U.S. Government Institutions

Course Overview:

This course is designed to provide a deeper understanding of U.S. national government for students of the TAMUCC Masters of Public Administration Program. This course will consist of a survey of the major institutions of the U.S. national government, with special attention to the presidency, Congress, and the U.S. Supreme Court. There will be some comparative discussion of federalism, parliamentary systems of government, and proportional representation. There will also be a brief review of the U.S. Constitution and the federal court structure. This course looks beyond simply the institutions of government and the policymaking process towards a deeper analysis of political actor motivations, policy outputs and impacts, and citizen rights and responsibilities.

Learning Objectives:

- Describe key political concepts related to U.S. institutions such as Congress, the Presidency, and the Judiciary.
- Identify key debates in contemporary American public policy as well as the issues at stake and the arguments advanced by each side of the debate.
- Describe various decision frameworks used by policymakers in creating, developing, and executing various public policies.
- Identify key actors and agencies involved in the making of public policy within the United States and their respective roles in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of policy.

Major Course Requirements

- Course Exams (3 @ 20 pts.) 60 Points
- Response Papers (4 @ 10 pts.) 40 points
- Extra Credit Essay (1 @ 5 pts.)

- **Course exams:** Three exams will be given to assess student learning. The exams will be based on slides and lectures uploaded to blackboard. Exams will be released on a weekly basis to correspond to that week’s block of lectures.
- **Response Papers:** Assignments will be completed as a means of formative assessment. You will be responsible for completing 4 two-page essays that pertain to the assigned reading and incorporate relevant contemporary policy issues. If you want additional feedback on your assignment, it must be substantially attempted and self-corrected prior to making an appointment. These essays should be completed as though they are going to be a professional report. **Instructions on these essays will be provided later.**
• **Extra Credit Essay:** An additional essay due on July 22nd will be optional, and worth 5 points extra credit. **Instructions on the essay will be provided at a later date.**

**Required or Recommended Readings:**


Additional Readings on Blackboard

**Lectures and Slides**

Slides with recorded lectures, along with slides without recorded lectures, will be posted in the content folder of blackboard. Slides will be stored in their appropriate week’s folder. To hear the audio track, simply run the slideshow full screen and the slides will advance on their own.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance/tardiness**

Students should log into Blackboard on a regular basis to download material, watch videos and turn in assignments.

**Late work and Make-up Exams**

The course is asynchronous, therefore you are able to log in and complete course learning anytime that is convenient to you. There are requirements, however, for completion of unit work and exams. If the student is late in meeting these dates, the work will not be accepted, nor will exams allowed to be made up.

**Extra Credit**

There is no extra credit offered in this course.

**Academic Integrity/Plagiarism**

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, falsification, forgery, complicity or plagiarism. (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work.) **In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in the grade of an F for the class.**
Dropping a Class

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with me before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. April 8th is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Classroom/professional behavior

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

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.

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 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 the office in Corpus Christi Hall #116.

Grade Appeals Process

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class 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/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office Grade Appeals*
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.

Schedule

Week 1: Systems of Government, American Political Culture, Politics of the American Founding, Constitution, Federalism, Congress

Exam #1 completed by 11:59 pm on June 6

Week 2: The Bill of Rights, Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, The President

Exam #2 completed by 11:59 pm on June 13

Week 3: the Supreme Court, The Bureaucracy, Elections and Campaigns, Interest Groups, The Media

Exam #3 completed by 11:59 pm on June 20

Week 4: On Security and Civil Liberties

Essay #1 due by 11:59 pm on June 27

Week 5: On Federalism and Hurricane Katrina

Essay #2 due by 11:59 pm on July 4

Week 6: On Political Responses

Essay #3 due by 11:59 pm on July 11

Week 7: Goldfish Bowls

Essay #4 due by 11:59 pm on July 18

Week 8: On Ideology and Parties

Optional Extra Credit Essay due by 11:59 on July 20