Syllabus POLS2305

Dr. Melissa Stewart

Course Meets Online

Office: Bay Hall 337

Spring 2012

On Campus Office Hours:

Office Telephone: 825-3660

Wednesday, 10am-noon

Thursday, 1:00pm-2:00pm

Friday, noon-1:00pm

Course Description

The objective of this course is to provide you with a basic introduction to the workings of American government and politics. This course consists of the study of the constitution, government, and federal structure of the United States. We will consider federal, state, and local problems and issues in the context of American political culture and history. We will place special emphasis on the United States Constitution, the political principles that underlie it, the historical context in which it was framed and contemporary interpretations. By the end of the course you should have gained insight into the political forces and institutions that shape our society and, reciprocally, the social forces that influence our government. While this is an online course, please note that the academic standards for the course are the same as in traditionally delivered courses.

Technical Support and Login Instructions

- For technical support with Blackboard 9.1, please contact the Island Online Help Desk at 361-825-2825 or 1-866-353-2491. They can also be reached via email at iol.support@tamucc.edu. Please copy me on any emails that you send to the Help Desk. Additionally, while I am unable to help you with technical issues, please notify me after you have contacted the Help Desk so that I can be aware of your specific issue and give you extra time to complete assignments if that becomes necessary.

- You can find information on the specific technical requirements for the course at https://iol.tamucc.edu/techreq.php.
You can find help with using Blackboard 9.1 on the Office of Distance Education’s website at:

http://distance-education.tamucc.edu/student_resources.html. (Note: Your “NetID” is the same log in and password that you use for your Islander email).

**Student Learning Outcomes**

On completion of this course you 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 your understanding of key concepts relating to the US political behavior such as voting, elections and political parties, interest groups and the media.

**Required Materials**

There is a textbook and an online subscription required for the course. Here is the information on each:


Online registration and access to www.AmericansGoverning.com. This access costs $25 and can be paid directly on the site using a credit or debit card. You can also purchase an access key through the TAMUCC bookstore.

Please make sure to have these materials in hand by the end of the first week of the course. Feel free to purchase them from another source besides the University, but know that you will not be allowed to make up work because your textbook has not been delivered yet.

**Weekly Lessons** (please see the weekly modules for detailed information on
each week’s requirements)

**Week 1 (Wednesday, Jan. 11-Saturday, Jan. 14)**
- Course Introduction, Overview
- "Power & Citizenship in American Politics," KTR (Keeping the Republic), Chapter 1

**Week 2 (January 15-21)**
- "Politics of the American Founding," KTR Chapter 2

**Week 3 (January 22-28)**
- "Federalism," KTR Chapter 3

**Week 4 (January 29-February 4)**
- "Fundamental American Liberties," KTR Chapter 4

**Week 5 (February 5-11)**
- "The Struggle for Equal Rights," KTR Chapter 5

**Week 6 (February 12-18)**
- Exam 1 (Covers all material in weeks 1-5)

**Week 7 (February 19-25)**
- "Congress," KTR Chapter 6

**Week 8 (February 26-March 3)**
- "The Presidency," KTR Chapter 7

**Week 9 (March 4-10)**
- "The Bureaucracy," KTR Chapter 8

**Week 10 (March 18-24)**
- Exam 2 (Covers all material in weeks 7, 8, & 9)

**Week 11 (March 25-31)**
• "The American Legal System and the Courts," KTR Chapter 9

**Week 12 (April 1-7)**

• "Public Opinion," KTR Chapter 10

**Week 13 (April 8-14)**

• "Parties and Interest Groups," KTR Chapter 11

**Week 14 (April 15-21)**

• Exam 3 (Covers all material in weeks 11, 12, & 13)

**Week 15 (April 22-28)**

• "Voting, Campaigns, & Elections," KTR Chapter 12

**Week 16 (April 29-May 2)**

• "The Media," KTR Chapter 13

The final exam will be available to you from Thursday, May 3 through Wednesday, May 9. It will not be cumulative and will cover only the material in weeks 15 and 16.

### Course Requirements and Policies

**Log-In Expectations and Instructor Feedback/Availability:**

- You should log-in at least twice a week, or as many times as is necessary to complete all of each week’s assignments.
- I will answer all emails within 24 hours of receipt (weekends and holidays may be a bit longer). Additionally, I will have on-campus office hours in order to help you with any aspect of the course. Email will be the best and most convenient way to contact me.

**Assignments:**
You should read all readings and complete all assignments during the weeks in which they are due. Weeks for this class are from Sunday to Saturday. Assignments not completed during the weeks they are assigned will not be given credit. Please check the course regularly for announcements and reminders from me.

