



**PSCI 2302 01W: United States and Texas Government: Institutions
and Polices
Course Syllabus: Fall 2014**

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COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required

We the People, Texas Edition
Authors: Lowi, Ginsberg, Weir, Tolbert, Harpham, and Champagne
Publisher: W.W. Norton
Edition: 9th Texas Edition
ISBN: ISBN Hardcover 978-0-393-12438-5 or Paperback 978-0-393-92111-3

You should be able to purchase this book from the bookstore or your favorite on-line merchant. Please note there is also an on-line version of the text available from the publishers that is significantly cheaper.

Course Description

This course is an examination of the United States and Texas political systems with emphasis on both political 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.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of the course students will be able to

- 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.
- Understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to explain the political institutions and state policy development and implementation of the state of Texas.
- Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion. Critical Thinking
- In written, oral, and/or visual communication, A&M-Commerce students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure. Core Objective: Communication
- Students will be able to understand their role in their own education. Core Objective: Personal Responsibility
- Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues. Core Objective: Social Responsibility

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

The primary method of instruction in this class will be student self-directed readings supplemented with interaction with classmates in discussion assignments as well as the instructor when needed.

Course grades will be based upon the following components.

Exams

Students will take three midterm exams. All exams will include material from the textbook and the scheduled dates for the exams are listed below. These exams will feature 50 multiple choice questions. Exam One will cover Chapters 1, 2, 12, 13, 14 and Appendix Readings. Exam Two will cover Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18. Exam Three will cover Chapters 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

Discussion Assignments

This graded component of the course will consist of weekly discussions completed via the eCollege platform. 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 responses.

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. This post should be 250 words minimum. Second, students are expected to respond to the posts of other students in their discussion group. Each of these posts should be at least 100 words. Students should include a word count in parentheses at the end of all of their posts. 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 per assignment and these posts should not be made all on the same day or during the final hours of the assignment time line.

Students will receive a grade of between a .5 through a 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 fully answer the questions or do not make a minimum of 5 posts 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. Effectively, students who do not follow the proper citation/attribution requirements listed above will receive a 0 for all of the discussion assignments.

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 of the 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.

Quizzes

Students will take weekly quizzes throughout the semester (except the week of exams) via the eCollege platform. These quizzes will feature 6-8 multiple choice and/or True/False questions and students will have 10 minutes to complete them. These quizzes will always open on Fridays 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 regardless of the reason. When the quiz average is computed at the end of the semester, the student's lowest individual quiz score will be dropped. If a student completes all of the quizzes, the lowest score will be dropped. For students who do not complete all of the quizzes, one score of 0 for a missing quiz will be dropped.

Extra Credit "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.

GRADING

Course grades will be based upon the following breakdown.

Final Grade Breakdown

| | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| Midterm One | 25% |
| Midterm Two | 25% |
| Midterm Three | 25% |
| Discussion Average | 15% |
| Quizzes | 10% |
| Final Grade | 100% |

Grading Scale

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

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

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 will need access to an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer.
Note that 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.

Our campus is optimized to work in a Microsoft Windows environment. This means our courses work best if you are using a Windows operating system (XP or newer) and a recent version of Microsoft Internet Explorer (6.0, 7.0, or 8.0).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser (3.0) on both Windows and Mac operating systems.

It is strongly recommended that you perform a “Browser Test” prior to the start of your course. To launch a browser test, login in to eCollege, click on the ‘myCourses’ tab, and then select the “Browser Test” link under Support Services.

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

eCollege Access and Log in Information

This course will be facilitated using eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.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.

Course Navigation

All course assignments and requirements will be delivered and completed through eCollege. All grades and any comments on submitted assignments will be made available in the Gradebook in eCollege.

This course is not a self-paced class. Students will need to follow the timelines and calendars included below to ensure that they complete the exams, discussion assignments, and extra credit opportunity in a timely manner. The exams will be found under the module labeled “Exam”; discussion assignments will be found under the module labeled “Discussions” and the extra credit assignment is located under the “Course Home” module. Students should become familiarize with the scheduled times and dates for all of these requirements.

