

STATE AND LOCAL POLITICS
TTH 355-510PM
RM. BLOCKER 102 (POLS 207, Section 509)
Spring 2007

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed as an introduction to American government. In this course, we will discuss the origins and foundation of the American Constitution. We will focus on both the processes and institutions of the federal government. We will examine elections, branches of the federal government, and citizen participation in the United States. We will also discuss civil liberties and public policy, public opinion and political action, the role of the media, the role of political parties and interest groups, and nominations and campaigns.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Students can expect to learn the following by the end of this course:
(1) To define, understand, and use concepts and terms relevant to the study of state and local government in the United States;
(2) To comprehend origins and evolution of state political systems with a special emphasis on Texas including a study of political institutions, constitutions, and federalism;
(3) To learn the opportunities for citizens to participate in government at the state and local level by understanding differences in mechanisms and patterns of participation thus making them more responsible citizens.

COURSE GRADES: Your final grade for the course will be calculated from the course requirements and will be weighted as follows:

Exam 1 (@ 50 points)	50 points
Exam 2 (@ 100 points)	100 points
Exam 3 (@ 100 points)	100 points
Exam 4 (@ 100 points)	100 points

Total	350 points

Your grades on assignments will be based on the quality of your work. Your final grade will be determined by the total number of points you earn. The basis for letter grades is:

A= at least 90% of 350 = 315 total points
B= at least 80% of 350 = 280 points
C= at least 70% of 350 = 245 points
D= at least 60% of 350 = 210 points
F= less than 60% of 350 = 209 points or less

The only reason for changing a grade is if I make an error in computation. Special circumstance (i.e., I am on probation and need a C to stay in school, I need an A to keep my scholarship, etc) may be important to you; however, to be fair to all students, I will not change a grade for any reason except for errors in computation.

TEXTS:

Lyle Brown, Joyce Langenegger, Sonia Garcia, Ted Lewis, and Robert Biles. *Practicing Texas Politics, 13th edition*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Course Packet available at Copy Corner.

You must supply your own scantrons (8x11 TAMU) for all examinations.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES TO SUCCEED IN THE COURSE:

I neither place lecture notes on reserve nor do I make them available in any form other than presented in class (i.e., no hard copies or electronic copies). If you want to know what is going on in lecture then you must attend class meetings. Though students seem to believe that prepared notes are advantageous, over the course of teaching multiple courses I have found that this is detrimental to their learning. I believe that the material that you need to know is for the most part in the textbook. You determine your own fate in this course, and **your grade is your responsibility**. This means that you come to class, pay attention, take notes, read the text, work the study guide, and study diligently for all exams and assignments in the course. My responsibility as your professor is to guide you in your study but not to baby and spoon-feed you an extremely limited amount of material I believe is essential to your understanding of politics. Part of your responsibility as a student and citizen is to develop the ability to examine significant amounts of material and determine what is important and what is not. In this class, authors have done an excellent job of condensing a large amount of information about American politics and it is now in a readable text. **Do not expect me to winnow down the material further so that all you need to read is what is on the exam.** Though most students have this attitude about their education and expect this in all of their

courses, I am informing you now that you will not get that from me this semester. I will provide you with an emphasis on important material and difficult concepts in the text, but I cannot cover all the material that you need to know in two class meetings per week. **You will learn most of the material in this course on your own.** One of the saddest things I ever saw written on a course evaluation was the comment "I learned most of the material myself." If you take this attitude about learning, then college is not for you and you are wasting your education. You must learn most of the material on your own. That is essentially what learning is. Passive listening to two lectures per week, no matter how well done they are, is not going to contribute to your learning experience in its entirety. My lectures in the class will point out and emphasize important elements, raise questions, and expand on what is discussed in the texts. Attendance at lectures is only a small part of the learning process. You should also have active neo email account. I will send announcements, etc to this account so make sure it is working.

HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL

After you meet the admissions standards at Texas A&M University, what happens next is up to you. Sloppy tactics that worked in high school will not be successful here. The level of competition is much higher. Your work is compared to other students like you who are academically gifted. You must keep up with work on a day to day basis. Being a student is your job now.

Successful students:

- Always go to class (prepare in advance, arrive on time,) and participate.
- Take good and complete notes
- Budget time, keep a calendar with assignments, deadlines, and appointments
- Keep up with work assigned, cramming doesn't work
- Visit with professors during office hours and get to know them
- Submit carefully edited work
- Practice moderation, a mind can't think in a hung-over, sleep deprived, junk food fed body
- Participate in campus activities
- Know about and use campus resources
- Study at least 2 to 3 hours for each hour you are in class (more maybe necessary)
- Learn to communicate
- Ask questions
- See your advisor regularly
- Accept responsibility

OFFICE HOURS: Office hours are Mondays 230-4 and by appointment. The reason for this is primarily because I work off campus. Consequently, students may come all the way over to west campus thinking I sit in my office all day and then they are irritated when they get there and I am not in the office. I bring my calendar with me to class so if you want to see me, ask and we can make an appointment that fits both of our schedules. When coming to my office to discuss grades or progress in the class, you must bring with you, your textbook, your class notes, and the assignments (handouts, graded work, etc). Please do not come to my office whining or demanding a grade change. I worked in a psychiatric hospital for several years and I am not easily persuaded. Also, if you need to contact me, email is the best way to do it. I check it frequently, whereas, my phone may ring for infinity if I am not in the office.

