U.S. GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The political scientist, Harold Lasswell, defined politics in terms of a process relating to the fundamental questions of “Who gets what, when and how?” Politics refers to a struggle for power and the distribution of finite resources. In one sense, politics can be seen as a game where there are clear winners and losers. Over the course of the semester we will examine how the rules of the game are structured, how the game is played, and the outcome of the game i.e. who are the winners and losers in the American political system?

The objective of this course is to encourage students to become independent, sophisticated consumers of the political process, or informed “citizens”. The ultimate goal of Higher Education is to develop critical thinking skills. By the end of the semester, students should possess the skills to evaluate current political developments from an informed perspective.

The course will also expose students to multiple perspectives on contentious issues of public debate. The goal is to develop understanding into why people arrive at different positions on these issues, and how government has sought to reconcile those differences in developing public policy.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Recall basic facts related to the foundations of US national government.
2. Describe key political concepts related to US institutions such as Congress, the Presidency, and the Judiciary.
3. Demonstrate their understanding of key concepts relating to the US political behavior such as voting, elections, political parties, interest groups and the media.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be required to take four in-class tests during the course of the semester, in addition to one comprehensive final exam at the end of the semester. Students are also required to write an issue position paper. Students will also earn credit for attendance and in class clicker quizzes.

Tests

The tests will all be multiple choice. There will be 50 objective questions (combination of multiple choice and true-false questions). Each objective question will be worth 2 points each.

Test Schedule

| Test 1- | Feb 6 |
| Test 2- | Feb 27 |
| Test 3- | Mar 26 |
| Test 4- | Apr 16 |

Final Exam

The comprehensive final exam will comprise of 100 objective multiple choice/true-false questions relating to material covered in class and in readings.

Issue Position Paper

Students are required to write one issue position paper on a topic related to the course. All topics must be submitted for approval of the instructor. The topic needs to fulfill the following criteria:

1. Relevance to US politics/public policy
2. Be the product of independent research covering primary and secondary sources
3. Contain appropriate footnoting and referencing- please refer to issue position paper guide
4. 5-10 pages in length

Papers are due by class time on April 9. A 10% late penalty will apply for every day the paper is late

Clicker Quizzes/Attendance
Students will be assessed on the basis of their performance on regular in class clicker quizzes. There will usually be 5-10 clicker questions each week with students receiving 1 or 2 points for every correct response. The quizzes will be based on the reading/lecture material for the current week. Students will also receive credit for attendance (typically 5 points at the beginning of each class and 5 points at the end of class). The Clicker quizzes will be worth 20 points for each week.

Grading Scheme

Attendance/Quizzes (15%)
Tests: (40 %)
Final Exam: (20 %)
Research Paper: (25 %)

A = 90-100; B = 80-89; C = 70-79; D = 60-69; F = Less than 60

REQUIRED TEXT


REQUIRED HARDWARE

Qwizdom Q4 Student Remote

*Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics* is the text for this course, which provides students with an overview of U. S. government and politics. With the lectures as a foundation, you should use the reading to provide additional material to fill in the gaps. Don’t do the reading in a vacuum; first, scan the reading before the lectures to get a few main points and a general sense of the subject matter covered. Then go back and do the reading more carefully. After the lectures, go back over the reading, with an eye toward supplementing and building upon the issues and events we discussed in class. The assigned readings often include materials not specifically covered in class, so it is absolutely essential that you read the assignments in order to succeed in this course. It is important that you keep up with the readings on a weekly basis. This will facilitate understanding of the lecture material, and also permit you to manage your time effectively in preparing for your tests.

You will need to purchase a Qwizdom Q4 student remote as weekly quizzes will be administered using the Qwizdom clicker system.
Class Attendance

Regular attendance is required for this course. It is in students’ interest to attend class, since there is a strong relationship between attendance and participation and semester grades. Approximately 50% of the Clicker Grade will be based on attendance. Paying close attention and taking notes is essential to your success in the class. Attendance data may be taken into consideration in determining students’ grades for borderline cases (i.e. students with scores falling on borderline between two grades). Your lowest weekly clicker score will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Readings

*Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics* is the core text for this course, which provides students with an overview of U.S. government and politics. With the lectures as a foundation, you should use the reading to provide additional material to fill in the gaps. Don’t do the reading in a vacuum; first, scan the reading before the lectures to get a few main points and a general sense of the subject matter covered. Then go back and do the reading more carefully. After the lectures, go back over the reading, with an eye toward supplementing and building upon the issues and events we discussed in class. The assigned readings often include materials not specifically covered in class, so it is absolutely essential that you read the assignments in order to succeed in this course. It is important that you keep up with the readings on a weekly basis. This will facilitate understanding of the lecture material, and also permit you to manage your time effectively in preparing for your tests. You will also be tested on your knowledge of the text in weekly in class quizzes.

