

**Principles of United States and Texas Government**  
**[PSCI 2301 Princ of US and Tex Gov]**  
**Summer I 2015**  
**Mondays/Tuesdays/Wednesdays/Thursdays (9:00am-10:50am)**  
**June 8 – July 9 2015**  
**Room: SS 124**

**Dr. Robert G. Rodríguez**

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**Office Hours: M/Tu/W/Th 10:50am-11:20am or by appointment**

*The BEST way to contact me is via email.*

**Course Description:**

Welcome to Principles of United States and Texas Government! The purpose of this course is to study the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in the United States and Texas. This course will introduce you to the historical, social, political, cultural, and global forces that affect national and statewide political activity. Please note 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*.

After a brief examination of early U.S. and Texas political history and political culture, we will examine the formation of the federal and state constitutions. Then, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities granted by federalism and representative government in the United States and Texas. Subsequently, we will spend a significant amount of time analyzing civil liberties and civil rights. We also will discuss the roles that public opinion and the media play in U.S. and Texas politics. We will conclude the course by examining political parties, campaigns, voting, and elections in the context of the upcoming 2016 presidential primaries and election in addition to interest group politics.

**Format:**

Each class session will involve lectures and discussions about the assigned readings. You will regularly be asked to contribute your opinions and answer questions about the readings. In addition to the assigned readings listed in the syllabus, we will regularly discuss current political events, since developments in American politics occur on a daily basis.

*This syllabus is subject to change at any time at the professor's discretion.*

**NO PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE ALLOWED IN CLASS AT ANY TIME.**

***THIS INCLUDES (BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO):***

***CELL PHONES,***

***LAPTOPS,***

***iPADS,***

***iPODS,***

***MP3 Players/Recorders,***

***Translation Devices***

***VIDEO CAMERAS***

***OR ANY OTHER AUDIO AND/OR VIDEO RECORDERS OF ANY KIND***

***IF ANY OF THESE DEVICES ARE PRESENT IN CLASS THE ENTIRE CLASS WILL HAVE A POP QUIZ AND THE INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE MAY BE DIRECTED TO LEAVE THE CLASSROOM IMMEDIATELY.***

## Requirements/Assignments:

**Examinations:** In this course, **all students are required to take three exams**, each of which will consist of 50 questions in a multiple choice format. Together, these exams will comprise **93%** of your grade (each exam is worth 31%). The exams are NOT comprehensive. **There is NOT a final exam in this course.**

**If you miss an exam, you will receive 0% for that exam.**

If you have a **legitimate reason** for missing an exam (e.g. severe illness or injury *requiring professional medical care*, emergencies in your *immediate* family, participation in *official* university activities, legal obligations) **AND** you have **supporting documentation** for your absence, then you may **request** taking the MAKE-UP EXAM, which will **BE GIVEN AT A TIME AND DATE DETERMINED BY THE PROFESSOR. NOTE: EXAM 3 WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE LAST DAY OF CLASS AND CANNOT BE MADE UP FOR ANY REASON.**

Requests for taking the make-up exam must be **submitted in writing and include documentation** explaining and substantiating why the absence was legitimate. An approval to take the make-up exam will be based solely upon the professor's evaluation of your request and any supporting documentation. **It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to notify me and provide documentation IN ADVANCE of missing an exam. If you do not provide this information in advance, you will receive 0% for that exam. If you miss an exam due to UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES, YOU MUST provide documentation for your absence in the class session immediately after the missed exam, or you will receive a 0% for that exam.**

*If you miss a make-up exam, you will get a 0% for that exam.*

**Attendance:** *Attendance is critical. Discussions are irreplaceable. Course sessions cannot be "made up." It will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for you to succeed in this course if you do not attend all –or nearly all- class sessions.* Attendance will be taken during each class session using a sign-in sheet for financial aid and other documentation purposes. However, it will **not** directly affect your grade (unless your attendance is 100% perfect—see Attendance Note 3 below). **Signing in a student who is not present or a asking a student to sign you in when you are absent constitutes academic dishonesty (see p.3).** As your attendance will not be used to calculate your grade, *it is NOT necessary to provide me with any excuses for absences (unless you are absent during an examination – read the previous section).*

*Attendance Note 1: If a pop quiz or any other assignment is given when you are absent, you CANNOT make it up, regardless of the reason for your absence (excused or unexcused).*

*Attendance Note 2: I will NOT reply to any emails asking what we did in class during your absence- We will follow the syllabus. If you miss class, get notes from a classmate and ask him/her if there were any announcements.*

*Attendance Note 3: Students who attend ALL class sessions will receive a bonus of 2% added to their final grade.*

**Participation:** Your participation in this class is highly desirable and will make class sessions more interesting. Positive participation includes responding to my questions, asking your own questions, and contributing to class discussions. Your participation will not directly affect your grade. However, if you use personal electronic devices in class, the entire class will take a pop quiz and you may be removed from the classroom. Also, if you misbehave in class or disrupt class in any way you may be directed to leave the classroom.

**Pop Quizzes:** These will be assigned only if anyone is found to be using an electronic device in class, and will count for a total of **3%** of your grade. If you are *absent* when a pop quiz is given, you **cannot** make it up, irrespective of the circumstances, and will earn 0% for any quiz you miss. Pop quizzes will be graded on the basis of the content and clarity of your answers.

