POLS 2305.003 – U.S. Government and Politics

Spring 2012 Syllabus, Version 1.0

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer L. Epley

Office Location: Bay Hall 3.41
Office Telephone: (361) 825-2554

Office Hours:
- Mondays from 12pm-3pm and Wednesdays from 12pm-2pm
- By appointment (in case of class or employment conflicts only)
- During busy periods, a sign-up sheet will be hung on the door to reserve slots.
- Please save detailed conversations for office hours instead of directly before or after a class session.

Email: jennifer.epley@tamucc.edu
- Please consider e-mail as official correspondence.
- Efforts will be made to address your e-mail within 48 hours. If you do not receive an email within 48 hours, please send a follow-up email.
- No email correspondence on weekends.
- No email correspondence on the day before an examination or deadline.
- E-mail communications should be about class business. E-mail is not the place for summaries of lectures, discussions, or readings, however.
- Please use the subject line in a way that indicates the content of the message. Please also use professional language and include your full name, section number, and a complete inquiry in the body of the message.
- Please keep copies of e-mails that are sent and received for records purposes.

Course Website: Blackboard online (https://iol.tamucc.edu/)

Course Section and Location:
POLS 2305.003 – U.S. Government & Politics meets Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00am-9:50am in Bay Hall 103.

Course Description & Objectives:
Political Science 2305 is an introductory course about political science in general and American politics in specific. Together in this course we will develop your ability to analyze various political processes and institutions. We will go beyond the basic facts of history and civics—what political institutions exist, how did they arise, who are the key political figures, etc.—to address basic questions of political science such as: What is the function of government and when does it fulfill or abdicate this function? How do political actors such as politicians and parties attain power? What is the role of institutional rules and procedures? What do citizens think about and do with regard to politics? Such questions and the answers we will find are applicable to us as citizens, residents, and visitors in the United States. These issues are also relevant elsewhere in the world. Through a process of collaboration, cooperation, and discovery, we will develop our knowledge base and skills. Substantive
knowledge, critical thinking and analysis, developing and defending arguments, and the clear and concise articulation of ideas and evidence will be important components of the discussions, writings, and evaluations in this course.

**Topics** covered include, but are not limited to: federalism, the U.S. Constitution, the three branches of government, the bureaucracy, the legal system, public opinion, political behavior, the mass media and politics, political parties, campaigns and elections, interest groups, and how the government and society deal with issues such as personal liberty, rights, the economy, and different domestic and foreign public policies.

**Learning Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:**
Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Describe “basic facts” about the American political system in historical and contemporary terms.
2. Understand and evaluate key concepts, theories, research methods, evidence, and conclusions by experts on U.S. politics.
3. Effectively and efficiently conduct their own analysis of certain political processes and institutions.

**Required Text:**

Students may use previous editions of the textbook, but should know that lectures and examinations will draw on material covered in the 4th edition. Students will be responsible for knowing if there are any differences between the latest version and older ones. Students can cross-check with the book on reserve in the campus library or borrow the 4th edition from a classmate.

The 4th edition textbook website provides excellent resources to students. Example materials include chapter summaries, practice quizzes, flashcards, and different academic exercises. Go to [http://republic-brief.cqpress.com/](http://republic-brief.cqpress.com/) to access and explore the free website.

Additional readings (paper and online) and websites will be required. These sources will supplement the textbook chapters and the instructor’s lectures. The instructor will provide the copies and links to students in class, via Blackboard, and/or by email.

**Performance Evaluation and Grading:**

Your final course grade will consist of the following components:

**65% Five Major Examinations** – Each examination is worth 13% of the course grade. The exam format will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, and short answer. The instructor will provide students with reading comprehension questions for each chapter. Students should treat these reading comprehension questions as review sheets.

**20% Course notebook/binder** – Students are expected to maintain a notebook/binder of original handwritten class notes from each meeting and for each textbook chapter. The course notebook/binder will be collected and graded twice during the semester. Each separate score will be 10% of the final course grade.
15%  One out-of-class learning activity (OCLA) and 1-page paper – Students are expected to complete one out-of-class learning activity related to the course material and submit a 1-page paper about the experience. The instructor will provide students with a list of activity choices and the paper guidelines in February.

