

## SYLLABUS

Political Science 2302 – §080  
Spring 2012  
Schedule: Tu, Th  
Room: Rassman 110

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### Federal and State Government

#### Course Description

The presidential primary elections and selection of the Republican Party's nominee for the presidential elections in 2012; the battle over redistricting in Texas; 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 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 war in Afghanistan; the aftermath of the Arab revolutions in Libya, Egypt, and Tunisia and the continuing civil war in Syria; the pursuit of nuclear weapons' technology by Iran, 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 the second part of a two part sequence of introductory courses required of all university students in Texas. It is designed to give students an understanding of the American political system – its principles, processes, relationships, and institutions. It is, also, structured to introduce students to Texas state politics. The course will examine the institutional foundations of government in the United States, paying close attention to the policymaking structures – Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary. It will, also, address corresponding topics at the state level. It will address a variety of public policy areas including poverty and inequality, civil rights, national economic policy and foreign policy. The objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To provide information about the workings of the American political system at both the national and state levels.
2. To develop a greater understanding of governmental political institutions, the policymaking process, and concepts for the study of political phenomena.
3. To broaden current understanding of politics within the context of the historical development of the American political system.
4. To evaluate political events, political values, and perspectives, and to assess the impact upon the individual and the community.

#### 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](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; consequently, 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 is 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 is Wednesday, April 4, 2012. 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	February 09	25% of Final Grade
Second Exam	March 08	25% of Final Grade
Third Exam	April 10	25% of Final Grade
Final Exam	May 08	25% of Final Grade

## **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.]

Jan 17: *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 distributing and discussing the course syllabus.

Jan 17 – Jan 19: *The Democratic Republic*

The course begins with a review of basic concepts and themes for the study of the U.S. democratic political system.

- A. What is politics?
- B. What is government?
- C. What is the political system model?
- D. What does democracy mean?
- E. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 1

Jan 24 – Jan 26: *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: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 12

Jan 31: *The Texas Legislature*

How does the Texas legislature as a governmental institution compare with the U.S. Congress? What is meant by congressional reapportionment? What is the impact of congressional reapportionment upon the Texas legislature? What constitutes the legislative process in the Texas legislature? How does this legislative process compare with the lawmaking process of the U.S. Congress?

- A. Membership in the Texas Legislature
- B. Structure of the Legislature
- C. Legislative Redistricting
- D. The Legislative Process
- E. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 24

Feb 02 – Feb 07: *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: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 13

Feb 14: *The Texas Executive Branch*

What constitutes the executive branch at the state level of government? Why is the Texas governorship described as one of the weakest in the country in terms of executive institutional powers? How does the governor influence the activities of state government and the policymaking process?

- A. Structure of the Texas Executive Branch
- B. Powers of the Governor
- C. The Texas Bureaucracy
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 25

Feb 16 – Feb 21: *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: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 14

Feb 23 – Feb 28: *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: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 15

Mar 01 – Mar 06: *The Texas Judiciary, Law & Due Process*

What is the structure of the Texas judicial system? What are some of the problems of the Texas judicial system? Is the Texas system of justice in a state of crisis?

- A. State Law in Texas
  - 1. Types of legal disputes
  - 2. Court procedures
- B. Texas Court Organization
- C. Judges and the Administration of Justice
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 26

Mar 20 – Mar 27: *Civil Liberties*

The concern for tyranny of government led to the early amendments to the constitution known collectively as the “Bill of Rights.” These amendments accord personal freedoms to the individual and serve as limitations on government’s ruling power. What is meant by civil liberties? What is the scope of personal freedoms guaranteed by the amendments and protected by the courts? What are the rights of the accused?

- A. The Bill of Rights
- B. First Amendment Freedoms
- C. The Rights of Criminal Defendants
- D. Additional Rights and Freedoms
- E. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 4

Mar 29 – Apr 05: *Civil Rights*

The Constitution provides for another category of rights/freedoms known as civil rights; however, these rights did not generally exist until the mid-1900s. What is meant by civil rights and how are they different from civil liberties? What are the roots to the struggle for equality in the American polity? What constitutes the controversy over equal protection and to what extent can government ensure equal protection and freedom from discrimination? What new groups can be protected from discrimination in society?

- A. Civil Liberties versus Civil Rights
- B. The Struggle Against Race Discrimination
- C. The Civil Rights Movement
- D. Women’s Struggle for Equal Rights
- E. Other Groups Protected Under the Civil Rights Umbrella
- F. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 5

Apr 12 – Apr 17: *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: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 16

Apr 19 – Apr 24: *Economic Policy*

Governments allocate scarce resources and values. Public policy reflects national decisions as to “who gets what, when, and how.” What views guide the making of economic policy? How does government impact the workings of the national economy? Should government intervene in the economy? If so, what problems in the economy are best handled through governmental intervention? How important is balancing the federal budget for the national economy?

- A. Types of Economic Systems

- B. Fiscal and Monetary Policy
- C. Taxes
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 17

Apr 26 – May 01: *Foreign Policy & National Security*

The United States emerged as a global actor in the 20th century. How has the U.S. responded to the global challenges? What have been some important changes in the global arena? What should be the role of the U.S. in the global arena in the 21st century?

- A. What is Foreign Policy?
- B. The Making of Foreign Policy
- C. Challenges in World Politics
- D. Readings: Schmidt, et al., Chapter 18

May 08: *Final Exam (8am)*