



**PSCI – 2305.01W Fall 2020**  
**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**  
**COURSE SYLLABUS:**  
**Web Based Course**  
**August 24th - December 12th**

Instructor: David Gosbee  
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Office Hours: TBA Online office hours only  
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**COURSE INFORMATION**

**Course Description**

This course is a survey of the institutions and policies of the American governing bodies. You will learn about formal and informal institutions of the national government and how they play into the creation and implementation of public policy. Topics considered include the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, bureaucracies, public policies (formulation and implementation), and global forces that continue to shape our understanding of the relationship between the people and government.

- Please note that you will not be taught what to think about political issues in this course. Rather, you will be provided with the knowledge to determine how to think about political issues for yourself.

This course is meant to provide you with a working knowledge of how a government functions at the federal level in the United States of America.

Because this is a web-based course, all students must meet the technology requirements listed below to successfully complete this course.

**Student Learning Objectives for this Course:**

1. Critical Thinking: Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
2. Communication: Student communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data and technology as applicable. In written, oral, and/or visual communication, A&M-Commerce students will communicate in a manner appropriate to the audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.
3. Personal Responsibility: Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
4. Social Responsibility: Students will demonstrate awareness 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.
7. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
8. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
9. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
10. Analyze the election process.
11. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens 8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

**Format:** Each week will involve digital lectures and discussions over the assigned readings. You will be required to contribute your opinions and answer questions about the readings.

**Textbook & Materials Required:**

This textbook is available free online. It will cover the material but realize that you do get what you pay for. So while this does have good information to start with, supplemental information will be needed to fully understand the topics being covered.

American Government and Politics in the Information Age:

<https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/american-government-and-politics-in-the-information-age>

**\*\*Additional required readings will be supplied by me at no cost to you\*\***

**Grading Policy:**

This following is the breakdown for this class

		<u>Grading Scale</u>
<u>Grading:</u>		A 90-100
Exam 1	10%	B 80-89
Exam 2	10%	C 70-79
Exam 3	10%	D 60-69
Exam 4	10%	F 0-59
Project	20%	
Quizzes	10%	
Participation/Discussions	30%	

Participation/Discussions: Because this is an online course your participation is the largest portion of the grade. This is to simulate what it *\*should\** be like in a face to face course. Where you will give opinions and factual support over the topics presented, and you will also interact with the opinions of your fellow classmates. I can not stress enough how it directly benefits you to be an active participant in the discussions which we will be having.

They will open on Sunday each week at 12:00 a.m. and close Saturday at 11:59 p.m. (all times are in central time)

Minimum requirements for discussion posts: (1) original post each week  
(2) replies to the other students

Participation Bonus: If you do not miss any discussion posts by the end of the semester you will receive a bonus quiz

Non-Participation: If you miss (4) discussion posts during the semester I as your instructor reserve the right to drop you from the class. The discussions are open for a full week and if you know that you will be missing a significant amount of the course it falls on you to make arrangements for your grades.

Exams: There will be four exams given during the semester. They comprise a significant portion of your grade; so it would be beneficial to come prepared for the exams. Makeup examinations may be given at the instructor’s discretion. If you have an academic or athletic reason for missing the exam please get with me as early as possible, to make arrangements. Athletic and School-related make up exams will not be given unless I am notified prior to the due date.

**The unfortunate aspect of makeup exams is that they are going to be different from the original exam and can be more difficult.**

Quizzes/Writing Assignments: Will open along with the discussions each week and will remain open for the same time frame. They can be over the subject matter or over current topics. Questions for the quizzes will come primarily from previous lectures and assigned readings. Plan on having a quiz or writing assignment for each chapter that we cover. Your lowest quiz grade will be dropped and quizzes cannot be made up.

Extra Credit: Opportunities for extra credit will arise during the semester and students will have the option of writing a one page reflection paper over the events or subject matter. Extra credit will be added to exam scores. If you cannot make it to the events, then you will be given the opportunity to turn in the extra credit assignment over the subject matter.

Project: The project will split the students up into two groups chosen by me at random. This is not a group project and each student is responsible for doing their own work. Each student is required to make a 5-10 slide presentation about a House of Representatives or Senate Bill. The presentation will include; why the student chose the bill they did, its progress through the legislative agenda, highlighting which committees it went through, who authored it, and who was for it and against it, and what happened to the bill along the way, any key speeches or anything of note about it, and what its ultimate fate was. Additionally there will be a 1-2 page paper attached with this as well. We will go over this in depth on the class pages.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Students will need to be familiar with the University learning management system (eCollege), know how to use a personal computer, navigate the internet, and use basic word processing software such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

### Student Responsibilities

- Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class and to engage in class Discussions;
- Complete all assignments;
- Be prepared to discuss the topics presented in class;
- Be courteous and respectful of your fellow students and instructors.
- Realize that just because this is a web-based course students are still accountable for their actions and comments.

### Technology Requirements

- Computer/Internet access and connection: high-speed preferred (not dial up)
- Speakers - so you can hear audio enhanced assignments throughout the semester
- Headset/Microphone
- Webcam
- Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint

As a student enrolled at Texas A&M University-Commerce, you have access to an email account via myLeo - all my emails sent from eCollege (and all other university emails) will go to this account, so please be sure to check it regularly. Conversely, you are to email me via the eCollege email system or your myLeo email, as our spam filters will catch Yahoo, Hotmail, etc.

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).