COURSE POLICIES

1. **Make-ups (Examinations)** – There are no make-ups for the course, but students do get to drop their lowest test score and their lowest weekly clicker score.

2. **Extra Credit** -- A limited amount of extra credit may be available to students over the course of the semester. Any extra credit assignment will be made available to all students on an ad hoc basis and announced in class. Students might, for example, be offered the option of attending an on campus lecture, or event, and write a short paper on the event with a strict deadline for the assignment announced in class. There will also be a discussion board in Blackboard in which I will “throw out” controversial topics for discussion. Participation in these discussions is optional, but I will at random intervals award extra credit to students who participate in designated threads. Ignorance about an assignment (e.g. resulting from a failure to attend class) does not entitle students to submit the
assignment after the deadline. There will be no “tailor made” extra credit (provided to students on an individual basis) and students should not count on extra credit as a means for remedying poor performance on tests and/or papers.

3. Incompletes – Will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

4. Assistance -- Please feel free to talk with me about your work or about politics and political science in general before or after class, or during the class “break”. If you wish to meet me at another time, please see me to arrange an appointment. You should also avail yourself of the opportunity to seek assistance from the Tutoring and Learning Center in the Bell Library. Political Science tutors may also available.

5. Academic etiquette -- Students are expected to attend and participate in class in professional manner.

This means: Arriving to class on time/ or if unavoidably detained, entering class in a quiet manner
Turning off ringers on cell phones
Not reading/texting/using internet while in class
Remaining in class for duration
Not talking except to address class

6. Academic Integrity -- Cheating or plagiarism on an assignment or test, or failure to complete any of the course requirements, will result in a zero grade for the assignment in question.

7. Dropping a Class – March 30th is the last day to drop a course for the semester with an automatic grade of W.

8. Notice to students with disabilities -- Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

9. 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 can be reached at 825-3466.
10. *Electronics*-- Please turn off all electronic communication devices before you enter the classroom. It is an extreme distraction when beepers, pagers, and cell phones ring during class. *No electronic devices will be permitted during exams.*

11. 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. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>READINGS/TOPICS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION</th>
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<td>No Class- Martin Luther King Day</td>
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<td>Jan 23</td>
<td>Chapter 1- Power &amp; Citizenship in American Politics</td>
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<td>Chapter 2- The Politics of the American Founding</td>
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<td>Chapter 3- Federalism</td>
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<td>TEST 1</td>
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<td>Chapter 4- Fundamental American Liberties</td>
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<td>Mar 5</td>
<td>Chapter 7- The Presidency</td>
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<td>Mar 12</td>
<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td>Chapter 8- The Bureaucracy</td>
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<td>Mar 26</td>
<td>Chapter 9- The American Legal System and the Courts</td>
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<td>TEST 3</td>
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Apr 2          Chapter 10- Public Opinion

Apr 9          Chapter 11- Parties and Interest Groups

PAPERS DUE     Apr 9

Apr 16         Chapter 12- Voting, Campaigns and Elections

TEST 4         Apr 16

Apr 23         Chapter 13- the Media

April 30       Chapter 14- Domestic and Foreign Policy
Issue Position Paper Format and Requirements

Structural Requirements

1. Length: 5-10 pages (typed)
2. Format- MLA, See [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/) for assistance with MLA style
3. Title page: Identify topic, your name, course name and number
4. References/footnotes: Minimum of 4 primary references, limit of 2 secondary sources

Topics and Contents

Your mission (if accepted) is to provide an issue position paper on an issue of current political controversy, which is of relevance to national politics. It may help you prepare for this assignment if you think of yourself as an advisor to the US President, or candidate during a political campaign.

Topics

1. Topic must be relevant to course
2. Approval of instructor is necessary
3. Textbooks are good starting point for your research beginning with table of contents

Contents

1. Must introduce issue and briefly set out your position in debate
2. Main text must review arguments on both sides of debate (including use of primary sources)
3. Conclusion- you must explain/persuade reader of the merits of your position in debate

Please do not hesitate to contact your instructor for further advice on your project