Federal Government

Course Description

The presidential elections of 2020 and the decision of more than 20 candidates to seek the nomination of the Democratic Party for the presidential race; the issuance of a new rule by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to prohibit Title X grantees from providing or referring patients for abortion, except in cases of rape, incest or medical emergency; the recent mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio and the renewed calls for gun control legislation by Democrats in Congress; the attempt of the Trump administration to end the DACA program implemented during the Obama administration; the decision by the Trump administration to make major changes to how the Endangered Species Act is implemented, particularly by limiting the extent to which economic analysis can be done to determine whether a particular species warrants protection or note and limiting as well the impact of climate change; the decision by the Trump administration to impose tariffs on imports from China; and the recent decision by President Trump to reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan by the 2020 elections – what do these events have in common? They are all part of the landscape of American politics, encompassing both national and global dimensions, covered in this introductory political science course.

This course is the first half of a two-sequence course program with Political Science 2306 being the second course which combined will satisfy the 6 Sch ASU Core Curriculum requirements in federal and state governments. Pols 2305 is designed to introduce the student to the American political system: its political culture, the attitudes and political behavior of its citizens, and the operation of key institutions. We will explore the historical development and founding of the United States and discuss major debates about the structure of our republican form of government. We will examine the role of major political actors – their strategies, roles, limitations, and power. We will examine the role individuals can play in influencing and affecting government. We will be concerned with several themes, especially the nature and distribution of political power, the role of the elections, the structure and function of political institutions, and the “rules of the political game.” The course will provide students with a basic understanding of the main institutions and main actors in American politics. We will follow the actions of the President, the Congress, the Courts, and the public. For these reasons, current political events will be of special interest and importance to our study of the federal government.

Course/Core Objectives:

1. Communication (CS): to develop, interpret and express ideas through effective written communication.
2. Critical Thinking (CT): to gather, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.
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.

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:

1. Student will explain the origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. government, and constitutional democracy.
2. Student will demonstrate knowledge of the U.S. political system and key components of the political system, including Congress, the presidency, and the judicial branch.
3. Student will understand the American federal system and explain the ways in which different political systems divide and share power between their central and state governments.
4. Students will evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, political parties, campaigns and elections in the American political system.
5. Students will describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens and be able to comment on the role of civic engagement in U.S. politics and political culture.
6. Student will analyze political issues, demonstrate critical thinking skills, and develop a critical approach to the study of government.

Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes:

- Learning outcomes will be assessed via examinations and a group policy project.

Class Organization

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. For each lesson chapter I will post materials in the course website on Blackboard under the “Lessons” divider. They will consist of lecture powerpoint presentations, review questions, and chapter outline. 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 urged that you follow the international, national, and local news on a daily basis by reading national as well as local newspapers. It is recommended that you consult reputable news sources like The New York Times, CNN, and The PBS News Hour.

Office Hours

Office hours are as follows:
M-F 9:00-10:00 AM
M-F 3:00-4:00 PM
By appointment also
I am here to help. If you have questions, concerns, or need to chat please come during my office hours. If they are not convenient please email me to schedule an appointment. You can reach me on weekdays, Monday through Friday. Please note that I check my emails periodically between 9 AM and 5 PM. Depending upon time of receipt of email I may take up to two days to response.

**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.

**Blackboard**

The teaching of this course is integrated with ASU’s online course management system, identified as Blackboard. You should familiarize yourself with the course components on Blackboard. You will find useful information on Blackboard such as a copy of the course syllabus, information about course policies, grading system, chapter Powerpoints, and grades for exams and assignments.

To access Blackboard you must have an ASU email account and be registered for this course. To login go to [https://blackboard.angelo.edu/](https://blackboard.angelo.edu/) and type in your ASU userid and password. Please try to access Blackboard as soon as possible to make sure that you are enrolled in the course and that you understand the various features of Blackboard.

**Course Requirements & Grading**

**Attendance**

Attendance is required for all classes. I will take attendance every day. It is important that you show up on time. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to approach me after class and make sure that I check your name on the class roll. Class attendance will be important for determining borderline grades. **Excellent class attendance will contribute five points to your sum total of 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 **Thursday, October 31, 2019**. Withdrawal grades will be indicated by the letter W.

**Exams (400 exam points)**

The evaluation of your class performance will be based on four examinations. The class exams will be objective and a combination of multiple-choice, identification, and/or short essay. A study guide will be provided before each exam through Blackboard. The final exam will not be
cumulative. All electronic equipment (cell phones, computers, etc.) must be put away and hidden from view during exams. 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 semester. Please note that you will be allowed to take only one make-up exam for the semester.

Public Policy Group Project (150 points)
This class project entails the research of a public policy topic pertaining to the American political landscape, and the delivery of a group presentation at the end of the semester. You will be randomly assigned to a group through Blackboard at the beginning of the semester. A public policy topic will be assigned or selected for each group. The public policy topics deal with a range of issues relevant to the current political landscape of the United States political system which center on activities of the U.S. Congress, the executive branch, the federal courts, political parties, interest groups, and/or campaigns and elections. Each group will research one public policy topic from the list of approved topics. The goal is for each student to become immersed in the study of American politics by grappling with a contemporary public policy issue that has captured the attention of the American public.

