POLS 2305-090: Federal Government, Spring 2019  
TTH: 9:30-10:45 A.M., RAS 112

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Office Hours: TTH, 11 A.M.-Noon and 2-5 P.M.; Wed., 1-3 P.M.; or by appointment.

Course Description: This is a survey course on Federal government and the American political system. As part of ASU’s core Curriculum, it is designed to provide students with the basic knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts related to the roles of governmental and non-governmental political institutions.

Student learning objectives (SLOs):
Critical Thinking (CT1): Promote students’ ability to think critically about politics, the roles and authority of government institutions and officials, and the dynamic nature of the American political system. Thinking critically means more than simply memorizing information, it is the ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize information that is factual and relevant to a question, issue, or event.

Communication (CS1 & CS2): Students will develop the ability to express their knowledge and understanding of concepts through effective written and oral communication.

Social Responsibility (SR2 &SR3): Gain an understanding of the contexts that shape and influence the federal government’s actions and decisions on public policy. The study of the American political system allows for a greater appreciation of civic responsibility and ability to engage others in civil discourse.

Personal Responsibility (PR1): Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to understand and evaluate political choices and outcomes.


Angelo State policies: As outlined in ASU’s student handbook, students are responsible for regular and punctual attendance at all scheduled classes. The university reserves the right to deal with individual cases of non-attendance. The handbook also outlines the university’s Academic Honor Code, the parameters of academic integrity, and students’ responsibilities.

Decisions on Incompletes will be made after consulting with the Office of Student Affairs.

Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard site where you can obtain a copy of the syllabus and your grades. When necessary, I will post announcements or send emails about any changes to the course schedule.

Lecture outline, assignments, and exams: Depending on the pace of class discussion or unforeseen events (weather related cancellations, illness, etc.), the course outline is subject to change. Exam dates will only be changed in the event the university closes due to weather conditions.

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to contact me about the material that was discussed and make arrangements to acquire a copy of a classmate’s lecture notes because I no longer provide students with copies of my lecture slides or movies.

Policies on examinations: Prior to an exam all students will be required to turn off all cell phones and computers, and place all belongings under their seat. Anyone caught cheating will immediately forfeit their exam and receive and automatic “F” for the assignment.

It is your responsibility to contact me if you miss an exam due to a university-related event or illness to schedule a make-up exam. Make-up exams must be taken within the two weeks following the original exam date. Failure to schedule a make-up exam within this time frame will result in an automatic “F” for that exam.

The course schedule is subject to change pending the Political Science Department’s anticipated trip to Austin. If necessary, adjustments will be announced in class after travel plans are finalized.
Excuses: The professor is the sole judge of all excuses. No excuse will be accepted after the fact or for students’ personal convenience. In the case of an emergency or extended absence, notification from the Office of Student Affairs will be required.

Accommodations: Any student who needs accommodations due to a disability, participation in university-related activities, religious observances, family matters, or a difficult life event should contact the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible so they can assist you with making arrangements and notifying your professors. The office is located in the Houston Harte University Center, Room 112, and additional information can be found on ASU’s website.

Class Etiquette and Student Conduct: Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating on an assignment will receive an F for that assignment.

-Computers will permitted in class but if it appears that devices are being used for purposes other than taking notes, I reserve the right to prohibit their use by anyone. If you have computer related issues during the semester, contact ASU’s IT Department, not me.
-Anyone habitually engaging in disruptive or distracting behavior (sleeping, talking, etc.) will be asked to take a seat in the front row, or closest available, for the rest of the semester.
-Texting in class is prohibited. Anyone caught texting in class will be asked to leave the classroom.

The Department of Political Science and Philosophy is committed to support the learning of all students. As part of maintaining the decorum of the classroom, students are expected to behave appropriately and in a responsible manner. Comments made during class discussion should be well thought out and not based on personal prejudice. Any student who is disruptive or engages in ad hominem attacks will be asked to leave.

