SYLLABUS

Political Science 2305, Section-§060 
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Fall, 2017 
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Federal Government

Course Description

The 2016 presidential election behind us and the election of Donald Trump as the 45th president of the United States; the failure of the 115th Congress to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act; the decision of President Trump to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris Climate Agreement; a new strategy of the Trump administration for resolving the nearly 16-year-old conflict in Afghanistan; the decision of the federal courts to refuse to enforce the president’s travel ban from six majority-Muslim countries; the intelligence community’s revelations of Russia’s hacking campaign to influence the outcome of the 2016 presidential election; state level efforts to limit transgender access to public bathrooms and the courts unwilling to resolve the issue; the building and funding of the border wall between Mexico and the U.S.; the seven-year-old Civil War in Syria and the failure of the international community to find a diplomatic solution that has led to the deaths of more than 465,000 individuals and more than 5 million refugees – what do these events have in common? They are all part of the landscape of American politics, encompassing both national and global dimensions, covered in this introductory political science course.

This course is the first half of a two-sequence course program with Political Science 2306 being the second course which combined will satisfy the 6 Sch ASU Core Curriculum requirements in federal and state governments. Pols 2305 is designed to introduce the student to the American political system: its political culture, the attitudes and political behavior of its citizens, and the operation of key institutions. We will explore the historical development and founding of the United States and discuss major debates about the structure of our republican form of government. We will examine the role of major political actors – their strategies, roles, limitations, and power. We will examine the role individuals can play in influencing and affecting government. We will be concerned with several themes, especially the nature and distribution of political power, the role of the elections, the structure and function of political institutions, and the “rules of the political game.” The course will provide students with a basic understanding of the main institutions and main actors in American politics. We will follow the actions of the President, the Congress, the Courts, and the public. For these reasons, current political events will be of special interest and importance to our study of the federal government.

Course/Core Objectives:

1. Critical Thinking (CT): to gather, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.
2. Communication (CS): to develop, interpret and express ideas through effective written communication.
4. Personal Responsibility (PR): to demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions
and consequences as related to ethical decision-making.
Note: Don’t accept any assertion of fact on its face. Try to step back from ideology, opinion & argument; listen carefully to different sides in a debate being prepared to see the logic in what people of different viewpoints have to say.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Student will explain the origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. government, and constitutional democracy.
2. Student will demonstrate knowledge of the U.S. political system and key components of the political system, including Congress, the presidency, and the judicial branch.
3. Student will understand the American federal system and explain the ways in which different political systems divide and share power between their central and state governments.
4. Students will evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, political parties, campaigns and elections in the American political system.
5. Students will describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens and be able to comment on the role of civic engagement in U.S. politics and political culture.
6. Student will analyze political issues, demonstrate critical thinking skills, and develop a critical approach to the study of government.

Core Curriculum – Learning Outcomes, Assignments/Activities, and Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Level Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Core Assignments/General Learning Activities for the Core Objectives</th>
<th>Core Assessments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLS 2305</td>
<td>Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student can think critically about American politics and governance.</td>
<td>POLS 2305 Value Rubrics for Critical Thinking, Communication, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT1: Students will develop critical thinking skills and the ability to critically evaluate the American political environment and explain the development of constitutional democracy.</td>
<td>Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student can effectively communicate a basic knowledge of American political governance and federalism using a written artifact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS1: Students will gain and be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of the three branches of government and the general principles and characteristics of federalism.</td>
<td>Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student can demonstrate specific knowledge of American civic life and political system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR2: Students will gain and be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of the American political system and demonstrate the importance of participating in the American civic and political life.</td>
<td>Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student understands ethical decision making and responsibilities as citizen using a written artifact.</td>
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<td>PR: Students will exhibit the skills necessary to understand and evaluate political outcomes and evaluate the responsibility of civic engagement. Students will demonstrate an understanding of different strategies for political participation and knowledge of rights and responsibilities of citizenship.</td>
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Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes:

- Learning outcomes will be assessed via examinations and a written essay assignment.