Each student will be required to work in a group in order to research the selected public policy topic and to prepare a group presentation. The group project will consist of the submission of a Powerpoint presentation consisting of at least eight slides, a short group presentation to the entire class and the submission of a group essay. The presentation and essay should provide an analysis of the public policy topic that provides a balanced overview of the topic in terms of relevant issues that apply to the topic, for example, pro or con, for or against. The topic should be researched in order to provide relevant information on its contemporary history, an analysis of the policy issue, and a response to the four course objectives listed above. Group discussion forums for each topic will be created in Blackboard to help promote the activities and exchange between group members. To help the group prepare for its presentations a series of class sessions, as listed in the course schedule, will be set aside throughout the semester and your attendance will be required for these class sessions. Absences from the group sessions will affect your group participation grade. At the conclusion of the group presentations each student will be required to submit a peer review on each individual member of the group.

Your grade for the public policy project is based on five component parts: group Powerpoint presentation, group essay, your individual delivery and presentation score, peer review score, and instructor’s evaluation of your participation. This last item is based on the instructor’s evaluation of your participation in the group through your attendance of the group sessions, discussion board postings in Blackboard, and observations of your interaction with other group members during the class group sessions. Each of the component parts will contribute a specified number of points as detailed below in the grading system.

- The group Powerpoint presentation is the group’s preparation and delivery of a Powerpoint presentation consisting of at least 8 slides. The content of the slides should provide evidence of meeting all four (4) course objectives. Your slides thus should
provide content information that satisfies the four core objectives of communication, critical thinking, social responsibility and personal responsibility.

- The group essay is a short paper of approximately four (4) pages (≈ 1300 words) in which you respond to the four (4) course objectives in a manner that communicates relevant contemporary history and background, provides evidence of critical thinking and analysis by addressing the merits of opposing viewpoints/positions on the selected topic, demonstrates knowledge of civic responsibility, and personal responsibility by evaluating choices and consequences of actions for influencing public policy formation and participating in a democratic political setting.

- Your individual presentation score is based on an evaluation of the quality of your individual presentation as part of the group presentation and the quality of your delivery of your presentation to the entire class. You will be evaluated on your ability to demonstrate mastery of the subject topic and to communicate your analysis and research to the class during in your presentation. Please note simply standing and reading from the computer monitor and/or background projector screen will not meet the standards for an adequate delivery of your presentation.

- Your peer review score is based on the peer review scores of your group members. You will need to submit a peer review for each group member. The scores received from your group members will influence your individual peer review score.

- Group participation score is based on the instructor’s evaluation of your participation in the group. It is based on your attendance of the group sessions, postings on the group discussion forum in Blackboard, and the instructor’s evaluation of your interaction with the members in your group during the in class group sessions.

**Grading**

Your semester grade is based on the number of points earned for each component element of the course requirements – the four examinations and public policy group project. The total sum of points earned will be used to determine your overall course grade. The table below outlines the grading scale for the course based on the number of points earned for each component part of the course requirements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
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<td>Public Policy Group Project</td>
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<td>Group Powerpoint</td>
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<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group Essay</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>Individual Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
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**Exam Schedule**

- First Exam: Sept 17, 100 points
- Second Exam: Oct 10, 100 points
- Third Exam: Nov 5, 100 points
Final Exam  Dec 10  100 points

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 studentsevices@angelo.edu to begin the process. The Student Affairs Office will establish the particular documentation requirements necessary for the various types of disabilities.

Title IX at Angelo State University

Angelo State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. Sex discrimination, sexual misconduct, public indecency, interpersonal violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and stalking are not tolerated at ASU. University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including the above, to the University’s Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. You are encouraged to report any incidents to ASU’s Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator in the Mayer Administration Building, Room 210 at 325-942-2022. For more information about Title IX in general you may visit www.angelo.edu/title-ix.

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


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.]

August 27: 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.

August 27 – August 29: 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

September 3 – September 5: 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

**September 10 – September 12: 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

**September 19: Group Session #1**

**September 19 – September 24: 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**: Ford, et al., Chapter 11

**September 26 – October 1: 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**: Ford, et al., Chapter 12
October 3 – October 8:  *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: Ford, et al., Chapter 13

**October 15: Group Session #2**

October 15 – October 17:  *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: Ford, et al., Chapter 14

October 22 – October 24:  *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
Syllabus_Pols 2305, §100_Page 10

F. Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 6

October 29 – October 31: 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

**November 7: Group Session #3**

November 7 – November 12: 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

November 14 – November 19: 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

November 21 – November 26: 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: Ford, et al., Chapter 15

December 3 – December 5: Group public policy presentations

Group Powerpoint due
Group Paper due
Peer Review due
Additional information will be provided as the semester progresses.

December 10: Final Exam: 10:30-12:30 p.m. (Section-100)