Make-Up Policy:

Late submissions of the course notebook/binder or the 1-page paper are only permitted for students with a documented excused absence for the day of the deadline. Make-up examinations will be given only if you have a documented excused absence. Students are required to provide the instructor with formal written documentation from a doctor, coach, academic advisor, or other professional staff member appropriate to the nature of the excused absence. Examples of excused absences include religious observances, sickness or other serious medical reasons, officially-sanctioned trips for members of the university’s academic and athletic teams, and accommodations for students with special needs.

Students should provide advance written notice, which will in turn be acknowledged in formal writing by the instructor. If you do not have a written response by the instructor, you do not have prior approval. In cases where advance notification is not possible (e.g., sickness or emergency), students need to provide notice by the end of the second working day after the absence. This particular notification should include an explanation as to why the notice could not be provided in advance.

Make-up examinations may be different in content and format from those given in class.

For documented excused absences, students will have a maximum of one week from the original submission deadline to turn in the course notebook/binder to the instructor. This policy applies to the 1-page paper as well. Students will have a maximum of one week from the date of the original event to complete the make-up examination, or if there is less than one week left in the semester, until the last day of the semester at a time designated by the instructor. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor in sufficient time and making themselves available so that the make-up examination is completed within the allowed time.

Grading Scale:
A = 90 – 100   B = 80 – 89   C = 70 – 79   D = 60 – 69   F = 59 and below

Additional Notes:
No extra credit options are available for this course. No exceptions. Please do not request extra credit from the instructor at any point during the semester.

Grade Appeal Process:
Major Examinations, Course Notebook/Binder, and OCLA Paper – Students have one week from the date that a score is posted on Blackboard for each individual component to make a grade appeal. First see the instructor during office hours to discuss the matter. If after the meeting a student wants to file a formal appeal, he/she should then follow the university’s appeal procedures, which are explained at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. Students may also contact the Office of Student Affairs for assistance.
**Final Grade** – As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at [http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Academic Honor Code:** Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the University Student Handbook. The Academic Honor Code is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student’s own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community. Violations of the Academic Honor Code will not be tolerated.

**Students with Disabilities:** 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 Disability Services Office at (361) 825-5816 or visit them in CCH 116. Please also contact the instructor as soon as possible if you require assistance.

**Veterans:** If you are a veteran who is experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the instructor and/or the Disability Services Office at (361) 825-5816. Veterans can find more information online at [http://vets.tamucc.edu/](http://vets.tamucc.edu/).

**Student Caregivers:** If you have caregiving responsibilities (e.g., parent of a child or care for elderly parents) and you anticipate scheduling difficulties, please discuss this at the beginning of the semester with the instructor to work out an appropriate strategy.

**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and their telephone number is (361) 825-3466.

**Classroom Policies:**
- **Be on time to class.** With the large number of students enrolled in the course, even a few latecomers can be very disruptive. Please be considerate of your peers and the instructor by being punctual. Students who are ten or more minutes late without proper documented excuses (see make-up policy section of this syllabus) will result in a 2% penalty for their course notebook/binder for each infraction.
• **Stay until the end of class.** “End of class” means when the instructor verbally releases students to leave. Please do not start to pack up your belongings too early as this is a distraction to other students and the instructor. If you need to leave early (again with a proper documented excuse), please sit in a seat closest to one of the classroom exits in order to minimize the disruption of your early departure.

• **Please do not talk during lecture.** Students will be concentrating on taking notes, so talking will distract them from doing a good job. There will be designated periods in which students will have the opportunity to discuss course material with classmates. **Talking is permitted at those times.**

• Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. **Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom.** This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

• **The instructor will assume that prior to class you have made an earnest effort to understand the material.** This will allow you to be prepared to engage the material in more detail or address misunderstandings during class. Reviewing “basic facts” will primarily be reserved for examinations, not lectures.

