American National Government and Politics

The first two decades of the 21st century have been fraught with turmoil, world violence, economic dislocation and rising inequality. The gap between the rich and poor is higher than at any time in yours, or your parents and grandparents life times. Your textbook sees this economic divide as potentially creating what the call “One Republic, but “Two Americas.” In 2016 we saw our people more divided and polarized than at any time in our history except maybe in the lead up to the Civil War in the 1860s. The constant news cycle and the rise of social media has a least contributed to this polarization by allowing more isolation from one another by reducing face to face contact, particularly with people whom we disagree. We now tend to click to blogs and web sites that reinforce our own opinions and biases, and tune to television pseudo news programs where panels of talking heads speak “to the choir” of various publics with which they already agree.

President Trump capitalized on this newer polarization in 2016 where he captured 81% of the voters who thought the country was worse off today and in the 1950s, and defeating Hillary Clinton by a 21 point margin among white voters. The biggest gap was between white voters with and without college degrees. Trump won with the latter group with a 39% gap. In the 2018 midterm elections. Voters for the U.S. House reacted negatively to the Trump Administration by returning the Democrats to the majority. While Republican kept control of the Senate, the mathematics of the Senate election almost ensured continued GOP control, in spite of overall Democratic vote increases in these races.

In spite of a strong economy, exit polls in 2018 showed that the majority of Americans believe our country is on the wrong track, the disapproval of the president hovers around 60%, as he ignores his own government agencies’ analyses of immigration reform, global warming, and Russian interference in our elections. The Mueller investigation has led to indictments of several in the president’s administration, and in early December concluded that there was probable collusion between the 2016 Trump campaign and the Russian government.

Given the somewhat frightening political environment, it is once again important to step back and assess the future of our representative democracy. We are reminded as well, that many Americans remain ignorant of our history, our government and the rights and responsibilities of each American citizen. This is the task of Political Science 2305. Our concern is to examine the major features of our constitutional democracy.

Insert Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes.
Learning Outcomes Assessment

Learning outcomes will be assessed through Three Exams and a Final. Each exam will consist of 50 objective questions (Multiple Choice), and I will base your final grade according to your semester average score on the exams using the following schedule.

A= 90-100  
B= 80-89  
C= 68-79  
D= 56-67  
F= 0-55

I will always give you one full week notice on exams.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes though no penalty will be assessed for missing class. There is no difference between an excused and an unexcused absence. An absence is an absence since I do not penalize you for absences. However, I will award an attendance bonus to your final average for excellent attendance and participation. Points will be added to your final average according to the following schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Bonus</th>
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<tr>
<td>0-2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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This bonus is added to your final average. As an example, a student with a final test average of 87 with only 1 absence would end up with (87+3)=90 for a final grade of A.

Make-Up Exams

Make-up exams are given only during Dead Week. They are essay in nature and generally more difficult than the regularly scheduled exams.

Course/Core Objectives

1. Critical Thinking (CT): To gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue
2. Communication (CS): to develop and express ideas through effective communication
3. Social Responsibility (SR): to demonstrate knowledge of civic responsibility
4. Personal responsibility (PR): to demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making

**Learning Objectives and Outcomes**

1. Student will demonstrate knowledge and critical thinking about the United States political system
2. Student will demonstrate knowledge about the U.S. Constitution, the structure of government and the constitutional framers views on the political system.
3. Student will demonstrate knowledge as to how our political institutions have evolved over time, and to critically think about the causes and consequences of this evolution
4. Student will demonstrate knowledge of the role of people in the political process through elections, political parties and interest groups
5. Student will demonstrate knowledge of some major policy issues concerning civil liberties, civil rights and the economy

**Academic Honesty**

Angelo State University expects students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for complying with the university ACADEMIC HONOR CODE which is spelled out in both print and web versions of the ASU Student Handbook. Acts of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean of Students.

**Disability**

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of a disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and its 2008 amendments.

If you have a disability, please contact the Student Affairs Office, Suite 112 of the Houston Harte University Center at 325-942-2047 or at studentservices@angelo.edu to begin the accommodation process.

**Classroom Behavior**

Please turn off, or place in airplane mode, all cell and smart phones. Laptops are permitted only for note taking. You should come to class prepared each day and be ready to discuss the material assigned.
Course Organization and Topics

I. Critical Thinking About American Politics: The Political World, Public Policy, and One Republic?
   **Reading:** Ford et. Al. Chapter 1

II. Constitutional Basis of American Political Institutions
   **Reading:** Ford et. al. Chapters 2-3

III. Political Institutions Today: Congress, The Executive and the Courts
   **Reading:** Ford et. al. Chapters 11-14

IV. People and Politics: Do People Make a difference?
   **Reading:** Ford et. al. Chapters 6, 8, 9, 10

V. The Courts and Public Policy: Civil Liberties
   **Reading:** Ford et. al. Chapter 4

VI. The Struggle for Equality: Civil Rights
   **Reading:** Ford et. al. Chapter 5

VII. Economic Policy
   **Reading:** Ford et. al. Chapter 16