

Political Science 2301  
Principles of U.S. and Texas Government  
Section 01  
9:00-10:00 MWF

**Professor Information:**

Dr. Jeffrey C. Herndon  
Ferguson Social Science Building, 160  
[Jeffrey.Herndon@tamuc.edu](mailto:Jeffrey.Herndon@tamuc.edu)  
Office Hours: 8:00-9:30 a.m. TTH  
10:00-11:00 a.m. MW  
And by appointment

**Books:**

ISBN: 978-0-393-92111-3  
Ginsberg, Benjamin, et.al. 2013. *We the People*, 9<sup>th</sup> Texas Edition. New York. W. W. Norton.

In addition to the above materials, you will be required to keep up with your MyLeo email to receive material. For this reason, you will also need to purchase a 1 ¼ inch binder to keep primary documents as assigned. You will also have to access at least one major news source everyday in order to keep up with current events in order to fulfill the requirements of the course. Your professor reserves the right to assign additional readings.

**Course Description:**

This class is a survey of the principles underlying the American experiment in self- government with justice and the constitution and government of Texas.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Critical Thinking—Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
2. Communications—Student Communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data and technology as applicable.
3. Personal Responsibility—Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
4. Social Responsibility—Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.

The following content specific 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 will have ten points deducted from their final grade for each absence over three. You may use your three absences for any purpose you choose—the only exception is on exam days when you must be present. If an absence happens to coincide with an examination or quiz, that examination or quiz cannot be made-up. There will be no make-up examinations or quizzes. 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 on during class—and it is not you. It is entirely possible that you will survive for two hours 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.

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

### **Caveat:**

Your professor reserves the right to amend this syllabus as required by the exigencies of the class.

### **Grading:**

The following is a breakdown of the elements considered in your final grade:

Exam One:	100 points	Exam Three:	100 points
Exam Two:	100 points	Quizzes/Reaction papers:	100 points

This class uses a cumulative system to determine grades. That is to say that for each examination, quiz, or reaction paper assignment you will accrue points that will be added together to determine your grade. It should be relatively easy at any point in time for you to determine how well you are performing in this class. The scale to be used in calculating final grades is as follows:

364-400	A
324-363	B
284-323	C
240-283	D
000-239	F

**Examinations:**

You will take three examinations in this course each weighted at 100 points. The dates for the examinations will February 20, April 1, and May 8. These dates will not change so please plan accordingly as per the attendance policy.

**Quizzes/Reaction Papers**

A component of your grade will be quizzes and reaction papers. Quizzes will either be over current events or the readings assigned for a particular class. Reaction papers will be assigned with regard to the readings. The reaction papers are not research papers, but are rather an exercise in analysis, critical thinking, and communication. Usually reaction papers will consist of no more than three pages. Formatting requirements will be distributed under a separate assignment sheet when necessary. Individual quizzes and reaction papers will be worth 10 points each with the possibility that low quiz scores or missed quizzes will be dropped in favor of those with higher scores.

**Course Calendar**

(All dates and content are subject to revision.)

Week	Topic	Readings
1	Introduction to the Course: Thinking About Politics	Ginsberg, Chapter 1 Plato, The Allegory of the Cave Aristotle Selections
2	Thinking about Politics, continued	Ginsberg, Chapter 1 Locke, Selections
3	Colonial Origins	Mayflower Compact Fundamental Orders Articles of Confederation
4	The Formation of the American Republic	Ginsberg, chapter 2 The Declaration of Independence The U.S. Constitution
5	The Problem of Self Government with Justice	Selections from <i>The Federalist</i>
6	The Constitution	The U.S. Constitution
7	Federalism and the Constitution	The U.S. Constitution Ginsberg, Chapter 3

8	"We the People": Public Opinion and the Shape of U.S. Politics	Ginsberg, Chapter 6
9	The "Media" and the Problem of Public Epistemology	Ginsberg, Chapter 7
10	Political Behavior	Ginsberg, Chapter 8
11	Campaigns and Elections	Ginsberg, Chapter 10
12	Political Parties	Ginsberg, Chapter 9
13	The Politics of Interest into the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	Ginsberg, Chapter 11
14	Texas Government and Political Culture	Ginsberg, Chapter 19
15	The Texas Constitution	Ginsberg, Chapter 20
16	Participation, Interests, and Political Behavior in Texas	Ginsberg, Chapters 21-22

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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**Student statement of understanding**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the syllabus and understand the guidelines and policies therein. Furthermore, I understand my obligation to adhere to these guidelines and policies in this class. As a student I have to exercise personal responsibility as demonstrated by my ability to follow the policies and procedures of the course as outlined in the syllabus and as explained in class. Furthermore, I acknowledge that this contract is a condition of the course and my failure to submit one will result in either removal from the course or a failing grade. I understand that failure to follow these policies and procedures may result in my being dropped from the course at the discretion of the professor.

X \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_