

SYLLABUS

Political Science 2301-§080/§100
Fall 2011
Schedule: Tu,Th
Room: Academic 135/Rassman 112

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Federal and State Government

Course Description

The struggle to win the Republican Party's nomination for the presidential elections in 2012; the cliffhanger negotiations in Congress during the summer over the extension of the debt ceiling; the increasing influence of the Tea Party in national politics; the continuing malaise of the nation's economy – national debt, high unemployment, and anemic economic recovery; the August riots and looting in Britain; the debt crisis in Europe particularly in Greece, Italy, Spain, and Portugal; the drug war in Mexico and the illegal outflow of undocumented labor into the U.S.; the civil wars in Libya and Syria; the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; and the war against terrorism & the threats to U.S. national security – what do these events have in common? They are all part of the landscape of American politics, encompassing both national and global dimensions. The purpose of this course is to make sense out of the American political process by studying national, international, and economic political phenomena. It is designed to provide answers to these and other concerns about how the political system works. This course is the first part of a two part sequence of introductory courses required of all college students in Texas. It is designed to give students an understanding of the American political system, its principles, processes, relationships, and institutions. It is developed, also, to introduce students to Texas state politics. The course will examine the institutional foundations of democracy in the United States, the evolution of democratic rights and liberties, and the importance of institutions: political parties, interest groups and elections. Federalism, the role of media, and public opinion are additional subjects to be covered.

This course provides students with information about the workings of the American political system at both the national and state levels; it enables students to comprehend the workings of political institutions and the American political system; and it helps students evaluate political events, political values, and perspectives, while considering their impact upon the individual and the community. The learning goals for this course on which you will be assessed are as follows:

1. Students will be able to understand the effects that historical, social, political, cultural, and global forces had on the United States and Texas constitutions.
2. Students will understand the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, federalism, and the key components of the U.S. and Texas political systems.
3. Students will be able to understand the ways in which different political systems divide and share power between their central and local governments.

Class Format

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. 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 recommended that you consult on a regular basis a national newspaper or Internet source of political information. To assist students in course preparation, I have developed course web materials, accessible through the following URL address: www.angelo.edu/faculty/rgarza.

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; it is important that you come to class equipped with a prior reading of the assigned materials.

Grading

The evaluation of your class performance will be based on a total of four examinations. The results of the exams will be the sole basis for computing your grade and each exam will contribute a specified percentage (indicated below) of your total grade. The exams will be objective and a combination of multiple-choice, identification, and/or short essay. 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; make-up exams may be comprehensive and entirely essay or a combination of multiple-choice and identification; they will be scheduled during the last week before finals. Please note that you will be allowed to take only one make-up exam for the semester.** Attendance is required for all classes. Class attendance will be important for determining borderline grades.

Your semester grade is based on your cumulative sum of semester points earned for each component part of the course requirements – the four examinations. Each exam is weighted according to the specified percentage (listed below) and will contribute to your sum total of semester points. There are a total of 100 semester points. The grading scale, adopted for determining your letter grade based on the earned cumulative sum of semester points, is listed below. **In order to be fair to all students it should be considered fairly rigid; however, 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.**

According to the University Calendar, the last day for a partial or total withdrawal from the University will be **Thursday, October 27, 2011**. Withdrawal grades will be indicated by the letter W.

The Grading Scale

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

Exam Schedule

First Exam	Sept 15	25% of Final Grade
Second Exam	Oct 13	25% of Final Grade
Third Exam	Nov 8	25% of Final Grade
Final Exam	Dec 6	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 the Academic Honor Code, which is available on the web at <http://www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/honorcode5.pdf>. Acts of academic dishonesty and misconduct as referenced in Angelo State University's Student Handbook will be referred to the Dean of Students.

Special Needs

Persons with disabilities which may warrant academic accommodations must contact the Student Life Office, Room 112 University Center, in order to request such accommodations prior to any accommodations being implemented. You are encouraged to make this request early in the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

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 purposes.

Reading Materials

Schmidt, Shelley, Bardes, Maxwell, Crain, & Santos. 2012. American Government and Politics Today, 2011-2012, Texas edition. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

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.]

