

PRINCIPLES OF US AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT
PSCI 2301
Spring 2018

Dr. Ozum Yesiltas

Ferguson Social Science Room: 147

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Office Hours: T-R 1 pm – 2.30 pm

W 11 am – 1 pm

and by appointment

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 the state of Texas. This course will introduce you to the historical, social, political, cultural, and global forces that affect national and statewide political activity.

We will examine early U.S. and Texas political history and political culture, the formation of federal and state constitutions, and the challenges and opportunities granted by federalism and representative government in the U.S. and Texas. We will also analyze civil liberties and civil rights and the roles that public opinion and the media play in U.S. and Texas politics.

THE GOAL OF THE COURSE

To cultivate citizenship in every student.

WHAT DO I MEAN BY CITIZENSHIP?

Citizenship is not only being active in the political processes in your community and country, but it is also participating in the civic life of your community and having the knowledge and skills to be able to contribute meaningfully. Participation in civic life can be voting, but it can also be attending city council meetings, writing op-eds in the local newspaper, or volunteering for a community non-profit.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ***Social Responsibility:*** Through understanding how government works, students will be able to increase their awareness of societal and/or civic issues and make opinions from a more informed perspective.
- ***Critical Thinking & Personal Responsibility:*** One must learn how to search efficiently and evaluate information and be able to critically assess that information. One must also be able to understand and practice academic honesty.

- **Develop Empathy Skills:** Look at issues from multiple sides, put yourself into others' shoes, and get out of your comfort zone in analyzing the complexity of the world. Develop the propensity of challenging your own assumptions and opinions.
- **Politics Can Actually Be Interesting and Dare I Say it? Fun!:** See what's fun and interesting about politics and policy in addition to its importance.
- **Communication:** Begin to enjoy talking about politics with friends, engage in friendly debates, and push each other to think more deeply and critically about issues. Students must be able to communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE

The class will be a mix of lectures, debates and discussions. An outline of the reading schedule is provided in this syllabus. Students are required to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. You will regularly be asked to contribute your opinions and answer questions about the readings. In addition to the assigned readings listed on this syllabus, we may also discuss current political events, since developments in U.S. and Texas politics occur on a daily basis.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Paula D. McClain and Steven C. Tauber, *American Government in Black and White*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Benjamin Ginsberg, et. al., *We the People*, 9th Texas ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance & Participation: Attendance is vital to your success in class. More than 3 unexcused absences will automatically drop your final grade by one letter grade (e.g. if the student earned a "B" in the course, the final grade would be a "C"). Acceptable excuses include documented health and family emergencies. Participation points are earned based on your contribution to class discussions and pop quizzes. However, pop quizzes are avoidable. All you have to do is to stay away from your phones and computers for the duration of class time. If I see anyone using technology, the entire class will receive a pop quiz.

Exams: There will be three exams in this course, each of which will consist of multiple choice questions. These exams will not be cumulative. Study guides will be available. The exam dates can be found on course schedule. There is no final exam in this course.

Debates: Interactive learning will be a crucial part of your learning process in this class. Throughout the semester, we will have two in-class debates. The first debate will be on U.S. domestic policy topics and the second debate will be on U.S. foreign policy topics. Debate topics

will be posted on E-College by the Professor at least two weeks before the debate date. Everyone will receive a performance grade for each debate based on participation. This will require a) being present in class during the debate; b) participate in the discussion with thoughtful comments. If you miss the class on a debate day, your performance grade will automatically be “0”. Debate dates can be found on the course schedule.

Final Research Project: Final research project will be a collaborative effort. Students will form groups of four and develop a policy proposal to address a U.S. domestic or foreign policy issue. This is a semester-long project which should not be left to last few weeks of classes. As a group, you need to identify an American foreign or domestic policy problem/issue that your project will focus on and collaboratively work on it throughout the semester. In order to ensure equal distribution of responsibility within the group, each member will have a specific task to fulfill. Groups must operate based on the following division of labor:

The Republican: This member represents the Republican position on the issue and responsible for developing a policy proposal from the perspective of the principles of the Republican Party.

The Democrat: This member represents the Democratic position on the issue and responsible for developing a policy proposal from the perspective of the principles of the Democratic Party.

