

**Texas A&M University – Commerce**  
**PSCI 2301.91W & PSCI 2301.92W**  
**Principles of United States and Texas Government**  
**FALL 2015**

**Instructor Information**

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**Office Hours:** By appointment only

**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 civil liberties and civil rights, 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 be able to form substantive and evidence-driven arguments to propose solutions to problems or explain phenomena.
2. Student communications will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data, and technology as applicable.
3. Students will be able to recognize bias and assumptions in arguments to understand the strengths and/or weakness of methodologies and/or project/research design.
4. Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.

**Required Textbooks and Materials**

The required text for this course is *We The People, 9<sup>th</sup> Texas Edition* by Lowi, Ginsberg, Weir. ISBN –9780393921113. While there are earlier editions of this text available, this is the official required edition. If you would like an alternative option to purchasing a hardcopy of the textbook, there is an online version of the text, which can be purchased from the publisher's website for a fraction of the cost. This version can be purchased at [www.wwnorton.com/nortonebooks](http://www.wwnorton.com/nortonebooks)

## Course Requirements

All students are required to meet the following expectations:

1. Students are expected to complete all course readings as assigned for each section of the class. The assigned reading schedule is attached below and will be posted in the weekly schedule found on the course homepage through eCollege.
2. Students are expected to access the course on a regular basis. You are responsible for checking the course for any announcements, updates, and changes that may be made throughout the semester.
3. Students are expected to complete all of the elements listed under **Grading and Evaluation** including Midterm Exams, Discussions, Quizzes and Assignments.
4. Students are expected to be active on discussion boards and are required to participate.
5. Students are to be respectful in all correspondence for the course. Please use courtesy and respect when posting in any areas of the course such as the Discussion Boards and Student Lounge. Please refer to the Student Guidebook for more information on this subject.
6. Students are expected to use academic honesty and maintain the highest level of personal responsibility. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated! Please see the **Student Conduct & Discipline section** below for a detailed description on this subject and what is considered as academic dishonesty in this class. All acts of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for that assignment and cannot be made up. In addition, all acts of academic dishonesty will be reported to the appropriate school official and may result in being dropped from the course and an F letter grade.

### Grading and Evaluation

**Examinations:** 60 percent. There will be three required examinations. All exams will include material from both the textbook and lecture. The scheduled dates for the exams are listed below and will be posted within the course. Each exam will be worth 20 percent of your final grade. Details of each exam will be provided to you prior to taking the exam.

**Quizzes:** 10 percent. Quizzes will be administered regularly throughout the course. Each week, a quiz will be given covering the contents for the chapters scheduled for that week. Quizzes may consist of multiple choice, matching, short answers, and fill in the blank. Quizzes can only be taken during the week they are scheduled and cannot be made up. If you fail to complete the quiz during the scheduled time, you will receive a zero for that week.

**Discussion Assignments:** 15 percent. Students will be required to participate in discussion threads on a weekly basis. The instructor will post the topics for weekly discussions, which will focus on that week's assigned reading. Each student will be required to post one response and respond to three of their fellow classmate's responses. More information regarding discussion assignments is listed below.

**Writing Assignments:** 15 percent. Students will be required to complete two writing assignments. These assignments will be assigned throughout the course and will have a specific due date which will be made available to you in advance. NO late assignments will be accepted.

The assignments will be posted and instructions will be provided to you. Please do not ask for the assignments in advance.

### **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**

Students are required to take three midterm exams. Each midterm will be taken on-line and have a 60-minute time limit. Each exam will be open for 48 hours and can only be accessed once.

- Midterm Exam One – Opens Thursday, Sept. 24th at 11:59 p.m and will remain open until Saturday, Sept. 26th at 11:59 p.m.
  - will cover Chapters 1,2,3,19, 20, and Appendix A 1-24
- Midterm Exam Two – Opens Thursday, Oct. 29th at 11:59 p.m and will remain open until Saturday, Oct. 31st at 11:59 p.m.
  - will cover Chapters 4,5,6,7,8,
- Midterm Exam Three – Opens Wed. Dec. 9th at 11:59 p.m and will remain open until Friday, Dec. 11th at 11:59 p.m.
  - will cover Chapters 9,10,11,21,22

### **Technical Issues**

Students are required to take three midterm exams and a comprehensive final, which will be accessed through 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 accessed once. Exams cannot be paused once it has begun even if there is a sudden disconnection. Students are given the option to “Save Answers” and should do so frequently. Students should not click the “Submit Test” button until the exam has been completed. Once the student clicks the “Submit Test”, the exam will be closed and cannot be re-entered. Any technical problems that occur while taking the exam should be immediately referred to the help desk and the student should contact the instructor immediately via email. Students who encounter technical problems because of failing to comply with these guidelines will not be given an opportunity re-take or re-access an exam.