Class Organization

A combination format of lecture and discussion has been adopted for teaching this course. Students are strongly encouraged to be prepared for class and to actively participate in class through comments, questions, and responses to questions. For each lesson chapter I will post materials in the course website on Blackboard under the “Lessons” divider. They will consist of lecture powerpoint presentations, review questions, and chapter outline. You are expected to do the required readings and urged to consult other sources of information for in-depth coverage of political events (newspapers, magazines, and/or major news network). It is strongly urged that you follow the international, national, and local news on a daily basis by reading national as well as local newspapers. It is recommended that you consult reputable news sources like The New York Times, CNN, and The PBS News Hour.

Office Hours

Office hours are as follows:
M,T,R,F 10:00-11:00 AM
M,T,W,F 2:30-3:30 PM
By appointment also

I am here to help. If you have questions, concerns, or need to chat please come during my office hours. If they are not convenient please email me to schedule an appointment. You can reach me on weekdays, Monday through Friday. Please note that I check my emails periodically between 9 AM and 5 PM. Depending upon time of receipt of email I may take up to two days to response.

Expectations of Students

Students are expected to read the course materials scheduled in the syllabus with care. It is important that there is no misunderstanding concerning the readings; consequently, if you have any questions regarding the assignments please do not hesitate to ask. All of the readings listed below are considered required. Class discussions and lectures will add to, rather than merely review, the reading materials. Analyses of current political events will be incorporated into class discussions and assigned reading materials; it is important that you come to class equipped with a prior reading of the assigned materials.

Blackboard

The teaching of this course is integrated with the Blackboard platform. You should familiarize yourself with the course website on Blackboard. You will find useful information on Blackboard such as a copy of the course syllabus, information about exams, grading system, and your grades.
To access Blackboard you must have an ASU email account and be registered for this course. To login go to URL webpage: https://blackboard.angelo.edu/ and type in your ASU userid and password. Please try to access Blackboard as soon as possible to make sure that you are enrolled in the course and that you understand the various features of the Blackboard course site.

Course Requirements & Grading

Attendance
Attendance is required for all classes. I will take attendance every day. It is important that you show up on time. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to approach me after class and make sure that I check your name on the class roll. Class attendance will be important for determining borderline grades. **Excellent class attendance will contribute one point to your sum total of semester points.** Excellent class attendance means no more than a specified number of class absences as determined by instructor. Student absence for observance of a religious holy day will be treated in accordance with OP 10.19 of ASU’s Operating Policies and Procedures. According to the University Calendar, the last day for a partial or total withdrawal from the University is **Friday, November 3, 2017.** Withdrawal grades will be indicated by the letter W.

Exams (400 exam points)
The evaluation of your class performance will be based on four examinations. The class exams will be objective and a combination of multiple-choice, identification, and/or short essay. A study guide will be provided before each exam through Blackboard. The final exam will not be cumulative. All electronic equipment (cell phones, computers, etc.) must be put away and hidden from view during exams. If you have a valid reason for missing an exam (verified illness, accident, or unavoidable absence) you may make-up an exam. **If possible, you should notify me before the exam, if not, within 24 hours after the exam date.** The design of the make-up exam is left solely up to the instructor; the make-up exam may be comprehensive and entirely essay or a combination of multiple-choice and identification; it will be scheduled during the last week of the semester. Please note that you will be allowed to take only one make-up exam for the semester.

Extra Credit Essay (40 exam points)
The extra credit assignment is the submission of a written essay that meets the Core Curriculum assessment requirements with regards to “demonstrating a basic knowledge of the American political system, engaging in critical thinking based on synthesis & evaluation, and exhibiting the skills necessary to understand and evaluate political outcomes.” You are asked to prepare a review essay of a newspaper article that discusses and analyzes a political topic that pertains to the course content. Some suggested newspaper sources are New York Times, Washington Post, Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times, or other well-known newspaper. The topic needs to be appropriate and relevant to the scope of American government and politics. You may earn up to a total of 40 exam points. More information will be provided about this extra credit project after the semester begins.

Grading
Your semester grade is based on the sum of semester points earned for each component part of
the course requirements – the four examinations and the extra-credit essay. Each exam is worth 100 exam points and the extra credit essay is worth 40 exam points.

The results of the in-class exams will be used to compute your course grade; each exam score will contribute a specified percentage (indicated below) of your total semester points. Each exam score is weighted according to the specified percentage and added up to calculate your total sum of semester points for the course. The extra credit exam points will be weighted by the same weight as the semester exams and added to your sum total of semester points.

