“Politics is not a bad profession. If you succeed, there are many rewards; if you disgrace yourself, you can always write a book.” ~ Ronald Reagan

“A common mistake that people make when trying to design something completely foolproof is to underestimate the ingenuity of complete fools.” ~ Douglas Adams, Mostly Harmless

SECTION I: Course Overview

Course Description
This course is a survey of the national government of the United States, the various instruments which drive its often enigmatic engine, and the historical evolution of the Constitution which gives it form. Influences on modern American government, such as political parties, interest groups, and the media, will be considered alongside its underlying institutions, including Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary. The relationship of the citizen to the national government will be highlighted along with the historical development of civil rights and civil liberties.

Course Objectives and Student Learning Outcomes
The goal of a political science class is to educate students in the historical foundations of government as well as its contemporary forms so that they can think and act as informed and responsible citizens of the United States and the global community. As such, through a survey of the basic tenants of American government, its various institutions, and its broad implications for citizens, students should be able to:

- demonstrate a knowledge of important factual information about American government,
- identify major trends and developments in American government and discuss their features and consequences,
- analyze the general characteristics of government and the nature of the American political system,
- present conclusions about issues and problems within the course,
- understand both the rights and the responsibilities of the American citizen, and
- evaluate sources and develop skills in reading comprehension as well as verbal and written expression.

Course Materials
Schmidt, Shelley, Bades, Maxwell, and Crain, American Government and Politics Today
Assigned primary and secondary sources to be distributed in class

SECTION II: Policies

Academic Honesty
Students shall maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits and are expected to engage in their studies in a manner that is above reproach both in and out of the classroom. Deviations from these expectations will not be tolerated. Angelo State
University defines “academic misconduct” as an action that “includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, violations of published professional ethics/standards, and any act or attempted act designed to give unfair academic advantage to oneself or another student.” See the “Angelo State University Student Handbook, Part II, B: Academic Integrity” for more information.

Student Disability Services
The Office of Student Affairs is the designated Angelo State University department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request through the department via the counselor.

Student Absence for Observance of a Religious Holy Day
A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or compete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.

SECTION III: Grading Policies

Grade Description
For the purpose of this class, an ‘A’ corresponds to work done above the average collegiate level. A ‘B’ represents work done at an average collegiate level. In general, a ‘C’ equates to below-average collegiate performance — meaning that you have demonstrated the skills and knowledge relevant to a particular assignment at a basic level of proficiency. This description does not include the weighted average you receive from Mason High School for taking an advanced course.

Assessment Breakdown
The grade for each six-weeks will count for 2/7ths of the course grade. A comprehensive final exam will account for the other 1/7th. Each six-weeks grade will be tallied as follows:

Reading Responses (10%)
Quizzes (30%)
Exams (60%)

Assessment Details

Reading Responses (10%)

Readings are intended to broaden students’ base of knowledge and to assist them in critically approaching primary and secondary sources. To facilitate this, questions for assigned readings will be distributed as “Reading Responses” prior to the start of each unit along with a unit outline and the readings themselves. Students’ original responses to questions will be submitted the day a reading is “due.” Grading will generally be done on a completion basis. Any specific instructions will be included in individual assignments.

Quizzes (30%)

“Quiz” grades include quizzes, more involved assignments, and any evaluation of notes. The date of quizzes and the material to be covered will be announced in advance,
normally at the start of each unit. Topics may include, but are not limited to, assigned readings, basic facts, historical documents, or materials from class discussion.

Exams (60%)  
There will be six unit exams, two per grading period. They will generally include multiple choice questions, short responses, and an essay. Exams are to be completed within a specified amount of time. **There will be no retakes.**

**SECTION IV: Course Schedule**

You will receive a tentative schedule of readings and assignments at the beginning of every unit. Note that additional content may be included as the unit progresses. Changes will be announced in class. What follows is a general schedule for the class.

**Unit I**  
**Constitutional Underpinnings**
- Aug. 21, 22: Course Introduction & What is Government?  
- Aug. 23, 24: Theories of Government  
- Aug. 27, 28: Nascent America: A Political Perspective  
- Aug. 29, 30: The Constitution: An Overview  
- Aug. 31, Sept. 4: Federalism: A History  
- Sept. 5, 6: Unit I Exam

**Unit II**  
**Extraconstitutional Influences**
- Sept. 7, 10: Great Expectations: The Democratic Citizen  
- Sept. 11, 12: Public Opinion and Polling  
- Sept. 13, 14: We’ve got Cake (and Pork): Political Parties like it’s ’89!  
- Sept. 17, 18: (Lack of) Interest Groups  
- Sept. 19, 20: Unit II Exam

**Unit III**  
**Democracy “Inaction”: Elections and the Media**
- Sept. 21, 24: The Primary Way: Nominating Candidates (and $$$)  
- Sept 25, 26: Elections and Voters  
- Sept 27, 28: All about Me(dia)  
- Oct. 1, 2: Unit III Exam

**Unit IV**  
**The Legislative Branch**
- Oct. 3, 4: Getting Elected to Congress for Dummies  
- Oct. 5, 9: With Great Power Comes a Desire for Reelection  
- Oct. 10, 11: Congress: An Overview  
- Oct. 12, 15: Lawmaking for Dummies (and Students)  
- Oct. 16, 17: Legislative (W)Rap (Sheet), or: Pork, Lobbying, etc.  
- Oct. 18, 19: Unit IV Exam

**Unit V**  
**The Executive Branch**
- Oct. 22, 23: Introduction to the Presidency  
- Oct. 24, 25: Presidential Basics  
- Oct. 26, 29: The Executive Branch: A Structural Overview  
- Oct. 30, 31: The Good, the Bad, and the Bureaucratic  
- Nov 1, 2: The Budgeting Process (Believe it or not)  
- Nov. 5, 6: Unit V Exam
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 7, 8</td>
<td>The Federal Court System: A Structural Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 9, 12</td>
<td>The Supreme Court: The Essentials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 13, 14</td>
<td>The Supreme Court: A History via (non-Santa) Clauses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 15, 16</td>
<td>The Bill of Rights: Perception, Reality, and the opposite of Darwin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 26, 27</td>
<td>Civil Rights &amp; Civil Liberties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 28, 29</td>
<td>Unit VI Exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 30, Dec. 3</td>
<td>Buffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 4, 5</td>
<td>Buffer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 6, 7</td>
<td>Buffer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 10, 11</td>
<td>Final Exam Study Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 12, 13</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 2A – Wednesday, December 12 – 9:55 a.m. to 11:25 a.m.
- 4B – Thursday, December 13 – 1:05 p.m. to 2:35 p.m.
- 5th – Thursday, December 13 – 2:40 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 14</td>
<td>Buffer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>