

# Principles of United States and Texas Government

PSCI 2301.04E

Fall 2018

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 12pm – 12:50pm

McDowell Administration Building BA 244

## Professor Information:

Sarah Clift

Email: [Sarah.Clift@tamuc.edu](mailto:Sarah.Clift@tamuc.edu)

Office: One Stop Shop

Office Hours: By appointment only – the BEST way to contact me is via email.

## 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 spend time analyzing civil liberties and civil rights and the roles that public opinion and the media play in U.S. and Texas politics.

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*.

## Format:

Each class session will involve lectures and discussions over 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 on this syllabus, we may also discuss current political events, since developments in U.S. and Texas politics occur on a daily basis.

## Learning Objectives:

1. **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to analyze, evaluate, or solve problems when given a set of circumstances, data, texts, or art.
2. **Communication:** 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.
3. **Personal Responsibility:** Students will understand and practice academic honesty.
4. **Social Responsibility:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of societal and/or civic issues.

### **Required Readings:**

We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 11<sup>th</sup> essentials edition  
By Ginsberg, Lowi, Tolbert, and Weir  
ISBN: 9780393283648

Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas, 5<sup>th</sup> edition  
By Collier, Galatas, and Harrelson-Stephens  
ISBN: 9781506346298

*\*\*If you already have the 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of We the People or the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of Lone Star Politics, they will be acceptable for use in this class. However, please be aware that this course will be taught from the 11<sup>th</sup> (WTP) and 5<sup>th</sup> (LSP) editions, so information in the former editions may be outdated, particularly in light of the recent 2016 Presidential Election.*

## **Requirements/Assignments and Grades**

### **Examinations:**

There will be four exams in this course, each of which will consist of questions in a multiple-choice, short answer, and/or fill-in-the-blank format. These exams are not comprehensive and there is no final exam in this course (though our last exam will take place during Finals Week).

**If you miss an exam, you will receive 0% for that exam.** If you have a legitimate reason (severe injury or illness requiring professional medical care, emergencies in your immediate family, participation in official university activities, legal obligations) *and* you have supporting documentation, a make-up exam may be scheduled at the instructor's discretion. Requests to take a make-up exam must be made in writing via email, and include documentation that substantiates the claim. If at all possible, provide notice before the scheduled exam date. **If you miss an exam due to unforeseen circumstances, you must provide documentation for the absence in the class session immediately after the missed exam to be eligible for a make-up exam.**

### **Attendance and Participation:**

Obviously, it is in your best interest to attend each and every class session. In-class discussions are irreplaceable and the content of our discussions is valuable to you as a student in this class. Additionally, students with 0 (unexcused) absences throughout the semester will receive a bonus of 2% added to their final grade. Absences due to school functions such as sports or music/band with proper documentation and notification are considered excused absences and do not count toward unexcused absences. Repeated unexcused absences will be detrimental to your final grade. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class session. If you must come late to class or leave early due to official university functions or other legitimate reasons, please contact me before class. Students that arrive late or leave early (unless otherwise cleared with the professor) will not be awarded attendance points for that day.

In addition to attending class, you are expected and encouraged to participate in class discussions. Your participation in class is highly desirable and will make class sessions more interesting. Students are expected to be respectful and courteous of the political opinions and ideas of their classmates and should not be afraid to engage in class discussion or ask questions. Participation in this class should be positive. Positive participation includes responding to

questions posed by the instructor, asking your own questions, and contributing to class discussions. Negative participation includes sleeping in class, side-talk with your neighbors, coming to class late, or any other class disruptions. Additionally, if you misuse personal electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc), you may be asked to leave the classroom. If you misbehave in class or disrupt class in any way, you may be directed to leave the classroom.