Your courses will also work with Macintosh OS X along with a recent version of Safari 2.0 or better. Along with Internet Explorer and Safari, eCollege also supports the Firefox browser on both Windows and Mac operating systems. \*\*Also be careful if using google docs. Do not share the documents, but download them as a word or pdf file and submit them that way. \*\*

## **COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR**

Below are reading assignments and exam schedule. In addition to the readings from the textbooks, students should also keep informed of the news and current events. As with most classes, this schedule is subject to change

Week of	Lecture Topic	Assignments
August 24th - August 29th Note: We are one day short	Introduction to Course, US Political Culture	Online Textbook Chapter 6
August 30th - September 5th	U.S. Constitution	Online Textbook Chapter 2
September 6th - September 12th	Congress	Online Textbook Chapter 12
September 13th - September 19th	Courts	Online Textbook Chapter 15
<b>September 20th - September 26th</b>		<b>Exam #1</b>
September 27th - October 3rd	Federalism	Online Textbook Chapter 3
October 4th - 10th	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights	Online Textbook Chapter 4&5
<b>October 11th - October 17th</b>		<b>Exam #2</b>
October 18th - October 24th	U.S. Political Parties, Participation, and Elections	Online Textbook Chapter 10& 11
October 25th - October 31st	Public Opinion	Online Textbook Chapter 7
November 1st - November 7th	Interest Groups	Online Textbook Chapter 9
November 8th - November 14th	The Bureaucracy	Online Textbook Chapter 14
November 15th - November 21st	The Media	Online Textbook Chapter 1
November 22nd - November 28th Thanksgiving Break No Class		
<b>November 29th - December 5th</b>		<b>Exam #3</b>
December 6th - December 12th <b>Final Exams Week</b>	Fiscal Policy, Social Policy	Supplied Readings <b>Exam #4</b> <b>(Non-comprehensive)</b>

*Email:* Emails will be sent throughout the semester, for emails to the entire class (i.e. — they are addressed to class, and not you personally) they do not require a response unless you need clarification. If the email is addressed to you personally, I do require that you at least acknowledge the email. If I do not receive an acknowledgment within a timely manner (48 hours in most cases) I will consider the subject matter of the emails moot.

During the final weeks of the semester please access your email regularly, sometimes assignments do not get sent correctly or there are changes that need to be made. Do not work the entire semester only to fall through at the very end.

Submitting Assignments: You are responsible for attaching the correct assignment to the correct folder in the Dropbox. Once you submit your assignment, you should always click on the Outbox to make sure the assignment is there. Submitting an incorrect document, a blank document, or no document is counted as failure to complete the assignment on time. Each assignment or work should include your name.

### Access and Navigation

Student will access this course using eCollege, the learning management system used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. Students can access their online courses through the myLeo portal or directly from the URL <http://online.tamuc.edu>. In order to login, students will need both their CWID and password to access the myLeo site. If you do not know what your CWID or password is, please contact Technology Services at 903-468-6000 or by e-mail, [helpdesk@tamuc.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

### eCollege Student Technical Support (D2L/Brightspace)

Technical support for eCollege is provided around the clock (24 hours a day/7 days a week) so if students experience technical issues with the class page itself they should contact the student help desk for assistance. Students can access support through one of three following methods:

1. Chat support: Students can access real-time chat support from within the course page by clicking on "Tech Support" in the toolbar and then clicking on "Chat Online."
2. Phone: Students can access phone support by calling the toll-free phone number for eCollege, 1-866-656-5511.
3. Email: Students can request assistance by e-mailing eCollege directly at [helpdesk@online.tamuc.org](mailto:helpdesk@online.tamuc.org). Please note that you might not receive a response for 24 hours if you use the e-mail option. eCollege also has extensive help files available. These can be accessed by clicking the 'Help' button on the toolbar.

## **Policies**

Academic Dishonesty: Any student who is caught committing any kind of academic dishonesty will receive an "F" in this course and 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.

Student Conduct: "All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment." 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 commonsense 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. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

**Texas A&M University-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.**

**“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.”**

*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  
E-mail: [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. 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 9-1-1. 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.

## *Withdrawals*

*Dropping the Class:* If you need to adjust your schedule by dropping this course, please contact your Academic Coach. Please be aware that dropping your course may impact your financial aid, veterans and military benefits, three-peat, 45-hour, and 30-hour rules. It is the student's responsibility to drop the course. If you fail to officially drop the class, a failing grade shall be assigned.

*Student Withdrawal:* A student wishing to withdraw from all courses before the end of a term for which he/she is registered must clear his or her record by filing an application for voluntary withdrawal. Please contact your Academic Coach. This action must be taken by the date stated in the Academic Calendar as the last day to drop a class or withdraw. Any student who withdraws from the university is subject to the conditions outlined in the section regarding Scholastic Probation or Suspension in the university catalog. It is the student's responsibility to withdraw from classes if he or she does not plan to attend during the semester in which he/she has enrolled. A student has one year from the first day of a semester to appeal a withdrawal refund. Courses withdrawn are counted as attempted hours and count towards the three-peat, 45-hour and 30-hour rules and financial aid and veterans and military benefits.

*Instructor Withdrawal:* Your instructor of record reserves the right to withdraw a student from his or her course based on inadequate performance and progress in the course materials, and or behavior.

**All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.**

*This syllabus is subject to change during the semester. As the instructor I reserve the right to amend or alter the syllabus. If alterations are made I will keep students updated.*