

Political Science 2302: Section 04W
United States & Texas Government: Institutions & Policies
Spring Semester 2014

Instructor: Mr. Tim Houston
Office Location: SS 152
Virtual Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday 9 AM – 12 PM
Office Phone: (903) 886-5317
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COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting Location

Class will be conducted online through eCollege.

Required Texts

Collier, Ken; Steven Galatas; Julie Herrelson –Stephens. *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas*. Second Edition. CQ Press: Washington, D.C. ISBN: 9781604266382

Lowi, Theodore J.; Benjamin Ginsberg; Kenneth A. Shepsle; Stephen Ansolabehere, *American Government: Power & Purpose*, Thirteenth Edition, W.W. Norton: New York. ISBN: 9780393922448 (Note: You need the full edition. Do not purchase the core edition.)

Any additional materials, such as brief articles, videos, or primary documents, will be supplied by the instructor electronically through your university email.

Course Description

This course is an examination of the United States and Texas political systems with emphases on both formal and informal 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. This course will also examine the historical, social, political, cultural, and international forces the effect our political systems in the United States and in Texas.

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

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and policy development and implementation of the government of the United States.
2. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and state policy development and implementation of the state of Texas.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Discussion & Participation

Your participation in class discussion is *mandatory*. Throughout the semester students are expected to be prepared and participate in class discussions. Students are responsible for reading the assigned portions of the text for week. In order to fully participate in this class all students must be engaged and inquisitive. You must give your thoughts on the material and current events that relate to the issues, people, and places discussed. As such, it is important to keep up with current events and issues in American and Texas government and integrate this information into class activities. Current events will

come up in class lectures and discussions and it is advisable to have a passing familiarity with the issues. Please keep in mind that you are expected to fully participate in each discussion.

This component of the course will consist of 15 weekly discussions. Topics for the discussion assignments will be posted on Monday each week by 12 PM (Noon). Each discussion thread will close at 11:30 PM on Friday for 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 of 250 words each 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 and 5, with 5 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 fully answer the questions or do not respond to student discussion will not receive full credit.

Students who wait until the end of the weekly time frame to complete posts may receive a grade penalty.

All content submitted for Discussion Assignments must be a student's original work for 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 70 (5 points X 14 assignments), which will be applied to a 100% scale where $1.0 = 100\%$. (Example: $56 / 70 = 0.8 = 80\%$)

Any act of plagiarism or academic dishonesty on a Discussion Assignment will result in a 0 for the entire semester's Discussion Assignment Grade.

Quizzes

Quizzes will be given to ensure that the class has read and understood the concepts mentioned in the assigned material and are keeping up with current events. These may be *announced or unannounced*, and shall be given at the instructor's discretion. Additional quiz grades may also come in the form of a short paper assignment and the form of that assignment shall be at the instructor's discretion.

As quizzes will be open for an adequate time period, there will be no make-up quizzes allowed for any reason in this class. During each week a quiz is given, quizzes will open at 12 PM (Noon) on Friday for a period of 24 hours)

Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. (If two or more quiz grades tie for the lowest quiz grade, only one will be dropped.)

Any act of plagiarism or academic dishonesty on a Quiz Assignment will result in a 0 for the entire semester's Quiz Grade.

Exams

There will be three exams, which shall consist of two mid-terms and a final. If you have any questions regarding the exam format please feel free to ask. Each exam is intended to ensure that you have grasped the concepts from the readings and discussions.

Each Exam will open at 12 PM (Noon) on the Thursday of the week of each specific exam and close after 48 hours.

Requests for make-up exams must be emailed to me, and a valid excuse presented to the instructor within three (3) calendar days of the originally scheduled exam date(s). For student athletes, band members, and other students involved in events officially sanctioned by the university this means you must provide me a letter from your advisor, coach, or director if you will not have access to eCollege during an exam's time period. All other incidences will be handled accordingly as they occur and proof must be provided via email. Failure to provide proof of a valid excuse as outlined here and according to University guidelines will result in your request being rejected.

Any act of plagiarism or academic dishonesty on an Exam will result in automatic failure of the course.

Grading Rubric

Exams (60%)	3 @ 25% each
Quizzes	15%
Discussion & Participation	10%

The grading scale used for this course is as follows:

90-100% = A 80-89% = B 70-79% = C 65-69% = D 64% or less = F

NOTE:

All assignments must be completed to pass this course!
There will be NO Extra Credit Assignments!

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS, ACCESS, AND NAVIGATION

Microsoft Office Word:

You will need access to a computer equipped with Microsoft Office Word. If you do not have it readily available on a computer of your own, please make use of our library computer lab or purchase a copy of the program. You can find a copy of the program at discount rate here:
<http://www.microsoft.com/student/office/en-us/default.aspx>.

