U.S. Government and Politics

Course Description
This is a lower-division course that introduces students to the fundamentals of American Government. The class will focus on political behavior and institutions, while providing a complementary overview of U.S. political history, the U.S. Constitution, and civil rights and liberties. We will be interacting with one another via the Blackboard online format. You may access the course by logging into your TAMUCC Island Online account and choosing POLS 2305-W02 for the Summer I session: https://iol.tamucc.edu

Learning Objectives
The four Core Objectives related to this course are: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. By the end of the semester the course will have met these objectives:

- By having the students engage in critical thinking activities related to the Constitution, the political and philosophical foundations of the nation, governmental institutions, and political behavior.

- By having students engage in written, verbal or visual activities related to the Constitution, the political and philosophical foundations of the nation, governmental institutions, and political behavior.

- By having students engage in course related activities that connect personal responsibility and political ideology to encourage ethical decision making.

- By having students engage in course related activities that connect social responsibility to civil rights, civil liberties, and to voting and voting behavior.

Major Course Requirements
You will have an exam each week beginning in Week 2 and a final. All will be timed exams to be taken by the scheduled days and will be multiple-choice format. You will have access to each exam beginning the Monday of the week. Notes are not allowed.

1. Exam 1: 20% covering Week 1 and 2

2. Exam 2: 20% covering Week 3 and 4
3. Final Exam: 15% covering week 5. The final exam is non-comprehensive; it only covers the final week of material.

4. Writing assignment 1: 10% - a writing assignment that is scheduled in module 2/week 2

5. Writing assignment 2: 10% - a writing assignment that is scheduled in module 4/week 4

6. Discussion board participation: (5% each week * 5 weeks = 25%) - each week you are required to post a thoughtful response to the question(s) in the discussion boards and respond to your peers.

*You must make your original post in each forum by Wednesday of that week or face a 10 point penalty each day for lateness and respond to each other by Sunday. You are required to post thoughtful responses to at least (2) of your peers or you will not receive credit (i.e. "I agree with your post") is not thoughtful. Discussion responses are graded on the following criteria: 80% content/20% response to peers
*Grammar and spelling errors will result in point deductions

Attendance:
I will not check attendance everyday, although I can track log-in and course activity in Blackboard.

Required Readings
*No Textbook is required for this course; save your money!

1. Web-based readings located within the learning modules each week inside of the Blackboard shell

2. Instructor lecture notes and guidance sections for each week that are placed within the learning modules in the course

Content Areas Covered
American political institutions: The Executive, Judicial, and Legislative Branches.
American political structure: The U.S. Constitution and Federalism
Political actors and behavior: Elections, Political Participation, Interest Groups, Political Parties
Public policies: Foreign Policy, Energy, Plea Bargaining, and the courts
Political rights: The U.S. Bill of Rights, civil liberties, and civil rights
Legislative focus: Civil liberties in context: The Patriot and Real ID Acts

**Please read the introduction letter to the class before reviewing the syllabus. The syllabus provides a calendar of readings and due dates, but the same information is found in each week’s learning module in much greater detail.
** It is best to contact your instructor either via email or in the discussion forums in Blackboard. If you call the above office phone number it will route your call to my voicemail, which I will check regularly and then return your call as soon as possible.

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Class Schedule:

Below you will find a class calendar, as well as the due dates for your exams, discussion posts, and writing assignments. Each week you are responsible for reading the web-based materials, my lecture notes (in Power Point format, Adobe, or MS Word), and checking the web links in those notes and any additional web content. I have posted the suggested readings on a daily basis that should keep you on track with the course. Good luck!

*Week 1 (June 2-8): The Founding of the American Republic, The U.S. Constitution, Federalism and Power Relationships. Public Policy Spotlight: Civil Liberties, the Real ID, and Patriot Acts*

**Monday-2: Introduction to the Course**
Introduce and familiarize yourself with the class, Blackboard, and note the due dates and assignments

**Tuesday-3: The American Founding and the U.S. Constitution**
Read sections on The American Founding and the U.S. Constitution in your content module for this week.

