

PRINCIPLES OF US AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT
PSCI 2301
Fall 2018

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Office Hours: T-R 12.30 – 2 pm
T-R 3.30 – 4.30 pm
and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

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

We will examine early U.S. and Texas political history and political culture, the formation of federal and state constitutions, and the challenges and opportunities granted by federalism and representative government in the United States and Texas. We will also analyze civil liberties and civil rights and the roles that public opinion and the media play in U.S. and Texas politics.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ***Social Responsibility:*** Through understanding how government works, students will be able to increase their awareness of societal and/or civic issues.
- ***Critical Thinking & Personal Responsibility:*** One must learn how to critically assess information in hand. One must also be able to understand and practice academic honesty.
- ***Develop Empathy Skills:*** Look at issues from multiple sides, put yourself into others' shoes, and get out of your comfort zone in analyzing the complexity of the world.
- ***Communication:*** Students must be able to communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE

The class will be a mix of lectures, debates and group activities. An outline of the reading schedule is provided in this syllabus. Students are required to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned materials. In addition to the assigned readings, we may also discuss current political events, since developments in U.S. and Texas politics occur on a daily basis.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Paula D. McClain and Steven C. Tauber, *American Government in Black and White*, 3rd edition, Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Benjamin Ginsberg, et. al., *We the People*, 9th Texas ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2013.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance & Participation: Attendance is vital to your success in class. I will take attendance on a random basis. If you're found absent more than 3 times without an excuse, your final grade will automatically drop by one letter grade (e.g. if the student earned a "B" in the course, the final grade would be a "C"). Acceptable excuses include documented health and family emergencies. Participation points are earned through your contribution to class discussions and debates.

Exams: There will be two midterms and a final exam. Both the midterms and the final will consist of multiple choice questions. Final exam (in-class) will take place during the finals week. Study guides will be available. The exam dates can be found on the course schedule.

Debates: Interactive learning will be a crucial part of your learning process in this class. Throughout the semester, we will have two in-class debates. The first debate will be on U.S. domestic policy topics and the second debate will be on U.S. foreign policy topics. Debate topics will be posted on E-College at least two weeks before the debate date. Everyone will receive a performance grade for each debate based on participation. This will require a) being present in class during the debate; b) participate in the discussion with thoughtful comments. If you miss the class on a debate day, your performance grade will automatically be "0". Debate dates can be found on the course schedule.

Group Project: The course includes a group assignment titled "Design Your Own Social Movement". Throughout the semester, students will work in groups to solve or create awareness about a social problem of their choice. This assignment requires students to consistently report about the progress of their project on E-College. There will be short preliminary presentations on **Week 8**. Final presentations will take place during the last two weeks of the semester. Each group is required to submit a final project report during the finals week. A detailed grading rubric, guidelines and format requirements for this assignment can be found on E-College.

GRADING

Your final course grade will be determined by your performance on the following components:

Course Requirements	Weight
Attendance & Participation	10%
Midterms	20% (each)
Debate Performance	10%
Group Project	20%
Final	20%

Total	100%
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GRADE SCALE

90-100 = A
80-90 = B
70-80 = C
60-70 = D
Below 60 =F

MAKE-UP POLICY

Make-ups are allowed only under special circumstances such as medical or family emergencies. However, you must request it prior to the deadline and present documentary proof. Post-deadline make-up requests will not be granted under any circumstances. If you submit any of your assignments late without an excuse, I will cut off 5 points for each day after the deadline.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY DURING CLASS

Unless we assign a day to use technology as part of the learning process, use of cell phones, computers or any other electronic devices in the classroom is not allowed.

CIVILITY AND RESPECT

All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. I expect everyone to be respectful of each other’s perspectives and opinions during class discussions. Any behavior that disrupts the class or impedes other student’s ability to fully engage with the course will not be tolerated.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Each student is required to be responsible for purposefully pursuing and honestly submitting research and work that is original and is the sole work of the individual. Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. If you are unclear about the ethics of an academic action, please consult me during my office hours.

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

The American 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 [\(903 886-5150\)](tel:9038865150) or [\(903\) 886-5835](tel:9038865835) Fax [\(903\) 468-8148](tel:9034688148) StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Texas Senate Bill-11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-0Commerce Rule 34.06.02R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02R1.pdf> (and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at [903-886-5868](tel:9038865868) or 9-1-1.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

8/28 Introduction to the course/Overview of the syllabus

8/30 American Government and Politics in a Racially Divided World McLain & Tauber Ch 1

Week 2

9/4 The Constitution McLain & Tauber Ch 2

9/6 The Constitution (continued) McLain & Tauber Ch 2

Week 3

9/11 Federalism McLain & Tauber Ch 3

9/13 Federalism (continued) McLain & Tauber Ch 3

Week 4

9/18 Civil Liberties McLain & Tauber Ch 4

9/20 Civil Rights McLain & Tauber Ch 5

Week 5

9/25 **Midterm 1**

9/27 **Debate 1**

Week 6

10/2 Public Opinion McLain & Tauber Ch 10

10/4 The Media McLain & Tauber Ch 11

Week 7

10/9 Political Parties McLain & Tauber Ch 16

10/11 Guest Speaker TBA

Week 8

10/16 Social Movements McLain & Tauber Ch 12

10/18 **Preliminary Presentations**

Week 9

10/23 Voting and Elections McLain & Tauber Ch 15

10/25 Voting and Elections (continued) McLain & Tauber Ch 15

Week 10

10/30 **Midterm 2**

11/1 **Debate 2**

Week 11

11/6 The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas We the People, Ch 19

11/8 The Texas Constitution We the People, Ch 20

Week 12

11/13 Parties and Elections in Texas We the People, Ch 21

11/15 The Texas Legislature We the People, Ch 23

Week 13

11/20 The Texas Executive Branch We the People, Ch 24

11/22 **Thanksgiving No Class**

Week 14

11/27 The Texas Judiciary We the People, Ch 25

11/29 **Final Presentations**

Week 15

12/4 **Final Presentations**

12/6 **Final Presentations**

Week 16

Finals Week

Final Exam: December 11, 1.15 pm – 2.45 pm

Final Projects due December 13, 11.59 pm on E-College