Exam Technical Issues: Students will take three midterm exams via the course site. 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.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Students should rely upon e-mail and reading class announcements as the primary means of communication with me. I will use both means to announce any changes to the course syllabus or other relevant information. Also, please note that the system will only send e-mail to your official University Email address, so you will need to check that account regularly. Because this is a completely online class, I will try to e-mail you as soon as I can. From M-F you can expect a reply, at the latest within 24 hours.

Office Hours

Because this class is offered online, office hours will be held online. Some weeks I will be in my campus office during the posted office hours, but I will always be available virtually during the posted times. If students need to discuss an issue with me during that time, they should make arrangements by e-mail to setup a time to either use the “Live” chat option on the course page, to see if I will physically be in my office or for me to call on the phone.

Virtual Office

The Virtual Office, found in the Course Home module is a discussion thread that provides students an opportunity to post questions or concerns that might be useful for the entire class to see. While other students may attempt to help answer your question, please check back for my answer as well, which will always be provided within 24 hours during the week.

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:

- 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."
- Phone: Students can access phone support by calling the toll free phone number for eCollege, 1-866-656-5511.
- 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.

- Help: Click on the *'Help'* button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege (i.e. how to submit to dropbox, and how to post to discussions, etc.)

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures

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 take each of the 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. Texas A&M University-Commerce does not tolerate **plagiarism** and other forms of academic **dishonesty**. Conduct that violates generally accepted standards of academic honesty is defined as academic dishonesty. "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. 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. Make-up exams: If a student misses an 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. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and 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. Students who miss any exam because they forgot

about the exam dates/times or because they did not have access to a computer/Internet will not receive a make-up exam. Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given. Make-up exams will be exclusively essay format.

11. Incompletes will be granted completely at the discretion of the instructor and only be granted in the case of serious medical illness or other serious, unavoidable circumstances and only if the students has completed at least 50% of the course work. Incompletes must be made up within two weeks of the end of the semester as students only have access to their eCollege course for two weeks following the final day of the term.

University Specific Procedures

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 132
Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835
Fax (903) 468-8148
StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Student Conduct

The University has rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. Specific expectations regarding student behavior and conduct are contained in different sections of this syllabus. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the student handbook.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Suggested Reading Schedule

| Date | Topic | Reading Assignment |
|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------------|
| Week beginning 8/24 | American Political Culture | 1 |
| Week beginning 8/31 | US Constitution | 2, Appendix A |
| Week beginning 9/7 | The Congress | 12 |
| Week beginning 9/14 | The Presidency | 13 |
| Week beginning 9/21 | The Bureaucracy | 14 |
| Week beginning 9/28 | The Judiciary | 15 |
| Week beginning 10/5 | Economic Policy | 16 |
| Week beginning 10/12 | Social Policy | 17 |
| Week beginning 10/19 | Foreign Policy | 18 |
| Week beginning 10/26 | Texas Constitution | 20 |
| Week beginning 11/2 | Texas Legislature | 23 |
| Week beginning 11/9 | Texas Executive | 24 |
| Week beginning 11/16 | Texas Judiciary | 25 |
| Week beginning 11/23 | Local Government in Texas | 26 |
| Week beginning 11/30 | Public Policy in Texas | 27 |

Midterm Exam Schedule

Midterm Exams will be taken on-line and are scheduled on the dates listed below. Each exam begins at 11:59 PM on the scheduled date and closes 48 hours later.

Midterm Exam One: Available 9/25 @ 11:59 PM. Covers Chapters 1, 2, 12, 13, 14 and Appendix Readings

Midterm Exam Two: Available 10/23 @ 11:59 PM. Covers Chapters 15, 16, 17, 18

Midterm Exam Three: Available 12/4 @ 11:59 PM. Covers Chapters 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27

Extra Credit Syllabus Quiz Schedule

The quiz will open at 9 AM on 7/11/2014 and close at 9 AM on 7/13/2014.

*** 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 on the class site.