

Texas A&M University
Introduction to American Government
POLS 206-504
Spring 2007

MWF 12:40-1:30PM, CHEM 100

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Office Hours: M, W, and F 11a-Noon, and by appointment

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to American national government. We will discuss both the processes and institutions of the federal government. That is, we will study elections, citizen participation, and the structure of the federal government, including its Constitution, branches, and official functions. We will also apply our understanding of American national government to current events and topics, all with the goal of enabling students to become better engaged citizen-consumers of politics and political phenomena.

Course Goals

- 1) Develop in each student a broad understanding of American government, its institutions, and electoral processes;
- 2) Equip students to recognize how American politics impacts their daily lives;
- 3) Better students' capacity for analytical writing, critical thinking, and self discovery within the course curriculum.

Course Materials

- 1) Edwards, Wattenberg, and Lineberry, *Government in America: People, Politics, and Public Policy*. 2007
- 2) Perspectives on American and Texas Politics, Calfano, Brian. 2006

Course Assignments

- | | | |
|---------------|-----|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Exam one | 25% | (February 19 th In class) |
| 2) Exam two | 35% | (March 26 th In class) |
| 3) Exam three | 40% | (April 27 th In class) |

Grading

Grading will follow a standard scale: 90% is an A, 80% is a B, 70% is a C, and 60% is a D. For privacy reasons, I do not reveal grades via e-mail or telephone. Grades will be posted via WebCT within seven business days of each exam.

Exams

The three in-class exams will test your understanding of assigned readings and lecture material. Each exam will have multiple choice questions and an additional writing project of my choosing. The third exam is NOT a comprehensive exam. It will cover material since the second exam, and is scheduled on the second-to-last class day. **Make sure to bring your student ID, a large gray Scantron, and two number 2 pencils for each exam.**

Please understand that you will not pass this class by reading the books alone. A large component of exam questions will come from the lecture materials. At the same time, because the lectures are structured according to the course readings, you will need to keep up with the assigned book chapters to do well. There is no reason why each of you cannot excel in this class! The best advice I can give is to show up regularly. I have no sympathy for students who blow off the semester and then come to me with tears in their eyes at the end of April because their GPR will be too low once they fail my class. Grow up, and be responsible.

Important Exam Notices 1) Once the first person has finished her/his exam and has left the classroom, any student(s) entering to take the exam at any time thereafter will NOT be permitted to do so, regardless of circumstances, and will receive a zero for the exam in question. Therefore, it is imperative that you arrive early for each exam.

2) Make up exams will only be given in light of a university excused absence, **and they will be in essay format.** Inform me of your absence at least two days *before* the examination date. Make ups for all three exams will be scheduled for the first reading day of finals week. The exact time and location will be announced later in the semester. Students must notify the instructor of their need to make up one of the three exams by May 3rd 2007. If you do not contact me by this date, you will receive a zero for the exam (s) that you missed.

Office Visits

I am more than happy to provide clarification of the course material, and am available for conferences almost every day. It would be best for you to make an appointment to visit me in my office rather than 1) asking a series of questions after class 2) stopping by my office unannounced. I do not give my notes to students under any circumstances.

Class Disruptions

Disrupting class is a serious violation of Texas A&M University rules and regulations. Electronic communication devices such as cell phones and pagers are disruptive if they beep during class. Please turn off or silence these devices *before* class. In addition, students are expected to show respect toward their classmates, irrespective of whether or not they agree with statements their classmates make. The instructor reserves the right to discipline any student by withdrawing them from this course with a failing grade for failing to abide by these provisions.

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement

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 believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Disabilities Services in Room B118 of Cain Hall, or call 845-1637. If you will be requesting accommodation in taking your exams, you must present documentation to the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first exam.

Course Materials and Copyright Statement

The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include, but are not limited to, syllabi, quizzes, exams, lab problems, in-class materials review sheets, and additional problem sets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the handouts, unless I expressly grant permission.

Scholastic Dishonesty

As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated. If you have any questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the Aggie Honor System Office website (<http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>) or the latest version of the Texas A&M University Student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty."

I will not tolerate any act of plagiarism on any assignment or exam in this class. All acts of plagiarism will be met with a failing course grade.

Course Schedule: Spring 2007

January 17th (Course introduction, Edwards Chapter 1)

January 22nd The Constitution (Edwards Chapter 2; Workbook Chapter 1)

January 29th The Constitution (Edwards Chapter 2, Workbooks Chapter 1)

February 5th Federalism (Edwards Chapter 3; Workbook Chapter 4)

February 12th Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (Edwards Chapter 4; Workbook Chapter 5)

February 19th: EXAM ONE

February 21st The Federal Courts (Edwards Chapter 13, Workbook Chapter 10)

February 26th Congress (Edwards Chapter 10, Workbook Chapter 7)

March 5th The Presidency (Edwards Chapter 11, Workbook Chapter 8)

March 19th The Federal Bureaucracy (Edwards Chapter 12, Workbook Chapter 9)

March 26th: EXAM TWO

March 28th Public Opinion and the Media (Edwards Chapter 5)

April 2nd Public Opinion and the Media (Edwards Chapter 6)

April 9th Political Parties and Campaigns (Edwards Chapters 7 and 8)

April 16th Interest Groups (Edwards Chapter 9)

April 23rd Policymaking (Edwards Chapters 15 and 16)

April 27th EXAM THREE