### **Writing Assignment:**

Students will be expected to produce TWO written assignments during the semester (**Sept 26** and **Oct 29**). The writing assignments will take place during class and will require you to bring a blue book to write in. You will be asked to write about issues that address your awareness of societal and/or civic issues, critical thinking, and communication skills. The exact topic(s) will be determined by the professor at a time closer to the assignment due date. **NOTE: IF YOU MISS THESE CLASS SESSIONS, YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE UP THESE ASSIGNMENTS, UNLESS YOU HAVE PROPER DOCUMENTATION FOR AN EXCUSED ABSENCE.**

### **Grading:**

Exam 1 (**Oct 8**) = 20%  
Exam 2 (**Nov 2**) = 20%  
Exam 3 (**Nov 28**) = 20%  
Exam 4 (**Dec 14**) = 20%  
In-Class Writing Assignment 1 (**Sept 26**) = 8%  
In-Class Writing Assignment 2 (**Oct 29**) = 8%  
Attendance & Participation = 4%  
Total = 100%

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

## **Policies**

### **Electronics Policy:**

Laptops and tablets may be used for note taking only. These are the only electronic devices allowed in class. Any other devices, such as cell phones, must be turned off and put away during class. Any violation of the electronics policy will result in an immediate pop quiz.

### **Email Policy:**

**Before you pose a question in an email to me, check to see if the syllabus answers your question FIRST.** I will not reply to emails that ask questions about items covered in the syllabus, such as what chapters were covered on what day or what discussions were had. If you need to contact me via email, you are required to include your first and last name and your student ID (CWID) number in **ALL** your correspondences. You are also asked to include the course name and info in your email subject/header. Example: PSCI 2301.04E – Question Regarding Class

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Any student who is caught committing any kind of academic dishonesty will receive an “F” in this course and will 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.

**Code of Student Conduct:**

*All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.* (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, 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.

**Students with Disabilities:**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination 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 162  
Phone: (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
Email: [StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto:StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu)

**Campus Carry:** 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-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, 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/34.06.02.R1.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 or 911.

**Non-discrimination notice:** 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 from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

## Course Calendar

(All dates and content are subject to change.)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Class Info</b>	<b>Readings</b>
August 27	Introduction	Syllabus
August 29	U.S. Political Culture	We the People, Chapter 1
August 31	U.S. Political Culture	We the People, Chapter 1
September 3	Labor Day	No Class
September 5	U.S. Political Culture	We the People, Chapter 1
September 7	Early Texas Politics	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 1
September 10	Early Texas Politics	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 1
September 12	Early Texas Politics	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 1
September 14	U.S. Constitution	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 1
September 17	U.S. Constitution	We the People, Chapter 2
September 19	U.S. Constitution	We the People, Chapter 2
September 21	U.S. Constitution	We the People, Chapter 2
September 24	U.S. Constitution	We the People, Chapter 2
September 26	<b>In-Class Writing Assignment 1</b>	Bring a Blue Book to write in!
September 28	Texas Constitution	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 2
October 1	Texas Constitution	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 2
October 3	Texas Constitution	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 2
October 5	Review	
October 8	<b>Exam 1</b>	
October 10	Federalism	We the People, Chapter 3
October 12	Federalism	We the People, Chapter 3
October 15	Federalism	We the People, Chapter 3
October 17	Federalism	We the People, Chapter 3
October 19	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights	We the People, Chapter 4
October 22	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights	We the People, Chapter 4
October 24	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights	We the People, Chapter 4
October 26	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights	We the People, Chapter 4
October 29	<b>In-Class Writing Assignment 2</b>	Bring a Blue Book to write in!
October 31	Review	
November 2	<b>Exam 2</b>	
November 5	Texas Elections	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9
November 7	Texas Elections	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9
November 9	Texas Elections	Lone Star Politics, Chapter 9

November 12	U.S. Political Parties and Elections	We the People, Chapter 7
November 14	U.S. Political Parties and Elections	We the People, Chapter 7
November 16	U.S. Political Parties and Elections	We the People, Chapter 7
November 19	U.S. Political Parties and Elections	We the People, Chapter 7
November 21	Thanksgiving	No Class
November 23	Thanksgiving	No Class
November 26	Review	
November 28	<b>Exam 3</b>	
November 30	Public Opinion/The Media	We the People Chapter 5 & 6
December 3	Public Opinion/The Media	We the People Chapter 5 & 6
December 5	Public Opinion/The Media	We the People Chapter 5 & 6
December 7	Review	
December 14	<b>Exam 4</b>	8am – 10am

Exam 1 covers We the People Chapters 1 & 2 and Lone Star Politics Chapters 1 & 2

Exam 2 covers We the People Chapters 3 & 4

Exam 3 covers We the People Chapter 7 and Lone Star Politics Chapter 9

Exam 4 covers We the People Chapters 5 & 6