**Wednesday-4: Federalism and Public Policy Making**
Review lecture slides on Federalism
Review supplementary online material embedded in the lecture slides
Review section on Federalism in your content module
Post responses to the discussion question in the discussion module

**Thursday-5: Civil Liberties, the Real ID and Patriot Acts:**
Watch the PBS Documentary "Spying on the Home Front” to better understand the consequences of the Patriot Act and domestic government espionage:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/homefront/

**Friday-6: Material Continued**
Study lecture slides and readings on the Real ID and Patriot Acts
Watch the PBS Documentary “Top Secret America” to better understand the impact of 911 on American civil liberties and the rise of the national security complex:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/topsecretamerica/
Read the discussion board and respond to peers
Saturday-7: Review
Read the discussion board and respond to peers if you have not done so at this point
Take some time to review the material and review sheet for this week located in the lessons module

Sunday-8: Take a break!

Week 2 (June 9-15) Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Campaign Finance

Monday 9: History of American Parties
Review online content on American political parties in the lessons module

*Exam #1 is now available to you
Exam 1 is a 40 question multiple-choice exam to be taken in 60 minutes over the material from weeks 1 and 2. You may only take the exam once and must complete the exam on your first attempt. You can revisit previous questions until you submit the exam, but the test will automatically submit after the time expires. The exam will be available in the Assessments tab beginning at 8:00 AM (CST) on 6/9 (Monday) and remain available until 11:00 PM (CST) on 6/13 (Friday).

Tuesday 10: Political Parties
Read chapter on political parties in your textbook
Review lecture slides on political parties in the lessons module
Continue reviewing online readings assigned in the content module for this week on political parties

Wednesday 11: Interest Groups, Lobbyists, and Campaign Finance
Read lecture slides on Interest groups and lobbyists
Review the online readings assigned in the content module for interest groups, lobbying, and campaign finance regulations
*Post response to discussion question in the discussion board

Thursday 12:
Review your notes and the review sheet in preparation for Exam #1

Friday 13: Exam 1:
A multiple choice exam to be taken after you finish reading the course content for weeks 1 and 2. You must begin and finish the exam (which is timed) by 11:00PM today (Friday, June 13).

Saturday 14: Writing assignment #1:
Follow the instructions in the week 2 learning module, which will direct you to web links for a set of ideology quizzes. The instructions will call for you to take the quizzes and reflect on the results and your personal ideology, while deciding which political parties best represent your viewpoints and beliefs.

**Writing Assignment: Political Ideology and Citizenship**

Part 1: Better understanding your political ideology
Follow the web links below and take both of the ideology quizzes. Write an essay describing the results of your quizzes. In your response please state if you agree or disagree with the results of the surveys and if there were inconsistencies in the results why you think this result occurred. Make sure you weave in some of your responses to the survey questions in your answer. Think carefully when reflecting on this one, as you have a (4) page minimum. Please cut and paste the results from the political compass test in your document (i.e. the grid that marks your political ideology that pops up after the quiz).  

http://www.politicalcompass.org/test  
http://typology.people-press.org/

Part 2: Should they let you into the country?
How much do you actually know about American government? Can you pass a citizenship test? For the second part of your writing assignment you must follow the link below and complete the following test online. When you are finished use the print screen function (either the prt scr key on your keyboard or hold the alt key and hit prt scr) and paste the results into the essay. Please provide your personal observations as to whether this is an adequate measure of the fundamentals of U.S. politics and culture.


**Sunday 15: Wrapping up**
*Post response to peers in the discussion forum
*Writing assignment #1 is due by 5:00PM on Sunday, June 15. You will receive a 10 point penalty per day for lateness.

**Week 3 (June 16-22): The Judicial and Legislative Branches**

**Monday 16: The Judiciary**
Read lecture slides on the Judiciary
Review the online readings on the Judiciary and court system located in the content module for this week

**Tuesday 17: The Plea Bargaining Process**
Read lecture notes on Plea bargaining
Wednesday 18: Plea Bargaining Continued
Watch the PBS Frontline episode “The Plea”. A link to the documentary can be found in the lecture slides for this section, but a link can also be found below:
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/plea/
Post your response to the discussion question in the discussion board

Thursday 19: Congress
Read the online readings on Congress/Legislative Branch in content module for this week

Friday 20: Congress continued
Review lectures slides on Congress
Read the discussion board and post a response to your peers

Saturday 21:
Read the discussion board and post a response to your peers

Sunday 22: Take a break!

