PSCI 2301.03: Principles of United States and Texas Government

Spring 2015 – MWF (11:00 – 11:50) SS 134

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*The Instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus at any time*

Required Text:
ISBN: 978-0-393-93703-9
We The People 10th ed.
Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert 2015.

Course Description:
The purpose of this course is to study the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in the United States and Texas. This course will introduce you to the historical, social, political, cultural, and global forces that formed the foundations for the American political system and continue to effect national and statewide political activity. 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.

After a brief examination of early U.S. and Texas political history and political culture, we will examine the formation of the federal and state constitutions. Then, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities granted by federalism and republicanism in the United States and Texas. Subsequently, we will spend a significant amount of time analyzing civil liberties and civil rights. We will conclude the course by examining the roles that public opinion, the economy, the media, political parties and interest groups play in U.S. and Texas politics.

Format:
Each class session will involve lectures and discussions about the assigned readings. You will regularly be asked to contribute and discuss your understanding about the assigned topics and answer questions about the readings.
Course Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding political behavior and interaction between citizens, institutions of government, and the US Constitution.

- Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding political behavior, interaction between citizens and institutions of government in Texas, and the Texas constitution.

- Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion. i.e. critical thinking

- Students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure, in written, oral, and/or visual communication. Core Objective: Communication

- Students will be able to understand their role in their own education. Core Objective: Personal Responsibility

- Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues. Core Objective: Social Responsibility

Requirements:
Each student will be expected to:

1. Complete the assigned readings on time and come to class prepared to engage in class discussions.
2. Keep up with current issues and activities in American and Texas government and integrate this information into class activities. Current events will come up in class lectures and discussions and it is advisable to have a passing familiarity with the issues.
3. CLASS ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY, be on time, and participate in class discussions. Students are responsible for obtaining prompts assigned.
4. Do not carry on private conversations during class.
5. DO NOT USE LAPTOPS, PHONES, IPODS, ETC DURING CLASS!!!!*
6. Respect the political opinions of your classmates, but do not be afraid to engage in discussion.

*Random quizzes will be given at the Instructors discretion for violations.
**Grading Scale**
Final grades will be based on a 100-point scale, using the following letter/number conversion.
A = 90-100   B = 80-89   C = 70-79   D = 65-69   F = Below 65

**Grades:**
Your grade in this course will be determined by the criteria listed below. Writing assignments will be announced during the course of the semester and the number of which may vary depending on the amount of class participation/discussion. The following scale will be used to determine your grade:

- Exam 1 = 25%
- Exam 2 = 25%
- Exam 3 = 25%
- Pop Quizzes/Short Writing Assignments* = 15%
- Participation = 10%

*Papers submitted must be a hard copy and be double-spaced, Times New Roman font with a size of 12pt.

**Make Up Exams:**

No Make Up Exams will be given during the course of the semester. Any Make Ups will be scheduled near the end of the semester. This means that if you took both exams, then this is a free study day for the Third Exam. No more than one (1) make up exam will be permitted. Any request for a make-up exam must be made in writing via E-mail BEFORE the last week of classes.

**Slacker Clause**

You will find, if you have not done so already, that taking university courses and making time for life within the context of work, family, and our other daily issues is difficult to manage. However, to that end a person must learn to effectively use their time for leisure, work, family, their issues, and also make room for their class assignments. In an effort to reinforce that idea, and ensure that you receive a quality learning experience in this course, **all assignments listed and that you receive during the time of this course must be completed. If you fail to complete one or more assignments, you will automatically fail this course.**
Plagiarism:

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.

Punishment for the first offense will range from failing the assignment to failing the entire course!

Students are expected to comply with the policies and procedures outlined in the Student Guidebook, which can be found at:


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.

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
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 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 understand that I am bound by the requirements listed therein.

Student’s Signature: ___________________________ Student’s CWID: ___________________________

X ___________________________ ___________________________

Date: ___________________________