COURSE SYLLABUS
POLS 2306: Texas Government
Prof. Tony Bartl, Spring 2021
tony.bartl@angelo.edu
(325) 486-6107
Office: RAS 215
Office Hours: T/Th 10:45am-12:30pm, W 10am-noon, and by appointment
Classroom: RAS 112
Meeting Time: TR 12:30-1:45pm

Course Description: THE PEOPLE OF TEXAS, speaking through their State Constitution, have determined that all citizens, in order to properly perform the duties of citizenship, need to be familiar with the Constitution of the United States and the Texas State Constitution. To fulfill this need, Texas Law requires that six semester hours dedicated to that purpose be completed by all students attending institutions of higher learning receiving state funds. Here at Angelo State University, this requirement is met by taking POLS 2305 and 2306.

Constitutions are the central legitimating symbols of Texan and American political life. They create and give shape to the institutions that govern us. Texan and American citizens therefore need to understand how these constitutions frame political controversy and how they influence political and social change. To that end, we will study important debates concerning what it means to be self-governing citizens of a political order dedicated to principles of liberty and equality. We will examine the important function of citizenship and of federalism in our democracy. We will also discuss the distinctive political culture of Texas.

TEXTS AND READINGS

2. Lawler and Schaefer, American Political Rhetoric, Rowman and Littlefield, ISBN: 978-1-4422-3219-8 (hereafter this text will be referred to as APR). This book must be brought with you to class every class, except on exam days.
3. Miscellaneous readings linked from Blackboard or the internet. These readings must be printed out and brought to class on the day they are assigned.

GRADING

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journal/Response</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extra Credit: Movie Blog</td>
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ATTENDANCE

This course works best when students come to class ready to participate. There is a minimum attendance ratio of 75% necessary for passing this course. Therefore, students who miss more than 7 class sessions will automatically fail. Attendance is defined as being in class on time, prepared, and undistracted by electronic devices. Being prepared is defined as bringing the reading material with to class, along with a notebook and writing utensil for taking notes, quizzes, etc. Attendance will be taken during the daily quiz. This includes those cases where students need to attend remotely. Students not present while attendance is being taken will be counted absent.

PARTICIPATION/QUIZZES

This class is based on discussion of the reading. Students will be graded on their participation in these class discussions. Daily readings Quizzes are one important metric of this grade. Quiz questions will be put up on the screen and students will write the answers in their notebooks. These will be given during the first 3-5 minutes of class. No make-up quizzes will be given for any reason.

JOURNAL

Weeks 2-8 will require students to write a weekly Journal reflecting on the questions, problems, ideas, etc., which arise from the readings for that week. This weekly assignment is composed of two parts: one Journal entry and two Journal responses to classmates in your assigned Journal group. Entries must be a minimum of 500 words in length. Each response must be a minimum of 250 words. Entries must be posted by Noon every Tuesday. Responses are due on Thursday of the same week. Detailed Journal instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

MIDTERM EXAM

The midterm exam will consist of written short answers and an essay. It will be given in the classroom tentatively during Week 8. Students must bring blue books to write their answers in.

FINAL EXAM

The final exam will contain written short answers and an essay. It will be given on Thursday, 5/13 at 10:30am, in the classroom. Students must bring blue books to write their answers in.

EXTRA CREDIT: MOVIE BLOG

I have provided a list of movies, which you may watch and write about for extra credit.
You will find a tab with the movie list and detailed instructions on Blackboard. Extra credit is considered while final grades are being tabulated. It is not worth any standard amount of points, but in close cases may cause a student’s final grade to be bumped up to the next letter. Any effects of extra credit on one’s grade will not be visible in Blackboard at any time but will only become apparent in the final course grade in Ramport.

Written Work: The Journal writing assignment is based entirely on the readings assigned for that week. The extra credit Movie Blog is likewise focused on the relationship between the movie and the course readings. Some important points must be kept in mind when setting out to do this work.

1. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. This course has a zero tolerance policy regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism is when you take someone else’s words or ideas and present them as your own. Even if you change most or all of the words around, it is still plagiarism if you begin by copying some portion of another person’s work. Students are responsible for understanding what plagiarism is and for avoiding it. Any and all instances of plagiarism or cheating will result in automatic failure for the course and may lead to academic integrity charges with the university.

2. Internet searches and other “outside sources” are not allowed as a resource for your written work. An outside source is any source not assigned in this course. Assignments using outside sources will be given zero credit.

3. All written work must follow standard rules of written English. Work that fails to use proper sentences, paragraphs, or basic punctuation will not be read or counted.

COURSE POLICIES

Electronic Devices: Electronic devices are distracting and not conducive to the atmosphere we are trying to build in this class. Use of electronic devices such as cell phones, tablets, and laptops is strictly forbidden. If you possess such devices and carry them with you to class, please keep them put away while in the classroom. Students who need to use their phones before class begins will please step out into the hallway to do so. Students who take out their phones during class will be asked to leave and counted absent.

Honor Code: Cheating, plagiarism, and other violations of the honor code will not be tolerated. Any violation of this policy will result in automatic failure for the course. See ASU’s policies at http://www.angelo.edu/forms/pdf/honorcode5.pdf

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Day One, 1/26 Introduction. The Purpose of Education. The Purpose of this Course. Read through Syllabus prior to the first class and bring questions with you to class. Make sure also to read the short excerpt from Horace Mann and Martin Luther King, Jr.
Weeks I-II  Political Culture and History
Weeks III-IV  The Declaration of Independence and Its Principles
Weeks V-VI  American Federalism and Local Government
Week VII  The Democratic-Republic of Texas
Week VIII  Midterm Exam
Week IX-X  The American Idea of Rights and Religious Liberty
Weeks XI-XII  Freedom of Speech, the Right to Keep and Bear Arms, etc.
Weeks XIII-XIV  Separation of Powers and the Political Branches
Week XV  The Judiciary and Unenumerated Rights

Final Exam - 5/13 at 10:30am

University Policies
All students are required to follow the policies and procedures presented in these documents:
Angelo State University Student Handbook
Angelo State University Catalog

Religious Holidays:
A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. See ASU Operating Policy 10.19 Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Day for more information. It is policy that incomplete grades be reserved for student illness or personal misfortune. Please contact faculty if you have serious illness or a personal misfortune that would keep you from completing course work. Documentation may be required. See ASU Operating Policy 10.11 Grading Procedures for more information.

Student Disability Services:
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.
Student Disability Services is located in the Office of Student Affairs, and 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 an employee of the Office of Student Affairs, in the Houston Harte University Center, Room 112, or contacting the department via email at ADA@angelo.edu. For more information about the application process and requirements, visit the Student Disability Services website at
Title IX
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. In accordance with Title VII, Title IX, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE), and other federal and state laws, the University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. The term includes sexual harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence or dating violence), sexual violence, and any other misconduct based on sex.
You are encouraged to report any incidents involving sexual misconduct to the Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator, Michelle Miller, J.D. You may submit reports in the following manner:
Online: www.angelo.edu/incident-form
Face to Face: Mayer Administration Building, Room 210
Phone: 325-942-2022
Email: michelle.boone@angelo.edu

Required Use of Masks/Facial Coverings by Students
As a member of the Texas Tech University System, Angelo State University has adopted the mandatory Facial Covering Policy to ensure a safe and healthy classroom experience. Current research on the COVID-19 virus suggests there is a significant reduction in the potential for transmission of the virus from person to person by wearing a mask/facial covering that covers the nose and mouth areas. Therefore, in compliance with the university policy students in this class are required to wear a mask/facial covering before, during, and after class. Faculty members may also ask you to display your daily screening badge as a prerequisite to enter the classroom. You are also asked to maintain safe distancing practices to the best of your ability. For the safety of everyone, any student not appropriately wearing a mask/facial covering will be asked to leave the classroom immediately. The student will be responsible to make up any missed class content or work. Continued non-compliance with the Texas Tech University System Policy may result in disciplinary action through the Office of Student Conduct.

