Political Science 2305.10E: United States Government and Politics
Fall 2019
Time: 3:30 pm–4:45 pm

"To sit home, read one's favorite paper, and scoff at the misdeeds of the men who do things is easy, but it is markedly ineffective. It is what evil men count upon the good men's doing."
Teddy Roosevelt, “The Higher Life of American Cities” (December 1895)

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Ayal K. Feinberg
Office Location: 148 Ferguson Social Sciences
Office Hours: 2:00pm–3:00pm T-Th; 10:00am–12:00pm & 1:00pm–3:00pm W; by appointment
University Email Address: Ayal.Feinberg@tamuc.edu
Communication Response Time: 48 Hours maximum

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Texts:
https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government
***(Click “Download a PDF” link for free download)***

Optional Texts:

Any additional course material and documents will be posted to MyLeo. Students should be checking the course MyLeo link for new reading at least 24 hours before every class. Students should also familiarize themselves with the news being covered by https://realclearpolitics.com prior to each class.

Course Description:
Designed to introduce the students to the principles and function of the government of the United States, this course examines the principles underlying the development of the U.S.
Constitution, the operations of the U.S. government under the Constitution, and the opportunities and constraints imposed by and on the political system in the U.S. Topics to be covered include the philosophical preconditions of the American experiment in self-government with justice, the documentary history of American government, the actual function and practice of government under the Constitution, and the actors engaged in the American political system.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

*By completing this course, you will be able to:*

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
6. Analyze the election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

**Instructional Methods**

This is a traditional university class that requires your regular attendance. During class, you will listen to lectures, participate in interactive simulations, and engage in lively discussions. The more engaged you are as a student and student-body, the less standard lecturing will take place. Therefore, it is vitally important you complete all assigned reading for classes.

**Student Responsibilities and Succeeding in this Course**

First, define what success means to you. If you want to get an A, focus on doing well on every assignment and course component. If you want a B or a C for the course, there are some assignments, quizzes and exams that you may want to put more effort into than others.

Second, take good notes. Taking good notes starts when you begin your assigned reading. Don’t wait to see what topics I cover during class presentations, as they will not necessarily be exhaustive. Review each chapter for key terms and concepts, and make sure you are familiar with them. Test yourself on defining these terms and concepts with a focus on being able to explain their importance to U.S. government.
Third, get together with your peers to prepare for your exams. Form study groups and review reading quizzes with each other. This will not only help you to fill in possible gaps in your course notes, but discussing class topics with peers often leads to new insights on the materials. It can also lead to lifelong friendships. If you are shy, asking to study with the members of your Zombie Apocalypse group is ideal.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, come to class. Attendance is strongly correlated with better performance on assignments and assessments as well as higher overall course grades. Furthermore, if you miss classes, it is likely you will also miss key insights we discuss in class that may make their way on to your exams. Consequently, while acquiring good notes from a peer could replace missing class on rare occasions, habitual nonattendance almost guarantees that you will miss critical in-class discussions of topics, concepts, and ideas. Simply put, do your best to show up for class every day. After all, you paid for it!

Grading and Assessment:

You are required to read the chapter(s) in your textbook associated with the topic being discussed in that day’s class. If the chapter(s) in your textbook is to be taught over several class periods, you will need to complete all readings by the last day the subject will be reviewed in order to successfully complete the associated reading quiz. However, you should make every effort to complete readings prior to a chapter’s first discussion in class. Doing so will arm you with the tools necessary to best understand the topics, ideas and concepts we will explore during class lectures and allow you to ask intelligent questions that can contribute to advancing the course discourse.

Course grading and assessment expectations will be discussed in greater detail below.

