

United States Government
PSCI 2305.05W
Fall 2020
Web Based Class

Professor Information:

Sarah Clift

Email: Sarah.Clift@tamuc.edu

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. This course will introduce you to the historical, social, political, cultural, and global forces that affect national political activity.

We will examine early U.S. political history and political culture, the formation of the Constitution, and the challenges and opportunities granted by federalism and representative government in the United States. We will also spend time analyzing civil liberties and civil rights, the roles that public opinion and the media play in U.S. politics, and the actual function and practice of government as outlined by the Constitution.

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:

This is a web based course, so the format may be slightly different than face-to-face courses you are accustomed to. The class will involve pre-recorded lectures and presentations over the assigned readings and/or additional content that may be beneficial or helpful to you to understand our course concepts and learning objectives. In addition to the assigned readings listed on this syllabus, we may also discuss current political events, since developments in U.S. 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.
5. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
6. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.

7. Describe the concepts of separation of power and checks and balances, both in theory and in practice.
8. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
9. Analyze the election process and issues and policies in U.S. politics.
10. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Required Readings:

We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 12th essentials edition
By Ginsberg, Lowi, Tolbert, Weir, Campbell, and Spitzer
ISBN: 9780393679670

***If you already have the 11th Edition of We the People, it will be acceptable for use in this class. However, please be aware that this course will be taught from the 12th (WTP) editions so information in the former editions may be outdated. If you would prefer to purchase and download the ebook, you can purchase it from the publisher's website or Amazon.*

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. **If you miss an exam due to unforeseen circumstances, you must provide documentation for the absence to be eligible for a make-up exam.**

Attendance:

Obviously, it is in your best interest to read each chapter and review the presentations. It will be difficult for you to succeed in this course if you do not stay up to date on assignments; however, because this is an online course attendance isn't traditional. As your instructor, I have access to your activity log in D2L – this will be used to document your “attendance” for Financial Aid purposes, **but it will not directly affect your grade.**

Since your attendance will not be used to calculate your grade, *it is not necessary to provide me with any excuse for absences, unless you are absent during an exam window. If you miss an exam due to an excused absence, you must provide documentation for the absence to be eligible for a make-up exam.*

Writing Assignment:

Students will be expected to produce TWO written assignments during the semester (**Feb 5** and **Mar 2**). The writing assignments will be submitted online via D2L and will be run through TurnItIn. 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.

Grading:

Exam 1 (**Feb 10**) = 20%

Exam 2 (**Mar 6**) = 20%

Exam 3 (**Apr 6**) = 20%

Exam 4 (**May 8**) = 20%

Writing Assignment 1 (**Feb 5**) = 10%

Writing Assignment 2 (**Mar 2**) = 10%

Total = 100%

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

Texas A&M – Commerce’s Pandemic Response

A&M-Commerce requires the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories. Exceptions may be made by faculty where warranted. Faculty have management over their classrooms. Students not using face-coverings can be required to leave class. Repetitive refusal to comply can be reported to the Office of Students’ Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. Faculty will work to support the student getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.

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 and exams.

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 to read by when. 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 2305.05W – Question Regarding Class

Academic Dishonesty:

Any student who is caught committing any kind of academic dishonesty will receive an automatic “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

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.)

Date	Topic/Class Info
August 24	Introduction
Week 1 August 24 – August 28	U.S. Political Culture
Week 2 August 31 – September 4	U.S. Constitution
Week 3 September 9 – September 11	U.S. Constitution
	Exam 1 – Due Sat. Sept 13 by 11:59pm
Week 4 September 14 – September 18	Federalism
Week 5 September 21 – September 25	Federalism
Week 6 September 28 – October 2	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights
Week 7 October 5 – October 9	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights
	Writing Assignment 1 – Due Sat. Oct 10 by 11:59pm Exam 2 – Due Sun. Oct 11 by 11:59pm
Week 8 October 12 – October 16	Congress
Week 9 October 19 – October 23	The Presidency
Week 10 October 26 – October 30	The Federal Courts
Week 11 November 2 – November 6	Bureaucracy
	Writing Assignment 2 – Due Sat. Nov 7 by 11:59pm Exam 3 – Due Sun. Nov 8 by 11:59pm
Week 12 November 9 – November 13	U.S. Political Parties, Participation, and Elections
Week 13 November 16 – November 20	Interest Groups
Week 14 November 23 – November 25	Public Opinion
Week 15 November 30 – December 4	Public Opinion/The Media
Week 16 December 7 – December 11	The Media
	Exam 4

Exam 1 covers We the People Chapters 1 & 2

Exam 2 covers We the People Chapters 3 & 4

Exam 3 covers We the People Chapter 9, 10, 11, & 12

Exam 4 covers We the People Chapters 5, 6, 7, & 8