classmates. You will not be allowed to intimidate, yell, make obscene gestures, etc. towards another classmate who is expressing their thoughts on a subject. If you do so, you will be asked to immediately leave the classroom and will be subject to university policies regarding student conduct

Academic Dishonesty

-Definition-

In all courses, it is expected that all work that you do and submit is your own. It is the policy of the University and I that no form of plagiarism, cheating, collusion or any other form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Plagiarism is defined as deliberately taking the words or ideas of someone else and passing them off as your own. Cheating is obtaining unauthorized assistance on any assignment. Collusion is the selling of academic products with the intention that they be

submitted to satisfy an academic requirement. Students are expected to uphold and support the highest academic standards at all times.

-Punishment-

Any student found guilty of academic dishonesty will automatically fail the assignment in question, and the grade cannot be made up. The student's academic advisor and/or academic major department head will also be notified of any such infraction. With regard to the severity of the infraction, the instructor reserves the right to fail from the course any student caught plagiarizing or cheating. Such students will also be subject to disciplinary action by the University (See Texas A&M University-Commerce's Code of Student Conduct 5.b. [1,2,3]). If you are still unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please ask me before committing this error in judgment.

Writing Center

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the resources of the Writing Center for assistance with drafting their papers. The Writing Center is a resource that you pay for, so be sure to get your money's worth from it. They will not write your paper, but they will tremendously help you improve your writing skills. If you use the Writing Center, please plan ahead as they can only help you if you seek them in advance in order for you to have time to incorporate their suggestions into your final paper(s). Visit:

www.tamuc.edu/academics/colleges/humanitiesSocialSciencesArts/departments/literatureLanguages/writingCenter/default.aspx

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 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Instructor's Rights

As instructor, I reserve the right to amend and/or modify this syllabus at any given moment. Any changes made will be announced to the students in class and through email.

TENTATIVE READINGS AND COURSE SCHEDULE**

***Subject to change at any given time. Please check eCollege and your school email regularly for any possible changes made.*

Mon., Aug. 25→ Class Introductions, Overview of the Course, What to Expect…

Wed., Aug. 27→ Syllabus Review (PLEASE HAVE A PRINTED COPY OF THIS SYLLABUS IN CLASS)

Fri., Aug. 29→ Chapter 1

Mon., Sept. 1→ **NO CLASS! – University is closed because of Labor Day**

Wed., Sept. 3 & Fri., Sept. 5→ Chapter 2

Mon., Sept. 8 → Chapter 3

Wed. Sept. 10→ Chapter 4

Fri., Sept. 12→ Chapter 5

Mon., Sept. 15→ Review for Exam 1 --- **Quiz #1 is due at the start of class**

Wed., Sept. 17→ **EXAM I**

Fri., Sept. 19→ Intro. to Three Branches of Government, Class Project, and Exam I Results

Mon., Sept. 22 & Wed., Sept. 24→ Chapter 6

Fri., Sept. 26→ Congress Simulation

Mon., Sept. 29 → Congress Simulation

Wed., Oct. 1→ Congress Simulation

Fri., Oct. 3→ Congress Simulation

Mon., Oct. 6→ Congress Simulation

Wed., Oct. 8 → Chapters 7 & 8

Fri., Oct 10→ **NO CLASS! Please use this time to work on your essay**

Mon., Oct. 13→ Chapter 9

Wed., Oct. 15 & Fri., Oct. 17→ Chapter 10

Mon., Oct. 20→ Exam II Review --- **Quiz #2 is due at the start of class**

Wed., Oct. 22→ **EXAM II**

Fri., Oct. 24→ Excerpts from Jon Stewart's "America: The Book" (PDF) and Exam II Results

Mon., Oct. 27→ Chapter 11--- **Class project essay is due!**

Wed., Oct. 29→ Chapter 12

Fri., Oct. 31→ Chapter 13

Mon., Nov. 3 → Chapter 14

Wed., Nov. 5→ Chapter 15

Fri., Nov. 7→ Review for Exam III --- **Quiz #3 is due at the start of class**

Mon., Nov. 10→ **Exam III**

Wed., Nov. 12→ ↓ Introduction to Texas Government ↓ and Exam III Results

Fri., Nov. 14→ Political Culture of Texas

Mon., Nov. 17→ The Texas Constitution

Wed., Nov. 19→ The Texas Legislature

Fri., Nov. 21→ Texas Executive Branch and the Texas Judiciary

Mon., Nov. 24→ Texas Political Parties

Wed., Nov. 26→ **NO CLASS! Please use this time to work on quiz #4**

Fri., Nov 28→ **NO CLASS! The university is closed due to Thanksgiving break**

Mon., Dec. 1→ Texas Voting Turnout and the Future of Texas Politics --- **Quiz #4 is due at the start of class**

Wed., Dec. 3→ Texas on the Brink

Fri., Dec. 5→ Review for Exam IV

Wed., Dec. 10→ **Exam IV** (please note that this is **NOT** a final exam)

MWF 9AM – Your exam will take place at 8am in our regular classroom
MWF 11AM – Your exam will take place at 10:30am in our regular classroom

Political Science 2301
Principles of United States & Texas Government

Fall 2014 Semester
Mr. Jesus A. Sosa

Student Statement of Understanding:

I, _____, have read this syllabus and understand the guidelines and policies therein. Furthermore, I understand my obligation to adhere to these guidelines and policies in this class and failure to do so could result in my being dropped from the course or bring upon me some other corrective measure at the discretion of the professor. I am aware that if I draw a smiley face on the top right corner of this page before I submit this contract, my professor will give me ten additional bonus points. I understand that I am bound by the requirements listed therein as well as any modifications my instructor may make to it throughout the semester, and that I shall receive a grade of **zero** (**0**) points until this form is completed, signed, and submitted by me to my instructor, Mr. Jesus A. Sosa.

Student's Printed First and Last Name:

X_____

Student's Signature:

X_____

Student ID: _____ Date: _____