The class grading system is based on a scoring scale of 100 semester points earned from the exam scores and extra credit essay. The grading scale adopted for determining your letter grade is listed below. Your course letter grade will be determined by the total sum of semester points that you earn. **In order to be fair to all students the grading scale should be considered fairly rigid.**

**The Grading Scale**
A=90-100  B=80-89  C=70-79  D=58-69  F=57 and below

[Numeric numbers refer to total semester points]

**Exam Schedule**
First Exam  Sept 22  25% of Final Grade
Second Exam  Oct 18  25% of Final Grade
Third Exam  Nov 15  25% of Final Grade
Final Exam  Dec 13  25% of Final Grade

**Nota Bene:** All electronic devices, including portable music players, are not allowed during exam taking.

**Academic Honesty**

Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with the university Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the ASU Student Handbook. See the Current Student page on the ASU homepage (URL address: http://www.angelo.edu/cstudent/) and click on Academic Honor Code. Acts of academic dishonesty and misconduct as referenced in Angelo State University's Student Handbook will be referred to the Dean of Students.

**Accommodations for Disability**

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA), and subsequent legislation.
The Student Affairs Office is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting the Student Affairs Office, Suite 112 of the Houston Harte University Center, at 325-942-2047 (phone) or 325-942-2211 (fax) or by e-mail at studentservices@angelo.edu to begin the process. The Student Affairs Office will establish the particular documentation requirements necessary for the various types of disabilities.

**Unprofessional Behavior**

A certain classroom decorum based upon mutual respect toward others contributes towards a productive environment. Please note that arriving late without a good reason or making distracting noise in the classroom, i.e., whispering or eating, is unprofessional and a sign of disrespect. Please be sure to turn off cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices with audible signals, and also refrain from bringing food and beverages. Laptops are permitted only for note taking.

**Reading Materials**


I suggest that you buy the online version of the book at the following site: [https://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/isbn/9781285853017&cid=APL1](https://www.cengagebrain.com/shop/isbn/9781285853017&cid=APL1). However the bookstore should also have copies. Be sure to note the 2017-2018 edition. Other editions contain outdated information.

**Course Schedule**

[Note: The course syllabus is a general plan for the semester. The schedule is a tentative and may be updated or changed throughout the semester as necessary.]

**August 28: Introduction**

What are the rules of the game for this course? What will be the basis for evaluating student performance? Questions pertaining to management of the course will be answered by discussing the course syllabus.

**August 30 – September 6: One Republic – Two Americas?**

How does a community of individuals create a set of rules and structures for the distribution of goods and services, and for the maintenance of the community? The answer is that individuals create government. What type of government can individuals create? Who really rules in America? What is meant by a "liberal" and "conservative” political ideology?

A. The basic terminology for the study of politics
B. The importance of government
C. Models of government
D. Key features of democracy
E. Political spectrum in the U.S.
F. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 1

**September 8 – September 13: The Constitution**

Imagine being faced with the task of laying the constitutional foundations for a brand-new nation. Where would you turn for philosophical guidance? How would you resolve differences in viewpoints regarding structures and powers of government? What are some important events in the formation of the new U.S. government?

A. Beginnings
   1. Articles of Confederation
   2. Declaration of Independence
   3. Revolutionary War
B. Drafting a constitution
C. Battle for ratification
D. Constitutional change
E. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 2

**September 15 – September 20: Federalism**

What is a federalist system of government? Why did the framers create a federal form of government? What are the different forms of relations between the central government and regional governments? How does federalism function today?

A. Three political system models
B. Constitutional basis of American federalism
C. Case law
   1. *McCulloch v. Maryland*
   2. *Gibbons v. Ogden*
D. The evolution of federalism in the U.S.
E. Politics of federalism
F. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 3

**September 25 – October 2: The Congress**

The Constitution establishes the major institutions of government - Congress, Presidency, and the Supreme Court. How did the framers of the Constitution structure a bicameral legislature? What major functions are associated with Congress as a governmental institution in the political system? Who gets elected to Congress? How does the lawmaking process work in Congress?

