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PSCI 211: PRINCIPLES OF UNITED STATES & TEXAS GOVERNMENT

TEXTS:

Thomas E. Patterson and Gary M. Halter, *The American Democracy*, 9th Texas ed. (P&H)
W. Robert Gump and James H. Woodworth, *Atlantis: Role-Playing Simulations for the Study of American Government* (G&W), Library Reserve

SCHEDULE

DATES	TOPICS	READINGS
Jan. 20	Introduction	
Jan. 25--Feb. 1	Government, Politics, and Political Culture	P&H, chs. 1, 18
Feb. 3--8	Simulation 1	G&W, pp. xv-xix, 1-27, 213-219
Feb. 10--15	Constitutions and Federalism	P&H, chs. 2, 3, 19
Feb. 17	Examination	
Feb. 22--24	Critical Thinking	Handouts
Mar. 1	Simulation 8	G&W, pp. 195-211
Mar. 3--10	Civil Liberties and Equal Rights	P&H, chs. 4-5
Mar. 22--24	Public Opinion and Political Socialization	P&H, ch. 6
Mar. 29--31	Political Participation and Voting	P&H, ch. 7 & pp. 509-515
Apr. 5	Examination	
Apr. 7--14	Political Parties and Elections	P&H, chs. 8, 21
Apr. 19	Simulation 3	G&W, pp. 55-73
Apr. 21--26	Interest Groups	P&H, ch. 9 & pp. 516-527
Apr. 28--May 3	The News Media	P&H, ch. 10
May 5	Open	
Exam Week	Examination	

Please Note:

1. Modifications in this syllabus are possible. If any changes are made, they will be announced in class.
2. The *National Journal* selections at the end of chapters 1-10 are worthwhile, but reading them is optional.
3. This syllabus and selected other course materials may be accessed through the Department of Political Science website (www.tamu-commerce.edu/psci). Click on Faculty, then Paul Lenchner, and finally Political Science 211.

PSCI 211: OBJECTIVES, REQUIREMENTS, EVALUATION PROCEDURES, AND OTHER INFORMATION

OBJECTIVES

The general purpose of this class is to expand the student's understanding of American national government and Texas government. While doing so, the course will:

1. Develop the student's ability to think and communicate in an effective, critical manner about political life.
2. Prepare the student to be an informed participant in the political process.
3. Promote comparative analysis between government and politics at the national and state and local levels, highlighting similarities and differences between them, with special attention to comparisons between the national political system and government and politics in Texas.
4. Offer selected comparisons between the American political system and government and politics in other countries.
5. Nurture tolerance for the complexities and ambiguities of political life.
6. Promote awareness of the linkages among politics and other fields of study, including history, economics, sociology, geography, and philosophy.
7. Familiarize the student with the methods used to analyze political phenomena and develop an appreciation for their applications and limitations.
8. Increase understanding of significant issues, concepts, and information in national and state and local government and politics, with a particular emphasis on Texas in regard to state and local matters.

REQUIREMENTS

Each student will be expected to:

1. Complete the assigned readings. The readings are timely and informative. The expectation is that students will keep up-to-date in their readings and show a willingness to contribute to class discussions of them.
2. Participate in several role-playing simulation exercises. The simulations will place students in controversial decision-making situations and will enhance appreciation of the challenges of addressing political issues.
3. Submit four essays during the term. Two of the essays will be based upon the simulations, and two will entail critical analysis of political readings. Details may be found on separate handouts.
4. Take three examinations.

EVALUATION

Grades will be determined as follows:

First exam	20%
Second exam	20%
Third exam	20%
Essays	40%
	100%

There are several ways that you may enhance the grades earned on examinations and essays. They include:

- **Class participation.** Students who regularly contribute to class discussions will be rewarded.
- **Active involvement in the simulations.** Active involvement will make the simulations more enjoyable and informative as well as helping your grade.
- **Extra credit assignments.** Extra credit opportunities may be available from time to time. Specifics will be announced as opportunities occur.
- **Attendance.** A record of each student's attendance will be kept, and students who maintain a good attendance record will be rewarded.

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

1. **Absences for examinations and simulations.** While attendance is expected for all classes, it is **mandatory** for examinations and simulation sessions. **If an examination or simulation session is missed, a harsh penalty will be imposed unless written verification is submitted to document that the absence was for a legitimate reason.** Legitimate reasons include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and legal obligations. Make-up assignments will be given at the instructor's discretion.
2. **Lateness for class.** **It is rude and disruptive to arrive late for class.** While anyone can be a minute or two late on rare occasions (say, once during the term), **chronic lateness is unacceptable.** Everyone is expected to be in class on time. **The door will close very soon after the start of class, and late arrivals may be locked out.** To avoid problems and the embarrassment of being locked out, **arrive on time.**
3. **Proper behavior in class.** All students at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See the *Student's Guide Handbook*, Policies and Procedures, Conduct.) Besides arriving on time and staying for the whole class, these tenets include the following:
 - **Not leaving the room during class except for major emergencies. Use the restroom before, not during, class.**
 - **Being attentive during class.** Having personal conversations, doing work for another class, sending text messages, surfing the Internet, listening to music, or reading personal materials is unacceptable.
 - **Using laptops only to take notes.**
 - **Not eating, wearing hooded garments, or engaging in personal grooming during class.**
 - **Turning off cell phones and all other electronic devices (except for laptops being used to take notes). If your cell phone goes off during class, it may be taken from you. If you text during class, you may be removed from the room.**
 - **Showing respectful tolerance for views other than your own.** A university is a place for thoughtful exchange of ideas. There is no justification for disrespectful behavior when someone else is speaking.
4. **Students with disabilities.** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination law 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 believe that you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services, Gee Library, Room 132, 903-886-5835/5150, StudentDisabilityServices@tamu-commerce.edu

ADVICE FOR STUDENTS

1. Be sure you have and keep the syllabus, assignment instructions, handouts, and other materials.
2. Follow instructions carefully for each assignment.
3. Submit your work on time. It is painful for me to see a student's grade suffer because he or she submitted an assignment late or not at all. **Late penalties are damaging. Zeroes are often devastating. Do not punish yourself by failing to submit a required paper.**
4. Neatly type papers in clear, correct English.
5. When extra credit opportunities are offered, take advantage of them.
6. Come to class. If possible, sit near the front of the room. Do not hesitate to seek recognition to make a comment or ask a question.
7. Be attentive and take notes during class. Research shows that students who take careful notes do better than those who do not.
8. Follow the news. Topics from the news will come up often in class, and your learning will be enhanced if you're aware of the context of news references. With the vast number of news sources, including high-quality websites, current events may be followed at your convenience.
9. Feel free to visit with me. **If you are having problems or concerns in class, see me at once.** The longer you delay, the harder it will be to address your needs. I will work with you in developing strategies appropriate for your situation. But I cannot help if I'm not informed of your concerns. So please come in.
10. Don't feel that you must have a problem to drop by my office. If you want to pursue topics raised in class in additional depth, or if there are subjects we didn't get to that you find interesting, or if you're considering majoring or minoring in political science, or if you just want to chat, please stop by. I'm not hard to find, and I'd be glad to visit with you.
11. A good way to reach me is via e-mail (Paul.Lenchner@tamu-commerce.edu). I will make every effort to respond promptly to messages.