**Weekly Discussions and/or Quizzes:**

Weekly quizzes within each learning module will make up 15% of your course grade. Each week, you will have quizzes to be completed within the weekly course module. These quizzes are to help you gauge how well you are learning the assigned material. You will have three attempts to take the online quiz, and the highest grade will count as your grade for that week’s quiz.

**Weekly Discussions and Blogs (beginning after Spring Break):**

This is our way to communicate with each other each week. Discussions are public and available to all members of the class, but journal entries are private conversations between me and you. No other students in the class can see what you write in your journal. Each week’s journal or discussion entry will have specific questions for you to answer based on your experiences with the course material that week. I will reply to your weekly entries. Your thoughtful participation in these weekly journals will make up 10% of your course grade.

**Exams:**

Exams will make up 60% of your course grade. Exams are not cumulative and should be taken online during the time frame listed in the course schedule. You will have a full week in which to complete the exam, so no make up exams will be given. Please do not wait until the last 30 minutes of the week to complete the exam (although you must complete the exam in one sitting) -- give yourself time for unplanned events such as limited internet access or computer crashes to arise. Because you have a week to complete the exams, no make up exams will be given.

Exams will be multiple choice and will contain 50 questions. Questions will come from both the textbook material and the Americans Governing assignments. Please complete the exam in one sitting, and do not use books, notes, or consult with other students during the exam. You will have 65 minutes to complete the exam. Please note that the exam questions will be randomized so that no two exams will be alike. If you take good notes over
the readings, complete the weekly assignments and quizzes, and spend time studying your textbook, you will have all of the tools you need to do well on the exam.

- You will be allowed to take the exam twice, and your grade will be the average of your two attempts. Please keep in mind that the questions you receive on each exam will be different since the questions are pulled from a test bank of at least 100 questions.

**Americans Governing Activities:**

- In order to enhance your readings, you will complete a series of homework assignments in the form of online activities throughout the semester. These activities can be accessed through [www.americansgoverning.com](http://www.americansgoverning.com), and will make up 15% of your course grade. Grades of at least 65% on these Americans Governing assignments will be given a 100%. Those less than 65% will be given their value. In other words, if you receive a 70% on the first exercise, that will be increased to a 100%. If you receive a 50% on the next assignment, your grade for that assignment will be 50%.

- During the first week of the course, please go to this website, click on "Student Sign Up," and set up your account information. There is a cost of $25 for access to this site, and you will be asked for your payment when you register. You can also purchase access at the University bookstore. Please complete all assignments during the week in which they are due. Assignments completed after the end of the week in which they are due will not be given credit.

If you feel you are having trouble with any aspect of the course, please contact me as early as possible *either in person or by email*. I try to answer all emails within 24 hours (weekends and holidays may take a bit longer). Help yourself by developing good study habits and asking questions as soon as you have them. There is no shame in asking questions or having concerns! My door is always open, and I want you to succeed! I would much rather answer repeated questions from you and help you create a study plan rather than having you fail the class because you did not want to ask questions. Please do not wait until the end of the semester to get serious about this course! At that point, there will be little that I can do to help you. However, I am happy and willing to assist those who ask for help and are working hard.

**Grading Scale**

Your grade will consist of four exams (60%), weekly journal entries (10%), weekly activities, discussions, blogs and/or quizzes (15%), and Americans Governing activities (15%). The exams will not be cumulative. All work will be graded within one week of your submission.
Exam 1: 15%
Exam 2: 15%
Exam 3: 15%
Exam 4: 15%
Journal Entries: 10%
Discussions/Quizzes: 15%
Americans Governing Activities: 15%

Grading Scale: A: 90-100; B: 80-90; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 59 and below

**Things I Must Say**

**Courtesy in the Online Classroom:**

- Please be courteous and polite to your fellow online learners. Realize that there is a real person with feelings, much like you, sitting at their computer posting their own discussions and comments. Feel free to disagree with one another, just disagree respectfully. Respect the opinions of your fellow classmates, even if you do not agree with them. In simple terms, do not attack your fellow students personally.

**Cheating:**

- Don't do it. The penalties are simply severe and not worth the risk. Academic dishonesty on even the smallest assignment or quiz will result in your failure in the course and facing University disciplinary action. In such cases, I will push for the strongest possible penalty. 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, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. If you have questions about University policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Student Code of Conduct at [http://www.tamucc.edu/~students/08-09StudentHandbook.pdf](http://www.tamucc.edu/~students/08-09StudentHandbook.pdf).

**Things the University Must Say**

**Academic Honor Code:** Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the TAMUCC 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 Driftwood 101.

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

**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.

**Grade Appeal Process:** 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.