### **Discussion Assignments**

There will be 15 weekly discussions. Each week, the instructor will post and/or instructions for the discussion assignments on Monday. Each discussion thread will be open until Saturday of that week and will close at 11:59 p.m. There will not be a discussion the week of Thanksgiving Break. Students are given ample time to participate in discussion assignments and therefore there will be no make-up opportunities if for any reason the student fails to participate. No credit will be given for posts made after the deadline.

Each week the student is required to submit four posts. The student is required to respond to the discussion topic and respond to three posts made by other students. Each post should answer all parts of the topic in a clear and coherent manner. When responding to other members of the course, students should provide thoughtful discussion that will help stimulate conversation. It is not sufficient to simply agree or disagree with the post; the student must provide an educated response. The student’s initial response should be at least 175 words and should incorporate

material from the textbook and at least one additional reference. Please note the additional reference should be from a scholarly source and should be cited within the discussion post. Wikipedia is never acceptable. The three responses to posts made by other students should be at least 125 words each.

The student will be graded based upon the quality and content of their original response to the topic posted as well as those posted in response to other students. Posts that do not fully answer the questions or respond to other posts will not receive full credit. Each discussion assignment will be graded on a scale from 1-3, with 3 being the highest. Students will receive up to 1.5 points for their original response and up to .5 for each additional response, for a combined possible total of 3 points. Students who fail to participate will receive a zero and this grade cannot be made up.

Students must be conscious of the academic dishonesty as discussed in the Student Conduct and Discipline section below when content is submitted for Discussion Assignments. All content that is submitted should be the student's original work. Any material taken from another source, including the textbook, should include a proper citation. Material, which is copied or paste from any source will be considered plagiarism and as a result, the student will not receive credit for ALL Discussion Assignments. Work submitted by students will be checked through Turnitin for originality.

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

**Make-up exams:** No individual make-up examinations will be given. If a student misses an exam, that student will receive a grade of zero 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 submitted in writing, not e-mail, and include documentation explaining why the absence was legitimate. Such a request must be received within three 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 official University activities and legal obligations. *Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given.* Should you be allowed to take the make-up exam, it will be a cumulative essay examination that will be given during the last scheduled week of class for the semester.

**Extra Credit:** There is no extra credit in this class so please do not ask about it. At times, you may be given the opportunity to receive extra points on exams. These will be given at the instructor's discretion and are not a guarantee.

### **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 which 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 attempts to pass off work as your own that was written by another individual, without proper citation or attribution, on any assignment or exam in this course will be considered an act of plagiarism. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate administrators on campus and may result in significant penalties to include failure or removal from the course.

### **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@tamu-commerce.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu)

**NOTE: 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.**

### Reading Assignments and Examination Calendar

Week	Topics	Assigned Chapter Readings
1	American Political Culture	1
2	The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas	19
3	The Founding and the Constitution	2
4	The Constitution	A1-A24
	The Texas Constitution	20
5	Federalism	3
	<b>EXAM ONE</b>	
6	Civil Liberties	4
7	Civil Rights	5
8	Public Opinion	6
9	The Media	7
10	Political Participation & Voting	8
	<b>Exam TWO</b>	
11	Campaigns & Elections	10
12	Political Parties	9
	Texas Political Parties	21
13	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>	
14	Groups and Interests	11
15	Interest Groups in Texas	22
	<b>EXAM THREE</b>	
16	Review ALL Chapters	
	Comprehensive Final Exam	

**\* The instructor reserves the right to amend the reading assignments and examination calendar as needed over the course of the semester. Any and all changes will be announced.**