Major Course Assignments and Examinations:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Quizzes</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zombie Apocalypse Simulation / Attendance</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Paper / Representative Letter</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>25% (optional)</td>
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Reading Quizzes (10%):

During the semester, we will discuss at least twelve distinct topics, each associated with specific chapters in the textbook. To gauge whether you are completing the assigned readings as well as comprehending the concepts and ideas within them, I will assign a reading quiz for you to complete after we finish exploring each topic in class. Reading quizzes will open immediately following the completion of the topic according to the syllabus (at least 48 hours before they are due). Each quiz will have no more than ten total multiple choice, true/false or short answer questions. There will be at least twelve reading quizzes given during the semester. You will be able to drop your two
lowest quiz scores. Consequently, under no circumstances will students be awarded a make-up reading quiz for failing to complete it before it is due. To calculate your grade, each of your top 10 quiz scores will count for 1% of your final grade. In total, your reading quizzes will make up 20% of your final grade. Be sure to notify me if you have any issues accessing the reading quizzes, which will be located on your course Canvas page.

**Zombie Apocalypse Simulation / Attendance (20%)**:

In this course, you will learn about the institutional designs and constitutional checks and balances that are integral to explaining how we have progressed as a nation. The Zombie apocalypse simulation will provide an opportunity for you to experience the challenges of creating a constitution that will govern a diverse country of people with numerous, often conflicting, interests.

Students will be divided into groups of 5-8 people and assigned to a region of the post-zombie apocalypse United States. They will act as political representatives for their area as all regions of the United States attempt to band together to create a new national government and the new American constitution. The political elites of each region (you and your peers) have agreed to try to unite because of the ongoing concerns with zombies and the threat of an imminent Canadian invasion.

Each group/region will be given ample classroom time to work on proposals they hope will be added to a national constitution. They will also be provided class time to discuss plans with other groups and work on crafting their draft constitution. Time outside of class is allowed, but it is unlikely to be necessary for groups to do well on this Zombie Apocalypse simulation. At the end of the simulation, the class will hold a constitutional convention to decide what policies will make it into the new constitution. There will be ample opportunities to receive extra credit during the simulation.

There are five graded constitutional design worksheets in this simulation. Each worksheet includes some information and several questions about the components of a workable constitution. These worksheets are designed to be a starting point for discussion amongst your group. Specifically, you will need to consider the possibility of different institutional rules and how you would prioritize competing goals in a proposed constitution. Each group is responsible for completing and turning in their worksheet. Each worksheet is worth 1% of your final grade and will be graded either as “satisfactory” earning the full 1% or “unsatisfactory” making 0%. To get credit for a constitutional design worksheet, students must thoughtfully answer each question with at least three sentences (no bullet points). Each answer should be justified by the group/region using their unique regional characteristics and demographics.

Each group will also submit a final draft of their constitution, which is worth 5% of your final grade and will be graded on an A-F scale. In this grading scheme, A’s receive the full 5%, B’s 4%, C’s 3%, D’s 2%, and F’s 0%. Groups earning an A will have written a novel constitution that incorporates their territories unique characteristics and highlights areas of potential cooperation. Groups making a B will have written an original constitution with clear proposals connected to distinct territorial aims. Groups earning a C will have written a broad constitution that relates only to
national or regional goals without incorporating much original thought. Groups receiving a D will have turned in a basic constitutional document showing little to no thought about either their territorial and national concerns. Groups earning an F will not have turned in the assignment.

Positive participation in the Zombie Apocalypse is mandatory. Your attendance score for the course will be based on whether you thoughtfully contributed to the constitutional design worksheets as well as the quality of your work. Overall, your attendance grade for the course is worth 10%, so make sure to come to class. If you miss a class day devoted to a constitutional design worksheet, you will not earn credit for the completion of that specific assignment. Claiming unearned participation constitutes academic dishonesty and will result in a failing grade for the entire simulation, and the possibility of further disciplinary action.

Policy Paper / Representative Letter (20%):

As a way to encourage civic engagement, this writing assignment requires you to develop a functional knowledge of a political issue that you care deeply about, analyze it, and then share your thoughts with an appropriate political representative or policymaker. Your assignment will be graded in two parts: 1) a 4-page double-spaced policy paper that contains at least three scholarly sources, and 2) a 1 page single-spaced formal letter to a political representative or policymaker.

Details regarding this assignment, specifically a grading rubric, will be provided in an additional handout later in the semester. This rubric can also be found through the appropriate link in MyLeo.

