

Federal Government
Summer Semester 2021
Pols 2305 – Course Syllabus
Asynchronous online class
Class Room: Blackboard

Course Instructor: Dr. Roberto Garza
Phone: 325-486-6108
E-mail: Robert.Garza@angelo.edu

Office hours: M, T, Th, & F: 9:00-10:00 AM; M-F: 3:00-4:00 PM; By appointment also

Introduction:

You have enrolled in an asynchronous online class taught through Blackboard; thus, the course is delivered completely online. The class is radically different from the traditional classroom based on instructor lectures and face to face contact on a regular basis. You have considerable leeway in choosing the times you spend “in class;” however, you will need to establish a system for interacting with course materials, responding to deadlines, and keeping up with the lessons & assignments spread throughout the semester. **Online classes require that students act with discipline and actively participate through Blackboard. Successful online students monitor the class multiple times throughout the week and the successful student will not be a passive participant in the class.** Communicating with the instructor is important and it will be your responsibility to contact me should you have questions and concerns.

Communication:

I will communicate with the class via email, Blackboard, and the Blackboard announcements page. You must be able to login and interact with the ASU Blackboard platform. Students are responsible for checking their ASU email account and Blackboard on a regular basis throughout every week for class announcements. I will communicate with individual students via ASU email address.

Instructor Contact information:

I check my email account regularly throughout the day. I usually respond fairly quickly to emails (unless you email after 5:00pm cst). I do check for emails after 5:00pm, but there is no guarantee I will email back that night. Generally, I check my email account at least once on Sundays during the semester. Generally, I will respond to students within 12 hours after contact.

Technology Requirements:

Hardware

With this online course, you must have access to an internet-enabled laptop or desktop computer with a high-speed internet connection, a built-in microphone and webcam. Please note that tablets and smartphones may not be supported thus be sure to check

with the Technology Service Center if you have questions about your technical hardware.

Software

You will need a browser and operating system, generally the most recent, that is compatible with ASU Blackboard. With regards to browsers, the use of Chrome is highly recommended. Note that if you use Safari, Firefox, or MS Edge, you should be prepared to use Chrome as a backup. Online courses typically use Acrobat Reader, Flash, Java, Windows Media Player, and Real Media Player.

You should have the necessary computer skills to navigate around the internet, webpages, and Blackboard. While I might be able to help with some basic technical issues, students who have computer technology issues should contact the ASU Technical Service Center (IT Helpdesk) at 325-942-2911 or 1-800-942-2911. You can also email them at helpdesk@angelo.edu. **Note that you are ultimately responsible for solving your computer technology issues.**

Students will not be penalized during the semester for technical issues caused by ASU or acts beyond their control. However, be sure to create back up files that are time stamped as you work throughout the semester.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course

Course Description:

This course serves as an introduction to American government and politics. It is designed to acquaint you with the fundamental ideas, institutions, and actors that make up the governmental system of the United States. 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, challenges to democratic governance, 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 Objectives:

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

Course Requirements:

Basic Structure

This online course is organized by chapter modules that cover the fundamental aspects of the study of the American federal government. Each module consists of textbook chapter reading, study questions, and possible supplemental materials. I am also providing ppt lecture slides and short-recorded oral lectures. The course content is divided into several segments-periods, approximately three chapters in length. At the conclusion of each period, you will take an exam that covers the content material covered during the particular period. In addition, you will have to complete one discussion board assignment.

Exams

Students will be required to take four non-cumulative exams that cover the content materials of the respective period. The exam will cover the chapter readings and lecture materials provided through the ppt slides and short video lectures. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple choice questions and you will have 50 minutes to complete the exam. Given that the time for taking the exam is limited, you will not be able to spend much time searching the textbook or chapter modules for answers. Thus, you will need to prepare and thoroughly study the chapter materials before you begin the exam.

The exam will be administered online on the designated exam dates posted in the schedule below. You will have a 24 hour window in which to take the exam. Note that once you begin the exam you will need to complete the exam within the allotted time and you will not have an opportunity to stop and start the exam at a later time. Please be sure that you have access to a reliable wifi connection when you log in to take the exam. It is important that you close all apps while taking the exam and that you take only one exam at a time. If you experience problems while taking the exam, call the IT Service Center at 325-942-2911 immediately so they can help assist you.