**Writing Assignments:** You will have **ONE** required writing assignment that is worth a total of **4%** of your grade. The writing assignment will take place during class on **Wednesday, July 8, 2015** and requires you to write about issues that address **critical thinking, communication** and **social responsibility** learned in this course. **IF YOU MISS THIS CLASS SESSION FOR ANY REASON, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE UP THIS ASSIGNMENT.**

### **Grades:**

Your grade in this course will be determined by the following criteria and scale:

- Exam #1 (**June 16**): 31%
- Exam #2 (**June 30**): 31%
- Exam #3 (**July 9**): 31%
- Pop Quizzes: 3%
- Writing Assignment (**July 8**): 4%

**A 90-100%; B 80-89.9%; C 70-79.9%; D 60-69.9%; F Below 60%**

### **Learning Outcomes:**

1. **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
2. **Communication:** Student communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data and technology as applicable.
3. **Personal Responsibility:** Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
4. **Social Responsibility:** Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.

### **Policies:**

**Academic Dishonesty of ANY kind:** Any student who is caught committing any kind of academic dishonesty will receive an “F” in this course and be reported to the University administration. “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), signing the attendance sheet for a student who is absent (or asking another student to sign you in when you are absent), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material” (Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12). If you have any doubt as to what may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me prior to submitting any assignments.

**Email:** Before you ask me a question in an email, check to see if the syllabus answers your question **FIRST**. I generally reply to emails within 24 hours, Monday-Thursday. Emails sent to me over weekends will be replied to on Mondays. I do not reply to emails that ask questions about items covered in the syllabus, such as what chapters are covered on an exam or what the assigned readings are for a given class session.

**Code of Student Conduct:** *Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.* Failure to comply with the Code of Student Conduct and commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class, being immediately dropped from the class, and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

**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

**In order to maximize your performance in this course, you must:**

- ***TURN OFF ALL PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES BEFORE CLASS BEGINS. THIS INCLUDES (BUT IS NOT LIMITED TO): CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, iPADS, IPODS, MP3 Players/Recorders, Translation devices, VIDEO CAMERAS, OR ANY OTHER AUDIO AND/OR VIDEO RECORDERS OF ANY KIND***
- ***IF ANYONE IS FOUND TO BE TEXTING OR ANSWERS A PHONE CALL DURING CLASS, THE ENTIRE CLASS WILL TAKE A *POP QUIZ* ON THE SPOT.***
- Attend each class session AND arrive ON TIME (**the classroom door will not be opened for late arrivals 15 minutes after class starts**); Notify the professor in advance if you need to arrive late or leave early;
- Read the assigned material before class;
- Be prepared to discuss the topics presented in class;
- Refrain from reading materials or working on other homework during class;
- Do NOT get up in the middle of class to go to the bathroom unless absolutely necessary;
- Be courteous to -and respectful of- your fellow students and professor.

## Required Readings:

There are **TWO** required texts for this course. *MAKE SURE TO PURCHASE THE CORRECT EDITIONS:*

- **We the People: An Introduction to American Politics**  
**TENTH ESSENTIALS** Edition, 2015, W.W. Norton and Co.  
*by Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, Spitzer*  
ISBN: 978-0-393-93705-3
- **Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas**  
**FOURTH** Edition 2016, CQ Press  
*by Ken Collier, Steven Galatas, Julie Harrelson-Stephens*  
ISBN: 978-1-4833-5277-0

*\*ELECTRONIC BOOKS (e-books) ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE FOR THIS COURSE\**

## Course Schedule:

### Introduction to Course; U.S. Political Culture

June 8

Read:

- *Buy your books*
- We the People, Chapter 1

### Early Texas Politics

June 9

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 1

### U.S. Constitution

June 10-11

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 2

### Texas Constitution

June 15

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 2

### Exam 1; Film

June 16

- *Exam #1 will take place at the beginning of class on TUESDAY, the 16<sup>h</sup> of June. You will have one hour to complete it. After the exam, we will watch a film in class. The exam will cover:*
  - *We The People (Chapters 1 & 2) AND*
  - *Lone Star Politics (Chapters 1 & 2).*

## **Federalism**

June 17-18

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 3

## **Civil Liberties/Civil Rights**

June 22-24

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 4

## **Public Opinion**

June 25

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 5

## **The Media**

June 29

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 6

## **Exam 2; Film**

June 30

Read:

- *Exam #2 will take place at the beginning of class on TUESDAY, the 30<sup>th</sup> of June. You will have one hour to complete it. After the exam, we will watch a film in class. The exam will cover:*
  - *We The People (Chapters 3,4, 5 & 6)*

## **U.S. Political Parties, Participation, and Elections**

July 1-2

Read:

- We the People, Chapter 7

## **Texas Elections**

July 6

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9

## **Texas Interest Groups**

July 7

Read:

- Lone Star Politics, Chapter 11

## **In-Class Writing Assignment/Course Evaluations**

July 8

- *You will be provided with the opportunity to complete course evaluations, then you will complete the in-class writing assignment for the rest of the class time.*

## **Exam 3**

July 9

Read:

Prepare for Exam # 3.

**NOTE:** This is the last day of the Summer I session, thus, **Exam 3 CANNOT BE MADE UP FOR ANY REASON.**

- *Exam #3 will take place at the beginning of class on THURSDAY, the 9<sup>th</sup> of July. You will have one hour to complete it. The exam will cover:*
  - **We The People, Chapters 7**
  - **Lone Star Politics, Chapters 9 and 11**

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**STUDENT STATEMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the syllabus in its entirety, and understand the guidelines and agree to the policies detailed therein as a condition of being enrolled in this course. I understand my obligation to adhere to these guidelines and policies in this course, and that failure to do so may result in serious consequences, including (but not limited to) being dropped from the course, and/or receiving a grade of “F” in the course.

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student PRINTED Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**FAILURE TO RETURN THIS SIGNED STATEMENT BY THE FOURTH CLASS SESSION (June 11, 2015) WILL RESULT IN YOUR BEING DROPPED FROM THIS COURSE.**