POLS 2305: Federal Government, Spring 2018  TTh: 9:30-10:45 a.m., Rassman 112

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Office: Rassman 223  Office Hours: MW: 1-4 p.m.; TR: 2-4 p.m.; All other meetings by appointment only

Course Description: This is a survey course on Federal government and the American political system. As part of ASU’s core Curriculum, it is designed to provide students with the basic knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts related to the roles of governmental and non-governmental political institutions.

Student learning objectives (SLOs):
Critical Thinking (CT1): Promote students’ ability to think critically about politics, the roles and authority of government institutions and officials, and the dynamic nature of the American political system. Thinking critically means more than simply memorizing information, it is the ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize information that is factual and relevant to a question, issue, or event.
Communication (CS1 & CS2): Students will develop the ability to express their knowledge and understanding of concepts through effective written and oral communication.
Social Responsibility (SR2 & SR3): Gain an understanding of the contexts that shape and influence the federal government’s actions and decisions on public policy. The study of the American political system allows for a greater appreciation of civic responsibility and ability to engage others in civil discourse.
Personal Responsibility (PR1): Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to understand and evaluate political choices and outcomes.

Bring your textbook to every class.

Angelo State policies: As outlined in ASU’s student handbook, students are responsible for regular and punctual attendance at all scheduled classes. The university reserves the right to deal with individual cases of non-attendance. The handbook also outlines the university’s Academic Honor Code, the parameters of academic integrity, and students’ responsibilities.

Decisions on Incompletes will be made after consulting with the Office of Student Affairs.

Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard site where you can obtain a copy of the syllabus and your grades. When necessary, I will post announcements or send emails about any changes to the course schedule.

Lecture outline, assignments, and exams: Depending on the pace of class discussion or unforeseen events (weather related cancellations, illness, etc.), the course outline is subject to change. Exam dates will only be changed in the event the university closes due to weather conditions.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact me about the material that was discussed and make arrangements to acquire a copy of a classmate’s lecture notes because I no longer provide students with copies of my lecture slides or movies.

Policies on examinations: Prior to an exam all students will be required to turn off all cell phones and computers, and place all belongings under their seat. Anyone caught cheating will immediately forfeit their exam and receive and automatic “F” for the assignment.
It is your responsibility to contact me is you miss an exam due to a university-related event or illness to schedule a make-up exam. Make-up exams must be taken within the two weeks following the original exam date. Failure to schedule a make-up exam within this time frame will results in an automatic “F” for that exam.

Excuses: The professor is the sole judge of all excuses. No excuse will be accepted after the fact or for students’ personal convenience. In the case of an emergency or extended absence, notification from the Office of Student Affairs will be required.

Accommodations: Any student who needs accommodations due to a disability, participation in university-related activities, religious observances, family matters, or a difficult life event should contact the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible so they can assist you with making arrangements and notifying your professors. The office is located in the Houston Harte University Center, Room 112, and additional information can be found on ASU’s website.
Assignments and Exams

Exams: All three exams will consist of two sections; short answer and fill-in-the-blank. Each exam will be worth 100 points. The chapters covered on Exams 1 & 2 are noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus. The Final Exam is comprehensive and will consist of new material and terms from the two previous exams.

Research Assignment: This assignment is designed to familiarize students with official, online sources for information about congressional lawmaking. A worksheet and a review of the instructions will be provided in class. The worksheet will not be available on Blackboard. Anyone who is absent the day the worksheet is distributed or needs an additional copy must see me after class or during my office hours. This assignment is worth 100 points and is due at the beginning of class on Monday, March 27th. Emailed submissions will not be accepted. Late assignments will have 10 points deducted for each day past the due date.

In-Class Budgeting Exercise: Students must attend class on the day of this exercise to receive credit. Only university-related absences, verified by a faculty advisor, will be accepted. Prior to this exercise students will be assigned to one of three groups that represent a branch of government. This assignment is worth 50 points. Please note that the designated date may be subject to change, if necessary.

Pop Quizzes: Pop quizzes will be given throughout the semester and based on the assigned reading. Quizzes can only be taken in-class. Make-ups will only be permitted for absences related to participation in a sanctioned university event and notification by a faculty advisor. Each pop quiz will be worth 25 points and the lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester. The number of pop quizzes will range between 5-10 depending on student preparedness and time constraints.

Extra Credit: Either a guest lecturer will be scheduled or a movie will be shown at the end of the semester. Only students who attend the guest lecture or every class in which the movie is shown and discussed will have 10 points of extra credit added to their final grade.

In the event a guest lecturer is scheduled, please note that the designated date may change to accommodate their schedule.

Final grades will follow Angelo State University’s Grading Scale:
A: 100-90%; B: 89-80%; C: 79-70%; D: 69-60%; F: 59% or below

Additional Notes: Class Etiquette and Student Conduct

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating on an assignment will receive an F for that assignment.

Computers will be permitted in class but if it appears that devices are being used for purposes other than taking notes, I reserve the right to prohibit their use by anyone. If you have computer related issues during the semester, contact ASU’s IT Department, not me.

Texting in class is prohibited. Anyone caught texting in class will be asked to leave the classroom.

The Department of Political Science and Philosophy is committed to support the learning of all students. As part of maintaining the decorum of the classroom, students are expected to behave appropriately and in a responsible manner. Comments made during class discussion should be well thought out and not based on personal prejudice. Any student who is disruptive or engages in ad hominem attacks during class discussion will be asked to leave.
Course Outline: It is your responsibility to read the assigned material, including the examples and case studies in each chapter, prior to class. You are also expected to bring your textbook to each class for reference.

Part I: Foundations of the American Political System

Week 1: January 16th & 18th
(T) First day of class, review of the syllabus
(Th) Chapter 1, Power & Citizenship in American Politics

Week 2: January 23rd & 25th
(T) Chapter 2, Politics of the American Founding
(TH) Chapter 3, Federalism

Week 3: January 30th & February 1st, Chapter 4, Fundamental American Liberties

Week 4: February 6th & 8th, Chapter 5, The Struggle for Equal Rights

Week 5: February 13th & 15th
(T) Lecture wrap-up and review
(Th) Exam 1 (covers Chapters 1-5)

Part II: Government Institutions

Week 6: February 20th & 22nd, Chapter 6, Congress

Week 7: February 27th & March 1st, Chapter 7, The Presidency

Week 8: March 6th & 8th, Chapter 8, The Bureaucracy

Spring Break: March 12th-16th, No class

Week 9: March 20th & 22nd, Chapter 9, The American Legal System and the Courts

Week 10: March 27th & 29th
(T) Lecture wrap-up and review; Research Assignment worksheet is due
(Th) Exam 2 (covers Chapters 6-9)

Monday, April 2nd, Last day to drop with a “W”

Part III: Policy, Elections, Public Opinion, and the Linking Institutions

Week 11: April 3rd & 5th, Chapter 14, Domestic and Foreign Policy

Week 12: April 10th & 12th
(T) In-class Budgeting Exercise
(Th) Chapter 11, Parties and Interest Groups

Week 13: April 17th & 19th
(T) Chapter 12, Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
(Th) Chapter 13, Media, Power, and Political Communication

Week 14: April 24th & 26th
(T) Chapter 10, Public Opinion
(Th) Lecture wrap-up

Week 15: May 1st & 3rd
Movie or Guest Lecturer and Final Exam Review

Week 16: Final Exam (covers Chapters 10-14, terms from Exams 1 & 2); (Th) May 10th, 8-10 a.m., Rassman 112