

Texas A&M University – Commerce

PSCI 2301.02W United States and Texas Government: Institutions and Policies SPRING 2016 - ONLINE

Instructor Information

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Course Description:

This course is an examination of the United States and Texas political systems with emphasis in 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 (formulation and implementation).

Learning objectives:

1. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding political behavior and interaction between citizens and institutions of government.
2. Students will understand and employ significant theoretical and analytical approaches to understanding political behavior and interaction between citizens and institutions of government in Texas.
3. Students will understand and employ important theoretical and analytical approaches to explain US constitutional development.
4. Students will understand and employ important theoretical and analytical approaches to explain Texas constitutional development.

Required Textbooks and Materials

The required text is *We The People, 9th Texas Edition* by Lowi, Ginsberg, Weir. ISBN: 978-0-393-9211-3. While there are earlier editions of this text available, this is the officially 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

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, and Assignments.
4. Students are expected to be active on discussion boards and are required to participate.
5. Students are to be respectful in any and 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. ***Any acts of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for that assignment and cannot be made up.

Grading and Evaluation

Examinations: 60 percent. There will be three required midterm exams. 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%. Details of each exam will be provided to you prior to taking the exam.

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. There will be two library assignments that students will be required to complete. These assignments will be assigned throughout the course and will have a specific due date which will be made available to you in advance. Writing assignments must be submitted via the course Dropbox and must be submitted in a word compatible document. It is the student's responsibility to make certain the document is word compatible, if the instructor is unable to open the assignment, it will not be graded and will result in a zero. NO late assignments will be accepted for any reason. The assignments will be posted and instructions will be provided to you. Please do not ask for the assignments in advance.

Quizzes: 10 percent. Students will be required to take weekly quizzes. The quizzes will cover material from the chapter assigned for each week and may only be taken in the week for which the chapter is assigned. If you miss a quiz, it cannot be made up. The quiz may only be taken once and must be completed at the time it is started, it may not be saved and resumed later.

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. These exams will be taken on-line and will 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, February 18th at 11:59 p.m. and closes Saturday, February 20th at 11:59 p.m.
 - will cover Chapters 1,2,3,19, 20, and Appendix A 1-24
- Midterm Exam Two – Opens Thursday, March 31st at 11:59 p.m. and closes Saturday April 2nd at 11:59 p.m.
 - will cover Chapters 4,5,6,7,8,
- Midterm Exam Three – Opens Wednesday May 4th at 11:59 p.m. and closes Friday, May 6th. ***Because exam three is a midterm, it will open on Wednesday so that it can be completed by the last class day of classes.
 - will cover Chapters 9,10,11,21,22
- Comprehensive Final – Opens Wednesday, May 11th at 11:59 p.m. and closes Friday, May 13th at 11:59 p.m. ***The Comprehensive is not required for all students. If you miss an exam, you are required to take the comprehensive final to replace the zero for the missed exam. If a student has taken all three midterms, the student has the option to take the comprehensive final to replace their lowest test grade. If the comprehensive final is taken as option, it will only count if it improves the student's grade.

Technical Issues

Students are required to take three midterm exams, 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. Students who encounter technical problems as a result 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 a topic for the discussion assignments on Monday at 10:00 a.m. Each discussion thread will be open until Sunday of that week and will close at 11:59 p.m. The only exception to this schedule is the first week of class where the discussion will open at 10:00 a.m. on Tuesday and will close at 10:00 p.m. on Sunday. We will not have a discussion the week of Spring 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 student is required to respond to the topic and is required to respond to three other 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. Students should use proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation when responding. Suggested length for the student's initial response to the discussion question is approximately 150-175 words. Suggested length for student's response to posts made by classmates is approximately 100 words. Word minimums are not required initially, but may be imposed based on the quality of responses.

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. When posting on the discussion board, you should not expect to post all four responses at the same time. The idea of discussion is to engage with other students and read what others are saying. With that in mind you should engage in discussion throughout the week. Please be aware that penalties may be given to students who submit all the required postings on the same day or all on the last day of the week. Each discussion assignment will be graded on a scale from 1-3, with 3 being the highest. Students who fail to participate will receive a 0 and 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.

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 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 submitted in writing, not e-mail, 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 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 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 offices on campus and may result in significant penalties.

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

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Technology: Please take the “Student Orientational Tutorial” linked to your main courses page within eCollege that you should have completed prior to beginning this course. In addition to reliable web service on a daily basis for your online sessions, you also need access to Microsoft Word or to word processing software that you can save files in “Microsoft Word” compatible style. You also need a reliable place to save and keep copies of your coursework files for storage and reference. You also need the following to use technology successfully in this course.

- Internet access/connection – high speed recommended (not dial-up)
- Internet browser software (Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox work best)
- Word Processor (MS Word)

Additionally, the following hardware and software are necessary to use eCollege:

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). 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

This course used eCollege, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to: <https://leo.tamu-commerce.edu/login.aspx>. You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamu-commerce.edu.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Email is the very best way to reach me. In every email, please make sure to provide your full name at the end, which course you are enrolled in, and a description of your request. I will communicate with you through the email address you have on file in MyLeo (make sure yours is up to date and working throughout the semester) and eCollege announcements. In all forms of class communication including all online forums, students are expected and required to maintain a respectful tone and use semiformal to formal language.

eCollege Student Technical Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of eCollege. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chat Support: Click on *'Live Support'* on the tool bar within your course to chat with an eCollege Representative.

Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Email: helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with eCollege Technical Support Representative.

Help: Click on the *'Help'* button on the toolbar for information regarding working with eCollege

Technological Failure:

If at any time you experience technical problems (e.g., you can't log in to the course, you can't see certain material, etc.) please contact the eCollege HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The HelpDesk can be reached by clicking on the HelpDesk link in the Help pages as described above, or by sending an email directly to helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling (toll-free) 1-866-656-5511.” This information is also available through the “Technical Support” tab on the course main menu. Course instructors are not responsible for technical failures and should only be notified in cases of repeated failure or lack of response by the HelpDesk.

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	Dates	Topics	Assigned Chapter Readings
1	Jan 20-Jan 24	American Political Culture	1
2	Jan 25-Jan 31	The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas	19
3	Feb 1-Feb 7	The Founding and the Constitution	2
		The Constitution	A1-A24
4	Feb 8-Feb 14	The Texas Constitution	20
5	Feb 15-Feb 21	Federalism	3
	Feb 18-Feb 20	EXAM ONE	
6	Feb 22-Feb 28	Civil Liberties	4
7	Feb 29-Mar 6	Civil Rights	5
8	Mar 7-Mar 13	Public Opinion	6
9	Mar 14-Mar 20	SPRING BREAK	
10	Mar 21-Mar 27	The Media	7
11	Mar 28 – Apr 3	Political Participation & Voting	8
	Mar 31– Apr 2	EXAM TWO	
12	Apr 4-Apr 10	Campaigns & Elections	10
13	Apr 11-Apr 17	Political Parties	9
14	Apr 18- Apr 24	Texas Political Parties	21
15	Apr 25-May 1	Groups & Interests	11
16	May 2-May 8	Interest Groups in Texas	27
	May 4 – May 6	EXAM THREE	
17	May 9–May 13	FINALS WEEK	

*** 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.**