Aug 23: 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.

Aug 25 – Aug 30: *The Democratic Republic*

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? 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 ideologies in the U.S.
- F. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 1

Sept 01 – Sept 06: *Texas History and Culture*

What makes for a political community at the state level? What is the history of Texas politics and what shapes it? What constitutes the various cultural regions of Texas?

- A. The Texas political community
- B. Historical periods in Texas history
- C. Political culture
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 19

Sept 08 – Sept 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. The final instrument and ratification
- D. Constitutional change
- E. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 2

Sept 20: *The Texas Constitution*

How did Texans deal with the responsibilities of creating a viable government? What does the history of Texas constitutionalism reflect? Do Texans need a new constitution?

- A. Role of constitutions in government
- B. Texas constitutional history
- C. The constitution of Texas
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 20

Sept 22 – Sept 27: 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 federalism in the U.S.
- C. Case law
 1. McCulloch v. Maryland
 2. Gibbons v. Ogden
- D. The evolution of federalism in the U.S.
- E. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 3

Sept 29 – Oct 04: Local Government

One reason for the federalist system was the framer's desire to provide the states with a large dose of political autonomy and sovereignty. States are granted exclusive sovereignty with regards to establishing local governments. Local government is the most pervasive form of government in Texas. What are the most common forms of local government in Texas?

- A. Municipal/city government
- B. County government
- C. Special district governments
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapters 28

Oct 06 – Oct 11: 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. 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.

- A. Define public opinion
- B. Importance of political socialization
- C. Measuring public opinion
- D. Spectrum of political beliefs – trust and confidence in government
- E. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 6

Oct 18 – Oct 20: 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? How well do interest groups perform their job?

- A. Define interest groups
- B. Functions of interest groups
- C. Tactics of interest groups
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 7

Oct 20: Texas Interest Groups

Interest groups are known as linkage institutions since they link individuals to government; they provide a vital link between personal values & aspirations and policy makers. They exist not only at the national level but also at the state level. Interest groups are an alternative avenue for public participation.

- A. Interest groups in Texas
- B. Most powerful interest groups in Texas
- C. Interest group tactics in Texas
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 21

Oct 25 – Oct 27: 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. Component parts of a 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: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 8

Nov 1: Political Parties in Texas

Political parties can be studied not only at the national level but also at the state level. How did political parties develop in Texas? What distinguishes political parties in Texas?

- A. Brief history of Texas party system
- B. Texas party machinery – temporary and permanent organizations
- C. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 22

Nov 01 – Nov 03: Voting and Elections

At the heart of the democratic political system is the election of freely chosen representatives by the majority of the people. For democracy to work there must be meaningful campaigns among candidates and meaningful participation among the voters. Who participates in elections today?

- A. Political participation in the U.S.
- B. How are elections conducted?
- C. Understanding campaigns
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 9

Nov 10 – Nov 15: *Campaigning for Office*

Competitive elections lie at the heart of a democratic political system. What comprises modern campaigns today? Politics and money go hand in hand. What concerns are raised today by changes in funding and getting-out the votes campaigns? Do these changes threaten democracy?

- A. Presidential election process
 - 1. The nomination game
 - 2. The electoral college
- B. The role of money in politics
- C. Campaign finance reform
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 10

Nov 17 – Nov 22: *Voting and Elections in Texas*

Democracies depend upon political participation. Public policy ultimately responds to participation. How is political participation achieved at the state level? How are campaigns and elections distinguished at the state level? What is the difference between a primary election and general election in Texas?

- A. Political participation in Texas
- B. Campaigns and elections in Texas
- C. Primary election versus general election
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 23

Nov 29 – Dec 01: *The Media and Cyberpolitics*

Vast changes have occurred in the American political system. One of them has been the development of the modern media. What has been the impact of the rise of the modern media on politics? How have politics and campaigns changed because of the rise of the modern media?

- A. The functions of the media
- B. History of the media in the United States
- C. The relationship between the media and politics
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 11

Dec 06: *Final Exam*