• There will be opportunities for the instructor to answer your questions and for you to engage and discuss important questions with the instructor and your peers. Students are invited to have open discussions and respectful debates during designated periods. Indeed, such debates are essential both for your learning and for progress in political science more generally. To foster an intellectually supportive environment, students should adhere to the dialogue guidelines (see additional handout).

• ***Unless directed by the instructor for specific course activities, the use of laptops, mobile phones, texting devices, entertainment gadgets, music devices, headphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), etc. is prohibited.** Phones in particular should be set to “vibrate” if you must have a phone to receive emergency calls. Phones should not be visible to other students or the instructor. In other words, keep your phone in a bag, backpack, pocket, etc. The abovementioned items limit a student’s active participation, can disturb other students, and distracts the instructor. **If a student is found to be using any of the aforementioned technological devices without permission, the instructor will politely request that the student stop using the device. A student will be asked to leave the class if found using the device again, which will cause the student to miss out on taking complete notes for his/her course notebook/binder that day, thereby limiting the number of points he/she will receive. This disciplinary process also takes time away from lecture and discussion, so please do not disrupt the entire class by taking such a chance.***
Academic Dishonesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism:
Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism of any kind are unacceptable. There are no exceptions. Consequences for academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism include, but are not limited to, a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, noncredit for an assignment, additional work, and/or direct referral to university officials.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses without permission, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. The term cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments, plagiarism; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university faculty or staff. The term plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling or distribution of term papers or other academic materials. If you have questions about the university’s policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Student Code of Conduct at http://judicialaffairs.tamu.edu/StudentCofC.html.

Dropping a Class:
The instructor hopes that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with the instructor before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Please refer to the academic calendar online for information about the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Academic Calendar Reminders from http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/academic_cal.html:

- Wednesday, January 11, 2012: Classes begin
- Monday, January 16, 2012: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- Thursday, January 19, 2012: Last day to register or add a class
- Monday-Friday, March 12-16, 2012: Spring Break
- Friday, March 30, 2012: Last day to drop a class
- Monday, April 30, 2012: Last day to withdraw from the University
- Tuesday, May 1, 2012: Last day of classes and last day to apply for August 2012 graduation
- Thursday-Friday, May 3-4, 2012 and Monday-Wednesday, May 7-9: Final examinations period
- Saturday, May 12, 2012: Spring Commencement

For the latest information on dates and deadlines, please inquire at the appropriate university office (e.g., Academic Affairs Office, Office of the Registrar, Dean’s Office of your major, main department of your major, etc.), with your academic advisor, and your professors.
Tentative Course Schedule:

All dates, assignments, and evaluations are subject to change with advance notice. Please pay attention to Blackboard (https://iol.tamucc.edu/) for updates.

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<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Course Topics</th>
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| Week 1: January 11, 13 | **Course Introduction:**  
  - Syllabus, Dialogue Guidelines, Professor-Student Relations,  
    Professor Background, Student Introductions, and Academic  
    Advice (e.g., how to study and take notes)              |
| Week 2: January 16 (No Class, MLK Day) | **(1) Political Science as a discipline**  
  - Explore American Political Science Association (APSA)  
    website: http://apsanet.org/  
  - Excerpts from APSA’s **Careers and the Study of Political Science: A Guide for Undergraduates**  
  - Article from Encyclopedia Britannica Academic Edition Online:  
| January 18, 20     | **(2) Chapter 1: Power and Citizenship in American Politics**  
  * You will take one page of notes for (1) and one page of notes for (2)  
    for your course notebook.                                   |
| Week 3: January 23, 25, 27 | **Chapter 2: The Politics of the American Founding** |
| Week 4: January 30 and February 1, 3 | **Chapter 3: Federalism**  
  **FIRST MAJOR EXAMINATION on February 3, 2012 in class:**  
  Covers introductory political science material and Chapters 1-3 |
| Week 5: February 6, 8, 10 | **Chapter 4: Fundamental American Liberties** |
| Week 6: February 13, 15, 17 | **Chapter 5: The Struggle for Equal Rights**  
  **Chapter 6: Congress** |
| Week 7: February 20, 22, 24 | **SECOND MAJOR EXAMINATION on February 24, 2012 in class:**  
  Covers Chapters 4-6 |
| Week 8: February 27, 29 and March 2 | **Submit COURSE NOTEBOOK/BINDER on February 27, 2012 at start of class:**  
  Covers introductory political science material and Chapters 1-6  
  **Chapter 7: The Presidency** |
| Week 9: March 5, 7, 9 | **Chapter 8: The Bureaucracy** |