If you have a university-defined and approved excuse (e.g., a medical or personal emergency) that prevents you from taking the exam at the appointed time, please notify me immediately so that arrangements can be made for an alternative time.

Discussion Board Assignments

You are required to complete one Discussion Board assignments spread throughout the semester. You are responsible for posting a response thread to questions posted for the assignment. A specific topic will be identified for the Discussion Board assignment and a specific question(s) will be posted in Blackboard. The topic will pertain to a current events issue, drawn in most cases from a newspaper article, blog, or other appropriate item. In your response thread, you will need to address all parts of the question(s). You should provide a suitable response in which you identify and briefly discuss the relevant issue(s) raised by the respective article. You should link your response to the appropriate course materials. You may wish to provide positive or negative reactions to the readings, and/or brief thoughts on the topic. The goal for this assignment is to be able to apply course materials to current event issues, while engaging in critical thinking and analysis. The response thread should be approximately 650 words in length. Additional information will be provided.

Grading Methodology

Your semester grade is based on the number of points earned for each component element of the course requirements – the four examinations and Discussion Board assignments. 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.

Grading Breakdown by Points

Exams (4 total)	400 points
Discussion Board Assignment	50 points
Total Points	450 points

Grading Scale

405-450	A
360-404	B
315-359	C
261-314	D
Below 261	F

According to the Academic Calendar, the last day to drop this course is **Monday, August 2, 2021**. Withdrawal grades will be indicated by the letter W.

Exam Schedule

First Exam	July 19	100 points
Second Exam	July 27	100 points
Third Exam	August 4	100 points
Final Exam	August 13	100 points

Reading Materials

Ford, Bardes, Schmidt & Shelley. 2020. *American Government and Politics Today*, enhanced/18th edition. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning
ISBN: 978-1-337-79035-2

Internet Sources

texastribune.com
cnn.com
nytimes.com
washingtonpost.com
latimes.com
wsj.com
politico.com
realclearpolitics.com
nationaljournal.com

Course Organization (Chapter Modules) and Schedule:

Chapter One: One Republic – Two Americas? (July 12 – July 13)

The chapter provides an introduction to the study of the American political system and identifies relevant concepts and themes. Relevant topics are:

1. The basic terminology for the study of politics
2. The importance of government
3. Models of democratic governance
4. Key features of democracy
5. Political ideology

Suitable questions to consider. 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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 1

Chapter Two: The Constitution (July 14 – July 15)

The chapter provides an introduction to the constitutional foundations of American government. Relevant topics are:

1. Impact of colonialism
2. Articles of Confederation
3. Declaration of Independence
4. Revolutionary War
5. Drafting a constitution
6. Battle for ratification
7. Constitutional change

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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 2

Chapter Three: Federalism (July 15 – July 16)

This chapter provides an analysis of the American federal system of government. Relevant topics are:

1. Three models of government
2. Constitutional basis of American federalism
3. Case law – *McCulloch v. Maryland*
4. Case law – *Gibbons v. Ogden*
5. The evolution of federalism in the U.S.
6. Politics of federalism

Suitable questions to consider. 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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 3

****July 19: Exam #1****

Chapter Eleven: The Congress (July 20 – July 21)

The chapter provides a study to one of the institutions of government, Congress. Relevant topics are:

1. Congress as an institution – membership and the election of legislators
2. Functions of Congress
3. Powers of Congress
4. Organization of Congress - committee and leadership system
5. Congress as a policymaking Institution – lawmaking

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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 11

Chapter Twelve: The President (July 22 – July 23)

This chapter provides a study of the executive branch of government, particularly the presidency. Relevant topics are:

1. The paths for becoming president
2. Roles of the president
3. Powers of the president
4. The structure of the executive branch

Suitable questions to consider. 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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 12

Chapter Thirteen: The Bureaucracy (July 26)