A. Congress as a Political Institution
   1. Members
   2. Constituencies
B. Functions of Congress
C. Powers of Congress
D. How is Congress Organized?
   1. Committee System
   2. Leadership System
E. Congress as a Policy-Making Institution – Activities of Congress
   1. Lawmaking
2. Budget Making

F. **Readings:** Ford, et al., Chapter 11

**October 4 – October 9: The President**

What constitutes the American presidency as the executive branch of government? What are the different duties and roles of the president? Describe the organization of the executive branch. Has the power of the president increased or decreased with respect to Congress?

A. Becoming a President
B. Roles of the President
C. Powers of the President
D. The Executive Organization
E. **Readings:** Ford, et al., Chapter 12

**October 11 – October 16: The Bureaucracy**

What constitutes the nature of the federal bureaucracy? What are the modern characteristics of bureaucracies? What constitutes the organization of the federal bureaucracy? Is the federal bureaucracy increasing or decreasing in power and/or size? What controls exist over the bureaucracy?

A. The Nature of Bureaucracy
B. Development of Federal Bureaucracy
C. Organization of the Federal Bureaucracy
D. What Bureaucracies Do
E. Overseeing the Bureaucracy
F. **Readings:** Ford, et al., Chapter 13

**October 20 – October 27: The Courts**

Although the founding fathers envisioned the judiciary at the “least dangerous branch” of government, today the judicial branch is judged as a coequal branch within the national government. Why? How does one describe the development of the Supreme Court? Describe the powers and structure of the judicial branch of government. How does the Supreme Court engage in public policymaking?

A. Nature of Judicial Branch
   1. Sources of American law
   2. The power of judicial review - Marbury v. Madison
   3. Eras of the Supreme Court
B. Structure of the Federal Judicial System
C. Selection of Judges
D. Policymaking and the Courts
   1. Access to the Supreme Court
   2. Deciding cases
E. **Readings:** Ford, et al., Chapter 14
October 30 – November 6: Public Opinion and Political Socialization

A democratic government is based on the consent of the governed. Consent is linked to the effectiveness of government and the wishes of individuals in society. Public opinion plays an important role in judging the effectiveness of government and measuring public consent. What is meant by public opinion and explain its use by policy-makers and interest groups? Explain how public opinion is formed in the United States. What is the link between public opinion and voting behavior?

A. Define public opinion
B. Importance of political socialization
C. Measuring public opinion
D. Political preferences and voting behavior
E. Public opinion and government
F. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 6

November 8 – November 13: Interest Groups

Society is a vast interlocking network of groups, encompassing economic, social, religious, ideological and political categories. Interest groups are important social structures which link the American people to government and provide for the transmission of peoples' preferences to government. Why do interest groups form? What strategies do interest groups adopt for influencing the policymaking process?

A. Define interest groups
B. Types of interest groups
C. Functions of interest groups
D. Tactics of interest groups
E. Regulating interest groups
F. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 7

November 17 – November 22: Political Parties

Linkage institutions include also political parties. The growth of political parties is associated with the development of a democratic political system. Political parties create a relationship between society and government and allow for input into the political system. How well do political parties perform their jobs? Do democratic governments need political parties?

A. Distinguish between an interest group and a political party
B. Development of political parties in the U.S.
C. The faces of a political party
   1. The party in the electorate
   2. The party as an organization
   3. The party in government
D. Third parties in the United States
E. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 8

November 27 – December 1: Campaigns, Voting, and Elections

At the heart of the democratic political system is the election of freely chosen representatives by the majority of the people in competitive elections. For democracy to work there must be
meaningful campaigns among candidates and meaningful participation among the voters. What comprises modern campaigns today? What concerns are raised today by changes in funding political campaigns? Do these changes threaten democracy?

A. Understanding the modern campaign today
B. Different types of elections
C. Presidential election process & the strategy of winning
D. The nomination game
E. The electoral college
F. The role of money in politics
G. Campaign finance reform
H. Political participation in the U.S.
I. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 9

December 4 – December 6: *Domestic Policy*

What constitutes domestic public policy? What policies have been enacted to address the problems of poverty, health, and welfare? How does government impact the distribution of economic resources for various groups in society?

A. The Policymaking Process
B. Social Welfare Policymaking
   1. Social Security
   2. Medicare
   3. Medicaid
C. Other Domestic Public Policy Programs
D. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 15

December 13: Final Exam: 10:30-12:30 pm