In general, there are five-major steps you need to follow to successfully complete the assignment:

1. Find a subject you are very interested in learning about and where your contribution will matter. You must be motivated to learn more about this subject because you are going to write both a policy paper and a representative letter on it.
2. Based on your chosen interest, find at least three scholarly sources discussing the politics or policy of your subject. These sources should come from academic publications (not newspapers or blogs).
3. Determine what state-level politician or policymaker is most appropriate to address in your representative letter. Write your letter to them.
4. Highlighting your new knowledge, draft and ultimately write your policy paper. Use some of your new findings and arguments from your policy paper to write your formal representative letter. Make sure your letter is unsealed, appropriately addressed, and stamped.
5. Turn in both your policy paper and representative letter to the instructor before the due date. Your letter will ultimately be mailed to the addressed government official after it is graded by your instructor.

Exams 1 & 2 (50%, 25% each):

Throughout the course, you will be given two exams. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice, true-false, and/or short answer questions covering the material in your
textbook readings as well as information from class presentations and discussions. Your reading quizzes should serve as an essential study guide for these tests. You will have the entire class on exam day to complete all 50 questions. These exams will be closed notes unless otherwise noted.

Test-taking is not for everyone. Furthermore, I completely understand that sometimes events happen beyond our control that prevent us from doing well on an exam or even make it to class to take the exam. Consequently, you will not be penalized for missing an exam as long as you elect to take the final exam. Students who are satisfied with their two course exam scores are not required to take the final.

Because of this exceptionally generous exam policy, I will not offer any make-up exams in this course. If you are having trouble earning the exam scores you desire for the course, please take the time to meet with me during scheduled office hours to discuss approaches that will help you achieve the grade you wish to earn. Do not wait until the end of the semester to address exam grade concerns.

Final Exam (Optional):

Your final exam for the course is entirely optional. It is designed to replace an exam that you had to miss due to unforeseen circumstances. Do not plan on taking the final exam simply to replace a poor exam score. Your optional final exam is considerably more time consuming and challenging than your regular course exams. Work hard to do as well as you can on both course exams to avoid having to consider taking the optional final exam.

The optional final exam will consist of three long answer prompts. You will have to choose two of these three prompts and answer each question in no less than three double-spaced pages (six double-spaced pages total). A scholarly source outside of your textbook will be required for every prompt.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS
All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:  
https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements

LMS Browser Support:  
https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:  
https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements
Access and Navigation
You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support
If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Syllabus Change Policy
The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Student Conduct
All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook.

http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette

TAMUC Attendance
For more information about the attendance policy please visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf
Academic Integrity
Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

Students with Disabilities – ADA Statement
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 162
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu
Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

Nondiscrimination Notice
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.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement
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-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer.
Web url: [http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf](http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf)

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
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>READING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 27 &amp; 29</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep. 3 &amp; 5</td>
<td>American Government &amp; Civic Engagement</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 10 &amp; 12</td>
<td>The Constitution &amp; Its Origins</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sep. 17 &amp; 19</td>
<td>American Federalism</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
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<td>Sep. 24 &amp; 26</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
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<td>Oct. 1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>The Presidency</td>
<td>Chapter 12</td>
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<td>Oct. 8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>The Courts</td>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
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<td>Oct. 17</td>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>Review</td>
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<td>Oct. 22 &amp; 24</td>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct. 29 &amp; 31</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 5 &amp; 7</td>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 12</td>
<td>Voting and Elections</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
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<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>The Politics of Public Opinion</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
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<td>Nov. 19</td>
<td>The Media / Interest Groups &amp; Lobbying</td>
<td>Chapters 8 &amp; 10</td>
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<td>Nov. 21</td>
<td>EXAM 2</td>
<td>Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 26 &amp; Dec. 3</td>
<td>Class Presentations</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>Zombie Constitutional Convention</td>
<td>None</td>
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<td>Dec. 12 (1:15-3:15)</td>
<td>FINAL EXAM (optional)</td>
<td>Review</td>
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***Representative Letter / Policy Paper due on Dec. 3, 2019
***Zombie Constitution and Simulation Assessment due on Dec. 6, 2019