Copyright Policy
Students officially enrolled in this course should make only one printed copy of the given articles and/or chapters. You are expressly prohibited from distributing or reproducing any portion of course readings in printed or electronic form without written permission from the copyright holders or publishers.
Course Goals

We will be working on 4 Core Objectives: Critical Thinking (CT), Communication Skills (CS), Social Responsibility (SR), and Personal Responsibility (PR). Each of these Core Objectives contains its own Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), with 8 in total. We are going to pursue all of these objectives as we proceed through the course. Your progress towards these objectives will be assessed through your performance on the requirements listed below.

The Purpose of Education
Martin Luther King Jr.
Morehouse College
1947

It seems to me that education has a two-fold function to perform in the life of man and in society: the one is utility and the other is culture. Education must enable a man to become more efficient, to achieve with increasing facility the legitimate goals of his life.

Education must also train one for quick, resolute and effective thinking. To think incisively and to think for one's self is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half-truths, prejudices, and propaganda. At this point, I often wonder whether or not education is fulfilling its purpose. A great majority of the so-called educated people do not think logically and scientifically. Even the press, the classroom, the platform, and the pulpit in many instances do not give us objective and unbiased truths. To save man from the morass of propaganda, in my opinion, is one of the chief aims of education. Education must enable one to sift and weigh evidence, to discern the true from the false, the real from the unreal, and the facts from the fiction.

The function of education, therefore, is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. But education which stops with efficiency may prove the greatest menace to society. The most dangerous criminal may be the man gifted with reason, but with no morals. . . .

We must remember that intelligence is not enough. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education. The complete education gives one not only power of concentration, but worthy objectives upon which to concentrate. The broad education will, therefore, transmit to one not only the accumulated knowledge of the race but also the accumulated experience of social living.
Horace Mann was known as the “Father of the Common Schools” because he led in establishing elementary public schools in the United States. In 1836 he became the first Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education, and in 1839 he founded the first State Normal School in the U.S. to improve the quality of educating public school teachers.

If the majority of a self-governing people are sober-minded, enlightened, studious of right, capable of comparing and balancing opposite interpretations of a fundamental law, or opposite views of a particular system of policy; then all appeals addressed to them in messages, speeches, pamphlets, and from the thousand-tongued newspaper press, will be calm, dispassionate, adapted at once to elucidate the subject under consideration and to instruct and elevate the mind of the arbitors.¹ But, on the other hand, if the people are ignorant, fickle, averse to or incapable of patient inquiry, prone to hasty decisions from plausible appearances, or reckless from prejudice or passion, then the demagogues² who address, will adapt themselves to the dupes³ who hear, just as certainly as the hunter adapts his lure to the animal he would ensnare; and flattery,⁴ imposture, falsehood, the vindication and eulogy⁵ of fellow partisans⁶ however wicked, and the defamation⁷ of opponents however virtuous, will be the instruments by which a warfare, destructive in the end alike to victors and vanquished, will be waged. Let the spirit and tone of our congressional and legislative speechmakers, and the language of the political press throughout the country, decide the question, which of the above described classes they consider themselves as addressing. . . .

¹ “Arbitors” are those who have the power to decide a disputed question. In democratic elections, this means the people or, more precisely, the voters.
² A demagogue is “a political agitator who appeals to the passions and prejudice of the mob in order to obtain power or further his own interests” (definition taken from the Oxford English Dictionary).
³ A dupe is “one who allow himself to be deceived or deluded; one who is misled by false representations or notions” (O.E.D.).
⁴ A flatterer “employs false praise to obtain favor or otherwise serve his own purposes (O.E.D.).
⁵ Praise.
⁶ A “partisan” is a member of one’s own party or, more generally, one who is loyal to one side in a dispute.
⁷ To “defame” is to attack someone’s reputation, especially through rumors or reports.