

United States Government
PSCI 2305.03E
Fall 2021

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:

Although this course meets in person, some components of the course may be completed online. Each class session will involve lectures and discussions over the assigned readings and/or additional content that may be beneficial or helpful to you to understand our course concepts and learning objectives. You will be regularly 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. 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 course. However, please be aware that this course will be taught from the 12th (WTP) edition, so information in older editions may be outdated. If you would prefer to purchase and download the ebook instead, 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 academic 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. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class session using a sign-in sheet for Financial Aid and other documentation purposes, **but it will not directly affect your grade.** Signing in a student who is not present, or asking a student to sign you in when you are absent constitutes academic dishonesty.

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 or the writing assignments.** **If you miss an exam or a writing assignment due to an excused absence, you must provide documentation for the absence to be eligible for a make-up exam.**

Participation:

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 meaningfully 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. The writing assignment 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 (**Sept 19**) = 20%

Exam 2 (**Oct 17**) = 20%

Exam 3 (**Nov 17**) = 20%

Exam 4 (**Dec 17**) = 20%

Writing Assignment 1 (**Oct 17**) = 10%

Writing Assignment 2 (**Nov 7**) = 10%

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 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 2305.03E – 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.

Counseling Center:

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center’s crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel

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 3	Introduction – Welcome to the Course! ☺
Week 1 August 30 – September 3	U.S. Political Culture
Week 2 September 6 – September 10	U.S. Constitution
Week 3 September 13 – September 17	U.S. Constitution
	Exam 1 – Due Sun. Sept 19 by 11:59pm
Week 4 September 20 – September 24	Federalism
Week 5 September 27 – October 1	Federalism
Week 6 October 4 – October 8	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights
Week 7 October 11 – October 15	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights
	Writing Assignment 1 – Due Sun. Oct 17 by 11:59pm Exam 2 – Due Sun. Oct 17 by 11:59pm
Week 8 October 18 – October 22	Congress
Week 9 October 18 – October 22	The Presidency
Week 10 October 25 – October 29	The Federal Courts
Week 11 November 1 – November 5	Bureaucracy
	Writing Assignment 2 – Due Sun. Nov 7 by 11:59pm Exam 3 – Due Sun. Nov 7 by 11:59pm
Week 12 November 8 – November 12	U.S. Political Parties, Participation, and Elections
Week 13 November 15 – November 19	Interest Groups
Week 14 November 22 – November 26	Public Opinion
Week 15 November 29 – December 3	Public Opinion/The Media
Week 16 December 6 – December 10	The Media
Week 17 December 13 – December 17	Finals Week Exam 4 – Due Fri. Dec 17 by 11:59pm

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