University Email:

Be sure that you can access the email account the university has on record for you. It is the primary means by which I will communicate with you.

eCollege:

Please make sure you have 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.

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

1. Regular access to a good quality computer
2. 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.
3. Students will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.
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>. 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.

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 clicking 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. Please note that you might not receive a response for 24 hours if you use the e-mail option.
4. eCollege also has extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the 'Help' button on the toolbar.

News Source

All students are required to have access to some form of media to keep up with current events.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

You are highly encouraged to contact the instructor for assistance. Students must understand that if they have difficulties in the course I will do my best to help them. However, if you do not approach me about your difficulties I can only assume everything is fine. It is necessary for students to discuss their concerns with me as soon as possible after your concern develops. If you wait until a project is due, or until the end of the semester to seek assistance there is little that can be done to compensate for your earlier difficulties.

My office hours will be **virtual**, meaning they will be conducted via phone and email and answered immediately in the order received. This will ensure that I am specifically available to answer your questions via email, or phone during those hours. However, you may of course email me at any time. After the first week of class students will be provided a direct telephone number to reach me during my virtual office hours.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

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 manage their time for leisure, work, and family while also making 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 that you receive during the time of this course must be completed. If you fail to complete assignments listed within this syllabus, you will automatically fail this course.

You are allowed to miss only one discussion assignment, and only one quiz assignment. All subsequent assignments for discussion and quiz assignments will invoke this policy and result in the student failing the course. Failure to complete all exams will result in automatic failure of the course.

Instructor's Rights

As instructor, I reserve the right to amend and/or modify this syllabus.

Student Conduct & Civility

All students are expected to observe basic tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive leaning 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 in ALL CAPS, make obscene gestures/comments, etc. towards another classmate who is expressing their thoughts on a subject. Likewise, students should not use incendiary language during the course. If you do so, you will receive a 0 for that week's discussion in which the violation occurred and you will be subject to University policies regarding student conduct. Continued violation of this policy will result in failure from the course.

Academic Dishonesty

-Definition-

In all courses, it is expected that all work that you do and turn in is your own. It is the policy of the University and me 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 result in the punishments listed under COURSE REQUIREMENTS, and the grade cannot be made up. Additionally, 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 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 with drafting their papers. The Writing Center is a resource that you pay for, so if you need assistance use it. They will not write your paper, but they will help you improve your writing skills. If you use the Writing Center, please plan ahead as they can only help you if you see them in advance and you have time to incorporate their suggestions into your final paper. More information can be found at <http://www.tamu-commerce.edu/litlang/CSC/>.

ADA Statement

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

Statement of Understanding

By remaining enrolled in this course it is understood that you as the student have read the syllabus and understand the guidelines and policies therein. It is further understood that you have an obligation to adhere to these guidelines and policies in this class and failure to do so could result in the student being dropped from the course or some other corrective measure being applied to the student at the discretion of the instructor. As a student you understand that you are bound by the requirements listed herein.

The Instructor thanks Dr. Chad King for his contributions to this syllabus.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

The following outline is a tentative schedule for our readings; all due dates and exam dates will remain intact, barring an occurrence beyond our control.

YOU MUST COMPLETE ALL READINGS!

Week 1 : January 13 - 18

Course Introduction; Syllabus; "Five Principles of Politics" in Power & Purpose

Week 2 : January 20 - 25

United States Constitution & Amendments (ALL)

Week 3 : January 27 – February 1

"Congress: The First Branch" in Power & Purpose

Week 4 : February 3 - 8

“The Presidency as an Institution” in Power & Purpose

Week 5 : February 10 - 15

“The Executive Branch: Bureaucracy in a Democracy” in Power & Purpose; **Midterm Exam 1**

Week 6 : February 17 - 22

“The Federal Courts” in Power & Purpose

Week 7 : February 24 – March 1

“Economic Policy” in Power & Purpose

Week 8 : March 3 - 8

“Social Policy” in Power & Purpose

Spring Break : March 10 - 15

Week 9 : March 17 - 22

“Foreign Policy” in Power & Purpose

Week 10 : March 24 –29

“Texas Society & Political Culture” in Lone Star Politics; **Midterm Exam 2**

Week 11 : March 31 – April 5

“The Legislative Process” in Lone Star Politics

Week 12 : April 7 - 12

“The Governor in Texas” & “The Plural Executive and the Bureaucracy in Texas” in Lone Star Politics

Week 13 : April 14 - 19

“The Texas Courts System” in Lone Star Politics

Week 14 : April 21 - 26

“Public Policy in Texas” Lone Star Politics

Week 15 : April 28 – May 3

“Criminal Justice Policy in Texas” Power & Purpose

Finals Week : May 5 - 10

Final Exam