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<th>Week 10: March 12, 14, 16</th>
<th>No Meetings: Spring Break</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11: March 19, 21, 23</td>
<td>Chapter 9: The American Legal System and the Courts</td>
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<td>Week 12: March 26, 28, 30</td>
<td>THIRD MAJOR EXAMINATION on March 23, 2012: Covers Chapters 7-9</td>
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<td>Week 13: April 2, 4, 6</td>
<td>Chapter 10: Public Opinion</td>
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<td>Week 14: April 9, 11, 13</td>
<td>Chapter 11: Parties and Interest Groups</td>
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<td>Week 15: April 16, 18, 20</td>
<td>Chapter 12: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections</td>
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<td>Week 16: April 23, 25, 27</td>
<td>FOURTH MAJOR EXAMINATION on April 13, 2012: Covers Chapters 10-12</td>
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<td>Week 17: April 30 (Last Class)</td>
<td>1-PAGE PAPER DRAFT DUE on April 16, 2012 at start of class</td>
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<td>Chapter 13: The Media</td>
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<td>Chapter 14: Domestic and Foreign Policy</td>
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<td>Finals Period</td>
<td>FIFTH MAJOR EXAMINATION on April 30, 2012: Covers Chapters 13-14</td>
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<td>Submit COURSE NOTEBOOK/BINDER on Wednesday, May 2, 2012 to Dr. Epley’s office (Bay Hall 341) between 9am-3pm: Covers Chapters 7-14</td>
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<td>1-PAGE PAPER DUE on Wednesday, May 9, 2012 in our regular classroom between 8:00am-10:30am (University-designated date &amp; time). Papers will not be accepted after 10:30am.</td>
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COURSE NOTEBOOK/BINDER GUIDELINES:

➔ See syllabus for two deadlines.
➔ On the front of your notebook/binder, please include your full name, student identification number (A number), the class title and section number, the instructor’s name (Dr. Jennifer Epley), and your preferred email address.
➔ On the top of each page of notes, please indicate the date of the class meeting or the textbook chapter number.
➔ Please avoid loose or missing pages. No late or missing pages will be graded. No exceptions.
➔ Binders with pages that you can add or remover are preferred over standard bound notebooks.

(1) Quantity
• Your notebook/binder must include notes for each class meeting.
• Your notebook/binder must include notes for each textbook chapter and assigned readings.
• Your notebook/binder may include notes for the reading comprehension questions for each chapter, but these notes will neither benefit nor harm your notebook/binder grade. In other words, the reading comprehension questions are “neutral” for the notebook/binder grade. That said, your instructor still highly recommends that you answer the reading comprehension questions in preparation for the five major examinations since the questions can function as review sheets.
  • Length:
    o Minimum/Maximum: 1 page of notes for each class meeting and 1 page of notes for each textbook chapter and assigned readings.

(2) Quality
• Notes should be handwritten. Please write legibly. Scores cannot be provided if the writing is unclear.
• Your notes must follow the “metacognitive note-taking” format that your instructor taught you (see handout).
• The best notes answer the following questions completely and accurately:
  o Who are the actors?
  o What are their preferences/interests?
  o How do they get their preferences/interests?
  o What are the consequences?
• Students are responsible for creating original notes. Do not copy notes from other students. To repeat an earlier section of the syllabus: Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism of any kind are unacceptable. There are no exceptions. Consequences for academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism include, but are not limited to, a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, noncredit for an assignment, additional work, and/or direct referral to university officials. The aforementioned consequences are dependent upon the severity of the infraction.