INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this class. I look forward to having a productive, informative, and enjoyable semester. Three good reasons to take this course: 1) The content of this course is really important and interesting, as our lives are always affected by the actions of government whether the subject is curbside recycling or war; 2) A democratic nation like this one needs an informed citizenry; and 3) credit for this class is required for graduation in Texas. I promise to do my best to convince you that learning about American Government is both interesting and worthwhile.

The textbook for this course is O'Connor et al (2014) and is provided below. We will be reading from 12 chapters in this text. Supplemental readings will be provided during class time, on my website, and/or through the library. The version sold at the bookstore includes a passkey to an online interface, which includes some valuable exercises and study materials. Though I do not grade these items, they may be worth your time for understanding key concepts on exams.


Attendance Policy

You are adults taking on the financial responsibility of earning an education. With that said, attendance is not mandatory for any of my courses. It is up to you to decide whether or not attendance is beneficial to your educational goals. However, I do expect all students to be well behaved and considerate to their peers when they attend. Please turn off all cell phones before class starts.

Quiz Assessments: 10% of final grade

I will be administering several pop quizzes during this course. You can receive a “A” in the course without taking a single one, but taking the quizzes provides an assessment of your understanding of the material each week and a resource for exam preparation.
Exam I: 30% of final grade

Tuesday October 6, 2015: This exam will test your knowledge of major political science theories, institutional design, constitutions, and civil liberties and human rights.

Exam II: 30% of final grade

Thursday November 19, 2015: This exam will test your knowledge of political organizations, electoral processes, news media, and political participation.

Exam III: 30% of final grade

December 10, 2015: This exam will test your knowledge of civil rights and mass political mobilization.

CLASS SCHEDULE

WEEK 1: Theories of Politics

• 9/1/15: Introduction to Political Science
• 9/3/15: Introduction to Collective Action
• Read Chapter 1

WEEK 2: Institutional Design

• 9/8/15: The Tragedy of the Commons
• 9/10/15: Failed Institutional Designs

WEEK 3: Constitutions

• 9/15/15: Institutional Compromises
• 9/17/15: State Constitutions
• Read Chapter 2, Appendix 2, and Appendix 3

WEEK 4: Institutional Origins of Political Violence

• 9/22/15: Constitutional Ambiguities
• 9/24/15: Federalism and States’ Rights

WEEK 5: Civil Liberties

• 9/29/15: Civil Liberties
• 10/1/15: Human Rights
• Read Chapter 4

The Instructor reserves the right to change the contents of the syllabus at any time. Upon changes students will be made aware within 24 hours.
WEEK 6: Exam Week

- 10/6/15: EXAM 1
- 10/8/15: Reading Day

WEEK 7: Political Parties and Interest Groups

- 10/13/15: Political Parties Information and Public Opinion
- 10/15/15: Interest Groups and Lobbying
- Read Chapter 11 and Chapter 15

WEEK 8: Campaign Processes

- 10/20/15: Campaign Finance
- 10/22/15: Campaign Strategy
- Read Chapter 13

WEEK 9: Public Opinion, Political Knowledge, and News Media

- 10/27/15: News Media I
- 10/29/15: News Media II
- Read Chapter 14

WEEK 10: Electoral Institutions and Participation

- 11/3/15: Electoral Institutions
- 11/5/15: Electioneering and Voting Behavior
- Read Chapter 12

WEEK 11: National Elections

- 11/10/15: Legislative Elections
- 11/12/15: Presidential Elections

WEEK 12: Simulation Week

- 11/17/15: Electoral College Simulation
- 11/19/15: EXAM 2

WEEK 13: NO CLASS, ENJOY THANKSGIVING WITH YOUR FAMILIES

- Watch “Prohibition” by Ken Burns (PBS)
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQz6YruGiyI
- Read Chapter 5

The Instructor reserves the right to change the contents of the syllabus at any time. Upon changes students will be made aware within 24 hours.
WEEK 14: Political Mobilization

- 12/1/15: The Prohibition Movement
- 12/3/15: The Civil Rights Movement

WEEK 15: Political Mobilization II

- 12/8/15: Tea Party Patriots and Occupy Wall Street
- 12/10/15: EXAM 3

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

Cheating Policy: Please do not work together during exams. If I catch you cheating, you will fail the course.

Whining Policy: There will be no make-ups for any assignment unless there is a legitimate health issue of emergency. It is very unlikely that I will change a grade unless there was a blatant error on my part. If you did poorly on an exam, I would be happy to discuss ways you can improve next time.