POLS 2305.001
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
SPRING 2015

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

Office hours: 9-10MWF, 1-2MW
or by appointment
Class MW 2:00-3:15
Bay Hall 207

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.

Core Learning Objectives

1. Having students engage in critical thinking activities, related to the Constitution,
   the political and philosophical foundations of the nation, governmental
   institutions, and political behavior.
2. Having students engage in written, verbal and visual activities related to the
   Constitution, the political and philosophical foundations of the nation,
   governmental institutions, and political behavior.
3. Having students engage in course related activities that connect personal
   responsibility and political ideology to encourage ethical decisionmaking.
4. Having students engage in course related activities that connect social
   responsibility to civil rights, civil liberties, and to voting and voting behavior.
**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:

- 450-405 A  
- 404-359 B  
- 358-313 C  
- 312-267 D  
- 266-0 F

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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit System. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood#203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

**Disability Services**

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 a 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, Room@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 Disabilities 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 on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/studentsinfo.html For assistance and or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

**Course outline** (dates subject to change with notice)

*January 21.* Go over syllabus, introduction to class.

*January 26.* Introduction to American Government.
   Ch. 1 in text.

*January 28, February 2.* Creating a national Constitution.
   Ch. 2 in text.

*February 4, 9.* Federalism.
   Ch. 3 in text.

*February 11.* Exam 1, February 11.

*February 16, 18.* Civil liberties
   Ch. 4 in text.

*February 23, Writing assignment 1*

*February 25 March 2.* Civil rights.
   Ch. 5 in text.

*March 4, Exam 2*

*March 9, 11, 23.* Congress.
   Ch. 11 in text.

*March 16-20, Spring Break*

*March 25, Writing assignment 2*
March 30, April 1, 6. Presidency.
   Ch. 12 in text.

Exam 3, April 8

April 13, 15. Judiciary.
   Ch. 14 in text.

April 20, 22. Parties and Interest Groups
   Ch. 8, 9 in text.

April 27, Writing assignment 3

April 29, May 4. Voting and elections
   Ch. 6, 7 in text