Assignments and Exams

Exams: All three exams will consist of two sections; short answer and fill-in-the-blank. Each exam will be worth 100 points. Exams 1 and 2 will cover the material noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus. The Final Exam is comprehensive and will consist of both new material and terms from the two previous exams. Again, make-ups for Exams 1-2 must be scheduled within two weeks of the originally scheduled exam date.

Research Assignment: This assignment is designed to familiarize students with official, online sources for information about congressional lawmaking. A worksheet and a review of the instructions will be provided in class. The worksheet will not be available on Blackboard. Anyone who is absent the day the worksheet is distributed or needs an additional copy must see me after class or during my office hours. This assignment is worth 100 points and is due at the beginning of class on Thursday, March 7th. Emailed submissions will not be accepted. Late assignments will have 10 points deducted for each day past the due date.

To benefit everyone, questions about this assignment must be asked before or during class.

In-Class Budgeting Exercise: Students must attend class on the day of this exercise to receive credit.Only university-related absences, verified by a faculty advisor, will be accepted. Prior to this exercise students will be assigned to one of three groups that represent a branch of government. This assignment is worth 50 points. Please note that the designated date may be subject to change, if necessary.

Pop Quizzes: 5-10 pop quizzes based on the assigned reading will be given throughout the semester. Quizzes can only be taken in-class. Make-ups will only be permitted for absences related to participation in a sanctioned university event and notification by a faculty advisor. Pop quizzes are worth 25 points each. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Extra Credit: Either a guest lecturer will be scheduled or a movie will be shown at the end of the semester. Only students who attend the guest lecture or every class in which the movie is shown and discussed will have 10 points of extra credit added to their final grade. If a guest lecturer is scheduled, the designated date may change to accommodate their schedule.

Final grades will follow Angelo State University’s Grading Scale: A: 100-90%; B: 89-80%; C: 79-70%; D: 69-60%; F: 59% or below.
Course Outline: It is your responsibility to read the assigned material, including the examples and case studies in each chapter, prior to class. You are also expected to bring your textbook to each class for reference.

Part I: Foundations of the American Political System

Week 1: January 15th & 17th
(T) First day of class, review of the syllabus
(TH) Chapter 1, Power & Citizenship in American Politics
Chapter 2, Politics of the American Founding

Week 2: January 22nd & 24th
(T-TH) Chapter 2 (cont., if necessary); Chapter 3, Federalism

Week 3: January 29 & 31st, Chapter 4, Fundamental American Liberties

Week 4: February 5th & 7th, Chapter 5, The Struggle for Equal Rights

Week 5: February 12th & 14th
(T) Lecture wrap-up and review
(TH) Exam 1 (covers Chapters 1-5)

Part II: Government Institutions

Week 6: February 19th & 21st, Chapter 6, Congress; Research assignment worksheet will be distributed and discussed.

Week 7: February 26th & 28th, Chapter 7, The Presidency

Week 8: March 5th & 7th, Chapter 8, The Bureaucracy
(TH, March 7th) Congress.gov Research Assignment worksheet is due at the beginning of class.

Spring Break: March 11th-15th, No class, the University is closed.

Week 9: March 19th & 21st, Chapter 9, The American Legal System and the Courts

Week 10: March 26th & 28th (Note: Thursday, March 28th, Last day to drop a class)
(T) Lecture wrap-up and review
(TH) Exam 2 (covers Chapters 6-9)

Part III: Policy, Elections, Public Opinion, and the Linking Institutions

Week 11: April 2nd & 4th, Chapter 14, Domestic and Foreign Policy

Week 12: April 9th & 11th
(T) Finish Chapter 14; Budgeting Exercise group assignments and discussion
(TH) In-class Budgeting Exercise (cont.)

Week 13: April 16th & 18th
(T) Chapter 10, Public Opinion
(TH) Chapter 12, Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Week 14: April 23rd & 25th
(T) Chapter 13, Media, Power, and Political Communication
(TH) Lecture wrap-up

Week 15: April 30th & May 2nd, Movie or Guest Lecturer and Final Exam Review

Week 16: Final Exam (covers Chapters 10-14 AND terms from Exams 1 & 2)
(TH) May 9th: POLS 2305-090, 8-10 A.M. (RAS 112)