Federal and State Government

Course Description

The 2016 presidential elections, viewed as one of the more important races since 1860; the end of the presidential primaries with Donald Trump becoming the presumptive Republican nominee and Hillary Clinton becoming the presumptive Democratic nominee; the Obama administration’s order for every public school district in the United States to allow transgender students to use the bathrooms that match the gender identity they have chosen; the signing into law by North Carolina’s governor a bill that blocks cities from allowing transgender individuals to use public bathrooms for the sex they identify with; the violence in the nation resulting from the shooting of African-Americans by police officers and also the killing of police officers; the problem of water infrastructure replacement in the U.S. as demonstrated by lead contamination of the water supply in Flint, Michigan and other states; the drug war in Latin America and the illegal outflow of undocumented individuals into the U.S.; the vote in England to leave the European Union; the impeachment proceedings against Brazilian president Dilma Rousseff and the calls for a recall referendum on the Venezuelan presidency of Nicolas Maduro; the five 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 250,000 individuals and more than 4 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. 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. Its primary objective is to introduce students to the study of the American federal and state governmental system. It is designed to give students an understanding of the American political system, its principles, processes, inputs, 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, public opinion, and campaigns & elections 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. In addition this course is part of the ASU core curriculum that integrates critical thinking, communication, social responsibility and personal responsibility objectives.
Course/Core Objectives:
1. To gain factual knowledge of the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, fundamental principles, and the key components of the U.S. and Texas political systems;
2. To gain understanding of the ways in which political systems divide and share power between the central and local governments;
3. To learn to evaluate and analyze the means of political participation and the manner of influencing government; and
4. To help students to learn and develop critical thinking skills and develop a critical approach to the study of government.

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:
• To define concepts and describe political phenomenon with appropriate terminology;
• To identify and understand fundamental principles and generalizations associated with the study of American politics and Texas politics; and
• To analyze and evaluate ideas and arguments relating to American politics.

Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes:
• Learning outcomes will be assessed via examinations and a written assignment.

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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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POLS 2301/02</td>
<td>CT, CS, SR, PR: Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that have content relating to PR/SR</td>
<td>POLS 2301/02 Rubrics may be used to evaluate student work in one or more Core Objectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT1: Students will develop critical thinking skills and the ability to critically evaluate their political environment.</td>
<td>POLS 2301/02</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS1: Students will gain and be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of American &amp; Texas governments.</td>
<td>POLS 2301/02</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR2: Students will gain and be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of American &amp; Texas governments.</td>
<td>POLS 2301/02</td>
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<tr>
<td>PR: Students with exhibit the skills necessary to understand and evaluate political outcomes.</td>
<td>POLS 2301/02</td>
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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.

Office Hours

Office hours are posted at the following URL Address: http://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. 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.

Course Requirements & Grading

The evaluation of your class performance will be based on a total of four examinations and extra credit written exercise announced in class. The results of the exams will be used to compute 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; 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 summer semester. Please note that you will be allowed to take only one make-up exam for the semester.

Your semester grade is based on your cumulative sum of semester points earned for each component part of the course requirements – the four examinations and/or extra credit work. Each exam is weighted according to the specified percentage (listed below) and will contribute to your sum total of semester points. Extra credit work will contribute additional exam points that will be weighted in a similar manner to the exams. The number of extra points awarded for submission of extra credit work will be announced in class. The total number of semester points may equal or exceed 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.

Attendance is required for all classes. 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, July 29, 2016**. 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Exam</td>
<td>July 18</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second Exam</td>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Exam</td>
<td>August 3</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>August 10</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**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**


**Note on textbooks:** The above two textbooks are rather expansive. I strongly recommend that you purchase at least the textbook on American politics since it will be the main textbook for the course. If you cannot purchase the second text, a reasonable alternative is to utilize the website entitled, “Texas Politics,” supported by the Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Services at the University of Texas at Austin. [URL address is as follows: http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/] This website is created to support the state-mandated university requirement of providing instruction in the workings of Texas government.

**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.]

**July 11: 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.

**July 11 – July 12: 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
July 13: *Texas Culture and Diversity*

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

A. The Texas political community
B. Historical periods in Texas politics
C. Texas political culture
D. Readings: Maxwell, et al., Chapter 1

July 14 – July 15: *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

July 19: *The Texas Constitution in Perspective*

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

A. Role of constitutions in government
B. Texas constitutional history
C. The constitution of Texas
D. Texas constitutional change
E. Readings: Maxwell, et al., Chapter 3

July 20 – July 21: *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

**July 22 – July 25: 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 governments are the most pervasive forms 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: Maxwell, et al., Chapter 11

**July 27 – July 28: 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

**July 29: 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

**August 1 – August 2: 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

August 4: Texas Political Parties & Interest Groups

Interest groups and political parties exist not only at the national level but also at the state level. They provide a vital link between personal values & aspirations and policy makers. Interest groups and political parties offer alternative avenues for public participation. What distinguishes interest groups and political parties in Texas?
   A. Political parties in Texas
   B. Texas party machinery – temporary and permanent organizations
   C. Interest groups in Texas
   D. Most powerful interest groups in Texas
   E. Readings: Maxwell, et al., Chapters 5 & 6

August 5 – August 8: 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

August 9: 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: Maxwell, et al., Chapter 4

August 10: *Final Exam: 10:15-12:15 pm*