The Analyst: This member is responsible for carefully analyzing the policies proposed by the Republican and the Democrat and laying out the pros and cons of each proposal in light of the foreign/domestic policy goals that the groups aims to achieve.

The Conciliator: This member is responsible for developing suggestions, resources and tips to help the group work through the identified issue/problem, highlight shared concerns and common themes between the Republican and the Democrat, and propose ideas about how to reconcile the differences.

Final research projects are expected to be 7-10 pages in length. A detailed grading rubric and guidelines for this assignment will be posted on E-College. Groups will make short preliminary presentations about their projects mid-semester and will get feedback on their progress. Final project presentations will take place during the last week of classes. Presentation dates can be found on the course schedule. Final projects are due **May 10**, 11.55, on E-College.

GRADING

Your final course grade will be determined by your performance on the following components:

Course Requirements	Weight
Attendance & Participation	10% (including pop quizzes)
Exams	20% (each)
Final Research Project	20%
Debate Performance	10%
Total	100%

GRADE SCALE

90-100 = A
80-89 = B
70-79 = C
60-69 = D
Below 60 =F

MAKE-UP POLICY

Make-ups are allowed only under special circumstances such as medical or family emergencies. However, you must request them prior to the exam/deadline and present documentary proof. Make-ups requested after the exam/deadline will not be granted. If you submit your written assignments late without an excuse, I will cut off 5 points for each day after the deadline.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY DURING CLASS

Unless we assign a day to use technology as part of the learning process, use of cell phones, computers or any other electronic devices in the classroom is strictly prohibited. Use of technology during class will result in a pop quiz.

CIVILITY AND RESPECT

All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. I expect everyone to be respectful of each other's perspectives and opinions during class discussions. Any behavior that disrupts the class or impedes other student's ability to fully engage with the course will not be tolerated.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student is required to be responsible for purposefully pursuing and honestly submitting research and work that is original and is the sole work of the individual. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. If you are unclear about the ethics of an academic action, please consult me during my office hours.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

A&M-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 of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The American 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

Texas Senate Bill-11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-0Commerce Rule 34.06.02R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02R1.pdf> (and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

- 1/16** Introduction to the course/Overview of the syllabus
- 1/18** American Government and Politics in a Racially Divided World
McLain & Tauber Ch 1

Week 2

- 1/23** The Constitution McLain & Tauber Ch 2
- 1/25** The Constitution (continued) McLain & Tauber Ch 2

Week 3

- 1/30** Federalism McLain & Tauber Ch 3
- 2/1** Federalism (continued) McLain & Tauber Ch 3

Week 4

- 2/6** Civil Liberties McLain & Tauber Ch 4
- 2/8** Civil Rights McLain & Tauber Ch 5

Week 5

- 2/13** **Exam 1**
- 2/15** **Debate 1**

Week 6

- 2/20** Public Opinion McLain & Tauber Ch 10
- 2/22** The Media McLain & Tauber Ch 11

Week 7

2/27 Social Movements McLain & Tauber Ch 12

3/1 Social Movements (continued) McLain & Tauber Ch 12

Week 8

3/6 Political Parties McLain & Tauber Ch 16

3/8 **Preliminary Research Project Presentations**

Week 9

3/13 **Spring Break – No Class**

3/15 **Spring Break – No Class**

Week 10

3/20 **Exam 2**

3/22 **Debate 2**

Week 11

3/27 The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas We the People, Ch 19

3/29 The Texas Constitution We the People, Ch 20

Week 12

4/3 The Texas Constitution (continued) We the People, Ch 20

4/5 Parties and Elections in Texas We the People, Ch 21

Week 13

4/10 Parties and Elections in Texas (continued) We the People, Ch 21

4/12 The Texas Legislature We the People, Ch 23

Week 14

4/17 The Texas Executive Branch We the People, Ch 24

4/19 The Texas Judiciary We the People, Ch 25

Week 15

4/24 **Exam 3**

4/26 **Final Research Project Presentations**

Week 16

5/1 **Final Research Project Presentations**

5/3 **Final Research Project Presentations**

Final Research Projects due May 10, 11.55 pm