

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT**  
**PSCI 2305-04E**  
**Spring 2024**

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**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 formation of the federal constitution, and the challenges and opportunities granted by federalism and representative government in the United States. We will also analyze civil liberties and civil rights and the roles that public opinion and the media play in U.S. politics.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

Paula D. McClain and Steven C. Tauber, *American Government in Black and White*, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> edition, Oxford University Press, 2023. ISBN: 9780197677520.

**CLASSROOM RULES**

- **Unless we assign a day to use technology as part of the learning process, use of personal electronic devices (cell phones, laptops, ipads, ipods, smartwatches, etc.) in class at ANY TIME is STRICTLY forbidden. Use of electronic devices during class time will result in deduction of points from your final grade per warning.**
- **Except for group activities, speaking with people around you is STRICTLY forbidden.**
- **Coming to class late is NOT allowed. The classroom door will NOT be opened for late arrivals 15 MINUTES after class starts.**
- **If you disrupt class or violate any of the classroom rules, you may be directed to leave the classroom IMMEDIATELY.**

**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. politics occur daily.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
- Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
- Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
- Analyze the election process.
- Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Attendance & Participation:** Attendance will be taken regularly. If you're found absent more than 3 times without an excuse, your final grade will automatically drop by "5 points" (e.g., if you earned 82 out of 100 in the end of the semester, your final grade will drop to 77). In-class activities are part of your final grade and will be offered in class randomly throughout the semester. Sleeping in class, side-talk with your neighbors, coming to class late, use of personal electronic devices and any other class disruptions (refer back to classroom rules please) will result in significant deduction of points from your attendance/participation grade.

**Exams:** There will be three midterms and a final exam. Both the midterms and the final will consist of multiple-choice questions. Final exam will take place during finals week and will be cumulative. Study guides will be available. Exam dates can be found on the course schedule.

**Debates:** Throughout the semester, we will have three in-class debates based on topics related to U.S. politics. Debate topics will be posted on D2L 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 Research Project:** To complete this assignment, students will work in groups and identify a problem/issue related to U.S. foreign policy. A detailed guidelines and grading rubric for this assignment can be found on D2L. Research papers are expected to be 5-7 pages in length. Students will do periodic presentations in class throughout the semester to get feedback on their topic. Final papers are due **May 9, 11.59 pm**.

## **GRADING**

<b>Course Requirements</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Attendance & Participation	10%
In-Class Activities	10%
Midterm Exams	30% (10% each)
Debate Performance	15% (5% each)
Group Research Project	15%
Final Exam	20%

## **GRADE SCALE**

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

## **MAKE-UP POLICY**

Make-ups are allowed under special circumstances such as medical or family emergencies. You are required to request your make-up prior to the deadline. Documentary proof for your request might be required based on the circumstances. Post-deadline late extension requests will not be granted. Post-deadline submission of assignments without an excuse will lead to loss of points.

## **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 students' 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 with 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 or (903) 886-5835 Fax (903) 468-8148 [StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu](mailto: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-Commerce Rule 34.06.02R1, 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.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1**

**1/11** Introduction to the course/Overview of the syllabus

### **Week 2**

**1/16** American Government and Politics in a Racially Divided World McLain & Tauber Ch 1

**1/18** The Constitution McLain & Tauber Ch 2

### **Week 3**

**1/23** The Constitution McLain & Tauber Ch 2

**1/25** The Constitution (continued)

### **Week 4**

**1/30** Federalism McLain & Tauber Ch 3

**2/1** Federalism (continued)

### **Week 5**

**2/6** **Debate 1**

**2/8** **Exam 1**

### **Week 6**

**2/13** Civil Liberties McLain & Tauber Ch 4

**2/15** Civil Rights McLain & Tauber Ch 5

**Week 7**

**2/20** Congress McLain & Tauber Ch 6

**2/22** Congress (continued)

**Week 8**

**2/27** The Presidency McLain & Tauber Ch 7

**2/29** The Presidency (continued)

**Week 9**

**3/5** **Debate 2**

**3/7** **Exam 2**

**Week 10**

**Spring Break – No Class**

**Week 11**

**3/19** The Judiciary McLain & Tauber Ch 9

**3/21** The Judiciary (continued)

**Week 12**

**3/26** Public Opinion McLain & Tauber Ch 10

**3/28** Media McLain & Tauber 11

**Week 13**

**4/2** Political Parties McLain & Tauber Ch 14

**4/4** Political Parties (continued)

**Week 14**

**4/9** **Debate 3**

**4/11** **Exam 3**

**Week 16**

**4/16** Voting and Elections McLain & Tauber Ch 15

**4/18** Voting and Elections (continued)

**Week 16**

**4/23** **Final Presentations**

**4/25** **Final Presentations**

**Week 17**

**4/30** **Final Presentations**

**5/2** **Final Presentations**

**Final Papers due May 9, 11.59 pm on D2L**