

# **PSCI 2301 Principles of United States and Texas Government**

## **Sec 01W**

### **Professor Contact Information**

Dr. Chad M. King

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### Office Hours

T 12:45-2:45

W 10-1

### **Course Description**

This course is a survey of the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in the United States and Texas. Topics considered include constitutionalism, federalism, ideology, pluralism, political culture and socialization, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, republicanism, and voting and electoral politics.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. 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.
2. 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.

### **Required Textbooks and Materials**

The required text is *We the People*, 9th Texas Edition, by Lowi, Ginsberg, Weir, Tolbert. While earlier editions of this text are available, this is the required edition.

## Course Requirements

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

1. Students are expected to complete all course readings for each section of the course.
2. Students are expected to regularly check the course site for announcement and updates.
3. Students are expected to take each of the scheduled Midterm Exams.
4. Students are expected to participate fully in the class discussion assignments.
5. Students are expected to complete all of the assigned quizzes.
6. Students are expected to respect their fellow classmates and the instructor. This includes treating everyone with courtesy and esteem in any and all correspondence for the course. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
7. Students are expected to 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. Any act of academic dishonesty on a midterm exam or quiz will result in a score of 0 for the exam or quiz. Any act of academic dishonesty on a discussion assignment will result in a 0 for the entire semester's discussion assignment grade. Instances of academic dishonesty may also be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant administrative penalties.
8. Failure to complete more than 3 discussion assignments will be considered "excessive" absenteeism and the student will be administratively dropped from the class.
9. Students will comply with any and all eCollege technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access.
10. 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](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)**

## Technology Requirements

Because this is web-based course, all students must meet the following technology requirements to successfully complete this course.

- Regular access to a good quality computer
- Regular, high-quality Internet access, specifically, a high-speed internet connection, not dial-up or a cellular phone. Students should use the eCollege tutorial to test the quality and speed of their browser and ensure that it is compatible with the system.
- Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.
- Note that it is the student's responsibility to ensure they meet these requirements. Aside from when the eCollege system is down, technical issues will not be accepted as a reason for failing to complete any course work.

## Access and Navigation

Students will access this course using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students can access their online courses using the myLeo portal or directly from the URL <http://online.tamuc.org>. In order to login, students will need both their CWID and password to access the myLeo site. 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 three 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 click on "Chat Online"
2. Phone: Students can access phone support by calling the toll free phone number for eCollege, 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.

eCollege also has extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the 'Help' button on the toolbar.

## Grading and Evaluation

Student performance will be based upon 3 categories of graded elements: midterm exams, quizzes and discussion assignments.

Exams:	Three midterm exams are scheduled below. All exams will include material from the textbook and lecture and the scheduled dates for the exams are listed below on the calendar. Exams may include multiple choice and essay questions. Each exam will count for 25% of the final grade.
Quizzes:	Students will take weekly quizzes throughout the semester online. The final quiz average will count for 10% of the final average.
Discussion Assignments:	Students will participate in weekly discussion assignments using eCollege. More information about these assignments is listed below. Collectively these assignments are worth 15% of the final grade. The lowest single discussion assignment grade will be dropped.
Syllabus "Quiz"	Students can earn up to a 3 bonus points toward their final average by taking a syllabus quiz. This quiz is designed to ensure that students familiarize themselves with the requirements and expectations of the syllabus. It will open during the second week of the semester.

## Grade Break Down

Midterm Exam 1	25%
Midterm Exam 2	25%
Midterm Exam 3	25%
Discussion Assignments	15%
Quizzes	10%
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Final Grade	100%

## Grading Schedule

Final grades will be based on a 100-point scale, using the following conversion.

A: 100-90    B: 89-80    C: 79-70    D: 69-65    F: Below 65

## Midterm Exams

Exam Format: Students will take three midterm exams that feature 50 multiple choice questions. 60 minutes are allotted for exam.

Exam Times and Dates: Midterm Exams will be taken on-line and are scheduled on the dates listed below. All three exams will begin at **11:59 PM** on a Thursday and will close 48 hours later at **11:59 PM** on Saturday.

### Midterm Exam One

Opens 2/13

Covers Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and Appendix Readings

### Midterm Exam Two

Opens 4/3

Covers Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

### Midterm Exam Three

Opens 5/1

Covers Chapters 19, 20, 21, 22

### Technical Issues

Students will take three midterm exams via the course page. Students are responsible for testing the compatibility of their own computers and software prior to starting the exam and must be sure to have a high speed internet connection to eliminate the chance of technical problems. Exams are timed and can only be taken once. Once the exam has begun, the allotted time will begin counting down and students will not be able to "pause" or put the exam time on hold, even if they disconnect from the course site or exam. Students should save their answers frequently by clicking on the "Save Answers" button. Students should not click the "Submit Test" button until they have completed the exam as it will not be possible to re-enter the exam once the test has been submitted. Students who encounter technical problems as a result of failing to comply with these guidelines will not be given an opportunity to re-take or re-access an exam. Any technical problems should be immediately referred to the help desk.