The chapter continues the study of the executive branch by providing an analysis of the bureaucracy. Relevant topics are:

1. The nature of bureaucracy
2. Development of federal bureaucracy
3. Organization of the federal bureaucracy
4. What bureaucracies do
5. Overseeing the bureaucracy

Suitable questions to consider. 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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 13

****July 27: Exam #2****

Chapter 14: The Courts (July 28 – July 29)

This chapter provides a study of the judicial branch of government, particularly the Supreme Court. Relevant topics are:

1. Sources of American law
2. The power of judicial review – *Marbury v. Madison*
3. Eras of the Supreme Court
4. Structure of the federal judicial system
5. Selection of judges
6. Policymaking and the courts
7. Access to the Supreme Court
8. Deciding cases

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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 14

****Friday – July 30: Discussion Board Assignment Due****

Chapter Six: Public Opinion and Political Socialization (July 30 – August 2)

This chapter provides a study of public opinion and its various dimensions. Relevant topics are:

1. The nature of public opinion
2. Importance of political socialization
3. Measuring public opinion
4. Political preferences and voting behavior
5. Public opinion and government

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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 6

Chapter Seven: Interest Groups (August 3)

The chapter provides a study of linkage institutions in the American political system, particularly interest groups. Relevant topics are:

1. Define interest groups
2. Types of interest groups
3. Functions of interest groups
4. Tactics of interest groups
5. Regulating 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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 7

****August 4: Exam #3****

Chapter Eight: Political Parties (August 5 – August 9)

The chapter provides a study of linkage institutions in the American political system, particularly political parties. Relevant topics are:

1. Distinguish between an interest group and a political party
2. Development of political parties in the U.S.
3. The three faces of a political party
4. Third parties in the United States

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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 8

Chapter Nine: Campaigns, Voting, and Elections (August 10 – August 12)

The chapter provides a study of additional types of linkage institutions associated with different forms of political participation. Relevant topics are:

1. Understanding the modern campaign today
2. Different types of elections
3. Presidential election process & the strategy of winning
4. The nomination game
5. The electoral college
6. The role of money in politics
7. Campaign finance reform
8. Political participation in the U.S.

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?

Readings: Ford, et al., Chapter 9

****August 13: Exam #4****

Course Schedule and Assignments

Chapter Module	Due Dates	Required Readings	Assignment Due Dates
Chapter One	7/12 — 7/13	Ford, et. al., Chapter 1	
Chapter Two	7/14 — 7/15	Ford, et. al., Chapter 2	
Chapter Three	7/15 — 7/16	Ford, et. al., Chapter 3	Exam #1 – July 19
Chapter Eleven	7/20 — 7/21	Ford, et. al., Chapter 11	
Chapter Twelve	7/22 — 7/23	Ford, et. al., Chapter 12	
Chapter Thirteen	7/26	Ford, et. al., Chapter 13	Exam #2 – July 27
Chapter Fourteen	7/28 — 7/29	Ford, et. al., Chapter 14	DB Assignment – July 30
Chapter Six	7/30 — 8/2	Ford, et. al., Chapter 6	
Chapter Seven	8/3	Ford, et. al., Chapter 7	Exam #3 – August 4
Chapter Eight	8/5 — 8/9	Ford, et. al., Chapter 8	
Chapter Nine	8/10 — 8/12	Ford, et. al., Chapter 9	Exam #4 – August 13

ASU Academic Policies

General Policies related to this course:

All students are required to follow the policies and procedures presented in these documents:

[Angelo State University Student Handbook](#)

[Angelo State University Catalog](#)

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.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious topic covered in ASU's Academic Integrity policy in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism is the action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own. Plagiarism is literary theft.

In your discussions and/or your papers, it is unacceptable to copy word-for-word without quotation marks and the source of the quotation. It is expected that you will summarize or paraphrase ideas giving appropriate credit to the source both in the body of your paper and the reference list.

Papers are subject to be evaluated for originality via Turnitin. Resources to help you understand this policy better are available at the ASU Writing Center.

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

Student absence for religious holidays

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.

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.

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