Week 4 (June 23-June 29): Executive Branch, Political Participation, and Elections

Monday 23: The Executive Branch
Review online readings on the executive branch/presidency in the content module for this week
Review lecture notes over the executive branch/presidency
*Exam II is now available to you
A multiple-choice exam consisting of 40 questions over the material from weeks 3 and 4. You will have 60 minutes to complete the exam. Once you take the exam you must complete it, as you only get one opportunity to take the exam. Once you answer a question you may go back and revisit it until you submit your exam, but the exam will automatically submit after the time limit expires. The exam will be available between 8:00 AM (CST) on 6/23 (Monday) until 11:00 PM (CST) on 6/27 (Friday). Good luck!

Tuesday 24: Writing assignment #2:
The Best of the Modern Presidents
You will be required to watch at least (2) documentaries online concerning the modern Presidents and to write a paper contrasting their major achievements/weaknesses in office. Please set aside time to do this as the documentaries themselves can be 3 hours long each. In your paper (minimum of (5) pages) you must discuss the major domestic and foreign policy achievements of each President, discuss their major weaknesses, and discuss which person you feel was a more successful President.
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/
Wednesday 25: Political Participation
Review documentaries and continue writing assignment #2
Read lecture notes on political participation, voting, and elections
Review online readings on these topics in your content module for this week
Post your response to the discussion question in the discussion board

Thursday 26: Continue readings on political participation
Review materials and review sheet for Exam 2

Friday 27: Exam 2
Multiple choice exam over weeks 3&4.
The exam must be taken and completed by 11:00PM on Friday, June 27

Saturday 28: wrapping up
Read the discussion board and respond to peers

Sunday 29: Writing assignment #2 due
*Writing assignment #2 is due by 5:00PM on Sunday, June 29. You will receive a 10 point penalty per day for lateness.

Week 5 (June 30-July 3): American Foreign Policy, Civil liberties, and Civil Rights

Monday 30: American Foreign Policy
Read chapter on foreign policy in your book and review lecture slides on foreign policy
*The final exam is now available to you.
A multiple-choice exam consisting of 20 questions over the material from week 5. You will have 40 minutes to complete the exam. The exam will be available from 6/30 at 8:00 AM (CST) until 11:00 PM (CST) on 7/3. Once you begin the exam you cannot retake it and it must be taken within this time frame. You may go back and revisit your questions until you submit the exam, but the exam will automatically submit after the time limit expires. Good luck!

Tuesday 1: Civil Liberties
Read chapter on civil liberties in your textbook and review lecture slides on civil liberties and civil rights. Review online readings on civil liberties
Watch the following hour long segment from Chicano! Quest for a Homeland
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RHQ4XS-DrqM&feature=related

Wednesday 2: Civil Rights
Review online readings and lecture notes on civil rights in your content module
Post your response to the discussion question in the discussion board
Thursday 3: Final Exam
Multiple choice exam over week 5. The exam must be taken and completed by 11:00PM on Thursday, July 3
Post your final response to peers in the last discussion board before the class closes at midnight

You are done! Congratulations on finishing the course.

Grade Appeals
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, 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 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 Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost.

Disabilities Accommodations
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 call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116. 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.

Statement of Academic Continuity
In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.
Academic Honesty:
University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, forgery, or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) If unsure of what honesty entails or if for more information regarding the penalties for academic dishonesty, please refer to the University Catalog. Instances of plagiarism will be handled on an individual basis, but generally speaking the first offense will result in a zero for the assignment; subsequent plagiarism will result in failing the course and/or reporting chronic plagiarism to the university administration for disciplinary action. Reuse of previous work, even if that work is original, is known as academic recycling; such work is not accepted in this course and instances of recycling will receive the same treatment as plagiarism.

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.