### Make-up Exams

If a student misses a midterm exam, that student will receive a grade of 0 for the exam. Make-up exams will only be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Any request for a make-up exam must be made in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence was legitimate. Such a request must be received within 3 calendar days of the missed exam date, unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request during that time period. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and/or legal obligations. Technical problems with accessing the

course will not be considered a valid excuse for missing an exam unless it can be shown that the problem is the fault of the eCollege platform. *Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given.*

Make-up exams will be exclusively essay format.

## **Quizzes**

Students will take weekly quizzes. These quizzes will feature 6-8 multiple choice and/or True False questions and students will have 10 minutes to complete them. The quizzes are scheduled to on Fridays at 9 AM and remain open for 24 hours except for the weeks of exams. During those weeks, Week 5, 11 and 15, the quizzes will open on Wednesday at 9 AM and remain open for 24 hours. The lowest single quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. Missed quizzes cannot be made up.

## **Discussion Assignments**

This graded component of the course will consist of 15 weekly discussions. Topics for the discussion assignments will be posted on Sunday each week at 9 AM. Each discussion thread will close at 11:30 PM on Friday that week. Regardless of the reason, there will be no make-up opportunities for discussion assignments and students will not receive any credit for posts made after the deadline.

Each student will randomly be assigned to a discussion group for the duration of the course. The instructor will create a discussion thread topic for each discussion group to which students are expected to compile a response.

Students will be graded upon two criteria. First, students are expected to submit an original response to the topic posted, answering all parts of the topic. Second, students are expected to respond to the posts of other students in their discussion group. Students should engage in conversation with their group members in a thoughtful discussion about the topic as well as their individual responses to the topic. Students should make a minimum of 5 posts during the week and these posts should not be made all on the same day during the final hours of the assignment time line.

Students will receive a grade between 0-3, with 3 being the highest, on each discussion assignment. (Students who do not participate will receive a 0) Grades will be based both upon the quality of the content of a student's posts, as well as the student's engagement with other students by responding to posts in the student's group. Posts that do not full answer the questions or do not respond posted will not receive full credit. . Students who wait until the end of the time frame may receive a grade penalty

All content submitted for discussion assignments must be a student's original submission. Any material taken from another source, including the textbook, should include a proper citation. Material which is copied or pasted from any source will be considered plagiarism as discussed above in the Course Policies and Procedures section.

When the discussion assignment average is computed at the end of the semester, the student's lowest individual assignment score will be dropped. If a student completes all 15 assignments, the lowest score will be dropped. For students who do not complete all of the assignments, one score of 0 for a missing assignment will be dropped. The discussion assignment average will be a ratio of the number of points earned on each assignment divided by 42 (3 points X 14 assignments)

### **Additional Course & Instructor Policies**

Extra Credit: Aside from the Syllabus Quiz, there are no extra credit opportunities in this class.

### **Student Conduct & Discipline**

The University has rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of business. It is the responsibility of each student to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations that govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the student handbook.

I expect all students to maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty which is discussed in Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12 Academic Honesty. "Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material."

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. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant penalties.

### **Telephone and Email Use**

The University prefers electronic mail as the primary means of communication between faculty, staff and students. Please use the e-mail address & telephone number provided on this syllabus for any and all correspondence. Questions about specific grades should be made in person during office hours.

## Reading Assignments Calendar

Week	Dates	Topic	Reading Assignment
1	Jan 13 - Jan 18	American Political Culture	Chapter 1
2	Jan 19 - 25	US Constitution	Chapter 2, Appendix A
3	Jan 26 - Feb 1	Federalism	Chapter 3
4	Feb 2 - Feb 8	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4
5	Feb 9 - Feb 15	Civil Rights	Chapter 5
6	Feb 16 - Feb 22	Public Opinion	Chapter 6
7	Feb 23 - Mar 1	The Media	Chapter 7
8	Mar 2 - Mar 8	Political Participation	Chapter 8
9	Mar 16 - Mar 22	Political Parties	Chapter 9
10	Mar 23 - Mar 29	Campaigns and Elections	Chapter 10
11	Mar 30 - Apr 5	Interest Groups	Chapter 11
12	Apr 6 - Apr 12	Texas Political Culture	Chapter 19
13	Apr 13 - Apr 19	Texas Constitution	Chapter 20
14	Apr 20 - Apr 26	Texas Political Parties	Chapter 21
15	Apr 28 - May 3	Texas Interest Groups	Chapter 22

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**Please note that the instructor reserves the right to change any part of this syllabus as needed over the course of the semester. Any and all changes will be announced in class.**