EMAIL: All students must activate their neo account through the university. I will occasionally send announcements concerning class and this is the most efficient way of getting messages to you. Further when contacting the professor, you should include your name, the course number and section in the subject line to avoid your email being read as spam and deleted.

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:

READING ASSIGNMENTS Students are required to complete all assigned readings by the day noted on the schedule.

EXAMS: There are four exams in the course. The exams are not cumulative and cover all lecture, reading, and study guide material leading up to the exam. Exams may include multiple choice questions. You should use an 8x11 TAMU Measurement Services scantron to record your answers and #2 pencil. If you have an excused absence with sufficient evidence (see discussion under attendance), all missed examinations will be made up on Tuesday December 4 at 3PM. On exam days, all possessions except your pencil, blue book, and scantron will be placed in front the classroom. No caps are permitted.

Make-Up work: In case of a formally excused absence, students arrange makeup in accordance to the university rules. You must turn in within 2 days of the absence the make-up request form posted on my webpage in order for makeup work to be accepted.

Make up exams will only be given in light of a university excused absence. Inform me of your absence before or within 2 days after the examination date. Make up exams are scheduled for Monday May 5 at 300 in RM 2124 at the Allen building next to the Bush library.

Plagiarism: As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own 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 **the worst of academic sins**, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be conducted safely. If you have questions regarding plagiarism, please consult the latest issue of the Texas A&M University student Rules, under the section "Scholastic Dishonesty." See their website at <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/acadmisconduct.htm> for more information. You should be aware that your instructor has had her work stolen from her and has no tolerance for plagiarism. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class. Any student plagiarizing will receive an automatic "F" in the course, NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Additionally, cheating and other forms of academic conduct (fabrication, falsification, multiple submissions, and complicity) will not be tolerated either. If a student cheats, they will receive a zero for the assignment. Again, see the university website of the aggie code of honor at <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor/acadmisconduct.htm/>

**From the Aggie Honor Code
Definitions of Academic Misconduct**

Misconduct in research or scholarship includes fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research. It does not include honest error or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data. Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, is sufficient grounds to initiate an academic dishonesty case. Academic dishonesty includes the commission of any of the following acts. This listing is not, however, exclusive of any other acts that may reasonably be called academic dishonesty. Clarification is provided for each definition by listing some prohibited behaviors.

- 1. Cheating:** Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, notes, study aids or other devices or materials in any academic exercise.
- 2. Fabrication:** Making up data or results, and recording or reporting them; submitting fabricated documents.
- 3. Falsification:** Manipulating research materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record. Examples:
- 4. Multiple Submission:** Submitting substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor of the class for which the student submits the work.
- 5. Plagiarism:** The appropriation of another person's ideas, processes, results, or words without giving appropriate credit.
- 6. Complicity:** Intentionally or knowingly helping, or attempting to help, another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

ANY FORM OF ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT WILL BE FORWARDED TO THE ACADEMIC HONOR COUNCIL FOR REVIEW!!!

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement: The Department of Student Life provided language for the following statement. The Americans with Disabilities Act is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, 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 Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room B118 of Cain Hall, or call 845-1637.

Course Materials/ Copyright Statement: The handouts used in this class 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.

Schedule:

Below is a tentative schedule of readings topics and assignments that will be covered in the course. If it appears that we are falling behind, I reserve the right to alter the syllabus. Specific readings will be announced in class.

Day 1: Introduction to the course and course pretest

Topic 1: Introduction to the ancient debate

Films: Star Wars Episode 4 and The Untouchables

Readings: selections from Plato's *The Republic* and Aristotle's *The Politics of Aristotle**

Topic 2: Utopia, Theory, and Ideology

Films: Logan's Run; V for Vendetta
Readings: selections from *Brave New World, 1984, The Republic, The Prince, Leviathan, Second Treatise on Government, A Social Contract**

Exam 1: January 31

Topic 3: Why Government?

Films: A Bug's Life
Readings: Practicing TX politics The Constitution
Selections from: *Lord of the Flies*

Topic 4: Political Culture

Films: Whale Rider
Readings: Practicing TX politics: Chapter 1 Political Participation

Topic 5: Structures and Institutions

Films: Monty Python and the Holy Grail
Readings: Practicing TX politics: Federalism
Selected readings from: *The Federalist #51, Animal Farm, A Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy**

Exam 2: February 28

Topic 6: Institutions

Films: Mr. Smith goes to Washington,
Readings: Practicing TX politics: Legislature. Executive, Bureaucracy
Selected readings from: *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*

Topic 7: Imperfections of Institutions

Films: Star Wars Episode 2; Caddyshack; Hacking Democracy
Readings: selections from: *All the Kings Men and Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, John Stewart's America*

Topic 8 Courts and Laws

Films: Law and Order
Readings: Practicing TX politics: the Judiciary
Selected readings from: *To Kill a Mockingbird, Letter from James Madison to Thomas Jefferson.*

Exam 3: April 10

Topic 9: Media, Politics, and Government

Films: All the President's Men, The Matrix, Raiders of the Lost Ark
Readings: Practicing TX politics: Media and politics, public opinion
Selections from: *Alice in Wonderland,*

Topic 10: Elections

Films: Man of the Year; Primary Colors
Readings: Practicing TX politics Elections

Topic 11: Government Role in Economy

Films: A Christmas Carol, Robin Hood
Readings: Practicing TX politics: The Budget
Selections from: *The Wealth of Nations, Great Expectations*

Topic 12: Local Government

Films: A Time to Kill; Deadwood, Do the Right Thing
Readings: Practicing TX politics: Local government

Post-Test and Exam IV: April 24