



**PSCI – 2302.01E & 2302.02E**  
**Institutions and Policies of U.S. & Texas Government**  
**Course Syllabus: Spring 2015**

**Instructor:** Mr. Jesús A. Sosa  
**Office Location:** Ferguson Social Sciences, #128  
**Office Hours:** Mon. & Fri.: 11am–12pm and 2pm–4pm, or by appointment  
**Office Phone:** (903) 886-5317 (Departmental Office)  
**Email Address:** [Jesus.Sosa@tamuc.edu](mailto:Jesus.Sosa@tamuc.edu)

**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Textbook & Materials Required:**

There is not a required textbook for this class; however, your instructor will be providing you with various reading materials and documents from his textbook, scholarly journals, and other articles that you will be required to read in order to successfully complete the course. The reading materials, assignments, and PowerPoint presentations will be dispersed electronically via eCollege, so you must make sure that you have access to a reliable computer or tablet that will allow you to download and view them. All of this will be further explained in better detail throughout the semester.

**Course Description**

This course is an examination of the United States and Texas political systems with emphasis on both political institutions and the roles they play in the creation and implementation of public policy. Topics considered include the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, bureaucracies, and public policies.

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 reserve the right to deduct any given number of points I feel is appropriate for each absence.

### **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 class, you will be responsible for completing the following assignments:

- Four Short-Essay Quizzes, each one worth 75 points
- Two Multiple-Choice Exams, each one worth 150 points
- Camelot Simulation & Reflective Paper, worth 200 points
- Public Policy Research Paper & Presentation, worth 200 points

When combined, the assignments add up to a total amount of 1000 possible cumulative points. The amount of points that you personally accumulate by the last day of classes will determine the grade you earn in the class.

### **Grading Scale:**

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.

## 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 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 and free rentable laptops, 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.

Excuses for failure to complete an assignment due to a faulty computer, computer programs/hardware, etc... will NOT be accepted. The school has invested a lot of money in ensuring that students have free access to a reliable computer with high-speed internet on campus. Please make sure that you take advantage of these resources since your tuition is already paying for it anyways!

### **University Email:**

Be sure that you can access the email account the university has created for you. It is the primary means by which I will communicate last-minute class information and updates with you. Your instructor is not responsible if the school has the wrong email on file for you which may prevent you from receiving instructor emails. It is up to you to make sure this is fixed immediately.

### **eCollege:**

Please make sure you are able to 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. The school has a computer lab that is free of charge to you (excluding printing) as well as a laptop/iPad checkout at Gee Library.

### **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](mailto: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](mailto: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 assignments 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.

### 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 any additional ones that you receive during the time of this course must be completed! If you fail to complete any assignment, you will automatically fail it and receive 0 points for it without the opportunity to make it up!** In previous terms, I have allowed students to submit assignments past the deadline; however, that will not be tolerated this semester without proper documentation demonstrating a legitimate excuse for its delay. I allow you plenty of time to work on your take-home assignments as well as resources to help you complete in-class assignments. There is NO EXCUSE for anyone to fail this course as long as you don't slack!

### 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 related 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 without the instructor's permission.
- 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 learning 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.

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.

### **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 throughout the process of creating their papers. The Writing Center staff will not write the paper for you, but they will tremendously help you improve your writing skills, edit it, and make sure it's at its best presentation before you submit it. 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 their website for further information:

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.*

Wed., Jan. 21 → Syllabus Review, Introductions, Etc... (Please print out syllabus for this class)

Fri., Jan. 23 → Video #1 for Quiz 1

Mon., Jan. 26 → U.S. Political Culture

Wed., Jan. 28 → U.S. Congress

Fri., Jan. 30 → Video #2 for Quiz 2 - **Quiz 1 is due today!**

Mon., Feb. 2 → U.S. Presidency

Wed. Feb. 4 → U.S. Bureaucracy

Fri., Feb. 6 → U.S. Supreme & Federal Courts – EXAM I REVIEW

Mon., Feb. 9 → **EXAM I**

Wed., Feb. 11 → Texas Political Culture

Fri., Feb. 13 → Video #3 for Quiz 3 – **Quiz 2 is due today!**

Mon., Feb. 16 → The Texas Legislature

Wed., Feb. 18 → The Texas Executive

Fri., Feb. 20 → Video #4 for Quiz 4 – **Quiz 3 is due today!**

Mon., Feb. 23 → Bureaucracy in Texas

Wed., Feb. 25 → Courts in Texas

Fri., Feb. 27 → Local Governments – EXAM II REVIEW – **Quiz 4 is due today!**

Mon., March 2 → **EXAM II**

Wed., March 4 → Topic Selection for Presentations – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

Fri., March 6 → U.S. Domestic Policies

Mon., March 9 → U.S. Foreign Policies

Wed., March 11 → Texas Policies

Fri., March 13 → Introduction to Camelot – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

March 16–20 → **Spring Break – No classes, the university is closed!**

March 23, 25, & 27 → Camelot Simulation – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY!

March 30, April 1 & 3 → Camelot Simulation – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY!

Mon., April 6 → Camelot Wrap-Up & Explanation of Student Presentations  
– ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY!  
– **Policy Paper & PowerPoint are due today! NO LATE SUBMISSIONS!**

Wed., April 8 → Class Presentations – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

Fri., April 10 → Class Presentations – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

Mon., April 13 → “Days of Remembrance” Presentation in the Student Center

Wed., April 15 → No Class – Please use this time to work on your Camelot Reflective Paper

Fri., April 17 → No Class – **Camelot Reflective Paper is due today via eCollege!**

April 20, 22, & 24 → Class Presentations – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

April 27, 29 & May 1 → Class Presentations – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

Mon., May 4 → Class Presentations – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

Wed., May 6 → Class Presentations – ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY

Fri., May 8 → Class Wrap-Up, Grade Reviews, Etc...

May 9–15 → **FINALS WEEK!** – We do not have a final examination in this class; however, this time period may be used for students who had **excused** absences for missing their presentation time.

MWF 9AM – Your “final exam” is scheduled for Wed., May 13 from 8am–10am

MWF 10AM – Your “final exam” is scheduled for Mon., May 11 from 10:30am–12:30pm

**Political Science 2302  
Institutions and Policies of United States & Texas Government**

**Spring 2015 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 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: \_\_\_\_\_