POLS 2305.001
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Fall 2014
MWF 12:00-12:50 CI 102

Dr. Paula Arledge
Bay Hall 307
825-2098
paula.arledge@tamucc.edu

POLS 2305 is a survey course in American Government. What that implies is that we will be covering quite a bit of ground in this course and will not have the time to focus in depth on any particular subject. However, I do have three major objectives that I hope to accomplish over the course of the semester: first, to familiarize students with the development of our constitutional system of government; second, to make students aware of their rights and responsibilities as members of this political community; and, third, to outline the structure of our federal system and the functions of the branches of our national government. While the structure of this class is primarily that of lectures, I encourage questions and discussion. I do not lecture directly from the book. Therefore, it is essential that students attend class on a regular basis to listen and take notes.

Course 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 US political behavior such as voting, elections, political parties, interest groups and the media.

Required text

Greer, etc (2012). Gateways to Democracy. Wadsworth.

Students should have access to a copy of the text and be prepared to read the assigned chapters. Test questions may come from material in the text that has not been covered in class.
**Course requirements**

Grades in this class will be based on points accumulated from tests and in class writing assignments. There will be four tests administered over the course of the semester, including a final. Each test will count for 100 points. There will be three in class writing assignments. Each assignment will count for up to 25 points and I will drop the lowest of the three. There is no make up for writing assignments. The grading scale will be as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>450-405</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>404-359</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>358-313</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>312-267</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>266-0</td>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
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The format for the exams will be multiple choice questions and all exams will be computer graded which means that the student must bring a number 2 pencil on exam days. Make up exams will be given only upon the receipt of an acceptable excuse. It is the responsibility of the student to talk to me immediately upon return to class regarding a make up exam. Students should also plan to be on time for exams as no exam will be given to a student who enters after the first student has finished, turned in her exam and departed.

**Class attendance and extra credit**

In my many years of teaching political science, I have found very few students who routinely cut class and do well on the exams. Therefore, in order to encourage class attendance, I will do two things in this class: I will call roll at the beginning of each class and I will provide “bonus” points toward the final exam for regular attendees.

The bonus point incentive will work as follows: students who have fewer than three unexcused absences will receive an additional 20 points toward their final grade. This can provide a significant boost since it represents almost half of a letter grade on the grading scale.

Students have the responsibility of demonstrating that they have met the course attendance requirement. This means that they must be present when roll is called (or on rare occasions when late let me know that they were there in that class) and must provide me with proof of excused absences (as defined by the university) within one week of returning to class.

**Additional requirements for POLS 2305**
1. Do be on time for this class. Regular tardiness is a form of student behavior totally unacceptable to me. Late arrival distracts both the professor and other students.

2. Do not bring children to class. They also are a distraction, no matter how well behaved they may be.

3. Do your own work on exams. Learning may be a shared endeavor but demonstrating knowledge is a solo effort. Cheating will not be tolerated. I will closely monitor exams and any wandering eyes or other attempts to cheat will result in the exam being picked up and the offender(s) reported for further disciplinary action.

4. If you need to leave class early, see me before class begins and explain why. Do not simply walk out of my class before you are dismissed.

5. Pay attention and take notes. Most of the questions on your exams come from lecture material. Talking to your neighbors or napping will be counterproductive to your final grade.

**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.

**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 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.

**Grade appeal process**

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards, as outlined in the course syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate
grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. 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 Procedure. 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.

**Course Outline (subject to change with notice)**

*August 27, Go over syllabus and course expectations*

*August 29, September 3, Introduction to American politics*
   *Ch. 1 in text.*

*September 5, 8, 10, The Constitution*
   *Ch. 2 in text*

*September 12, 15, 17 Federalism.*
   *Ch. 3 in test.*

**Exam 1, September 19.**

*September 22, 24, 26, Civil liberties*
   *Ch. 4 in text.*

**September 29, Writing assignment 1**

*October 1, 3, 6, Civil rights.*
   *Ch. 5 in text.*

**Exam 2, October 8.**

*October 10, 13, 15, Congress.*
   *Ch. 11 in text.*

**October 17, Writing assignment 2.**

*October 20, 22, 24, 27, Presidency.*
   *Ch. 12 in text.*

**Exam 3, October 29.**

*October 31, November 3, 5, Judiciary.*
Ch. 14 in text.

November 7, 10, 12 Parties and Interest Groups
Ch. 8, 9 in text.

November 14, 17. Public Opinion
Ch. 6 in text

November 19, Writing 3

November 21, 24, 26, December 1. Voting and Elections

Final Exam, Monday, December 8 at 11 a.m.