POLS 2305: Introduction to American Politics

SPRING 2017
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Course Time: 9:05 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.
Office Hours: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Mondays
Monday - Wednesday - Friday
3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Wednesdays
Classroom: 112 Fine Arts
Office: BUS 231

Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions of the American government, using the prior civic understanding each student has. The course investigates the behavioral trends that explain how individuals work within these institutions to change laws. The course also explores topics where students can challenge their understanding of government by comparing how state politics is unique from the federal government and identifying the dates of significant reforms to the lawmakers process.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed with the objective that by the end the semester each student has a comprehensive knowledge of:

- How branches of government operate independently
- How branches interact with one another and what that means for the power one individual can have
- What ways constituents can influence each operation of the government
- Through Service Learning activities, recognize the importance of relationships and government structures in how decisions are implemented.

Students who will do the best in the course will understand how political contexts shape how institutions function and identify the processes in which the public can influence how the government operates. Note: This section of POLS 2305 is registered as a course for the GIVE BACK certificate.

Required Books

All texts can be found in the bookstore or online.


Know this is an eTextbook. You may link to the website or download the PDF of the entire text.
Student Evaluation

Participation

I believe actively participating in discussion are an important part of a class, which is why participation will make up 100 points of your final grade. The participation grade will consist of:

I. Entries to the Question Well

The day before we begin class discussion on a topic, submit a question to the “Question Well” that is organized as a Discussion Board. During the entire semester, you only need to complete four entries, however each question needs to explore a topic in a new way or style.

Rules
1) Only one question submission will count per class topic.
2) When you propose a question, have a copy of the question with you in the next class.
3) Unoriginal questions that reword another student’s example or examples from the book will not be accepted.
4) All questions are due at 2pm CST the day before we begin discussing a topic. For example, if we talk about the Constitution on Wednesday the 10th, questions need to be posted before 2pm CST on Tuesday the 9th to count.

Style for Proposing Questions:
1) Clarify a topic
2) Explore a causal connection
3) Inquire about history and details
4) Suggest a hypothetical connection between actors, motivations, or limits to authority

II. Participation in Class Simulations and Discussions

Throughout the semester there are in-class simulations to apply topics of the class and experience some of the difficulties in government. The quality of individual involvement in each assignment and the assessment of all answers will contribute to the grade. During the semester one of the class activities can be dropped, with or without prior notification.

Engagement on a day-to-day basis is important to the learning new content. Therefore the last aspect of the participation grade is a proportion of the high quality contributions to class discussion throughout the semester. Students putting forth no effort on a given class day should expect to receive a zero for participation on that date.

I encourage you to CHALLENGE, RESPOND to, & CRITIQUE what you read and hear outside of class. Our goal is to learn by challenging what preconceived notions we may have.

Chapter Quizzes

Quizzes are given throughout the semester in class to assess comprehension of the reading material. All quizzes will be given before the topics are discussed in class. Each quiz will be worth 25 points and the top five scores will count towards your overall grade. No make-up quizzes will be given, however there will be more than five quizzes throughout the semester.
Semester Long Polling Project

The class will conduct three polls throughout the semester. The work of interviewing members of the community and writing reports makes up 150 points. All information collected by the class will be consolidated into one larger dataset. In the end, students will be able to discuss trends based on their own smaller experiences and make comparisons to the larger project.

Objective: How a poll is conducted is important to the value of the information to be analyzed. This project is an experience in the process of collecting opinions and reporting on the views of our community.

Task 1 - Each student is responsible for contacting a set number of individuals at three different points in the semester.

Task 2 - Each student, as the interviewer, will determine their strategy for finding respondents before contacting the individuals to make sure the process continues to be scientific. Strategies include: Face-to-face interviews, emailing a link to an online poll, speaking to individuals on the phone, mailing surveys, or a mixture of two or more types.

Task 3 - Interview individuals by asking a similar set of questions that are assigned to you. Alert: If a respondent does not complete the poll or is interrupted, the information is no longer satisfactory. A new entry for answers must be started.

Task 4 - Enter the information for every respondent into a spreadsheet. This will be the raw individual data that you will submit.

Task 5 - Draft a one-page description of the experience and what you learned from the answers of the individuals. Important strategies to use each detail to make broader suggestions are to: Tally the results of each question or take the average or make interesting comparisons of how one group answered a question differently from another group. In this short description be sure to conclude with meaningful observations based on the findings of your exercise. For polls 2 and 3 you will have the chance to draw comparisons across time as well.

Note: The ten points will be deducted from the assignment for each day the data and descriptions are late.

Community Engagement & Colloquiums

University campuses and cities like Tyler, Texas are hubs for opportunities to engage in thoughtful discussions about the role of government or see how policy decisions effect our lives. During the semester are to attend two public events Distinguished Lecture Series, Webb Student Society - if the talk relates to politics, meeting of the Smith County Commission, etc... Upon attending the lecture or government meeting, describe what you learned by observing politics in action or the questions others are asking. For each event:

1) Take notes on what aspects of the experience match with the class and what was something new/different.

2) Collect information to document you were there. Five points will be deducted if documentation is not provided.

3) Upload a 450 to 500 word discussion on the impact of what occurred at the event to share your experience with the class. Pay particular attention to the actions of individuals and the rules that structure their activity. Watch those leading the meeting and those in attendance. Consider how the concerns raised in the meeting (or at the event) reflect content we have discussed in the course. As you write an entry, feel free to be creative in building comparisons of differences and similarities between similar events. Stories should be added under the forum for Colloquium Events.

4) After attending two events, write a letter to one of the groups you witnessed a meeting of. Provide comparisons of how their meeting may have differed from others in the community. Also, acknowledge what you learned about governance - be it how their organization operates or the people who attend engage in government locally.
Exams

Three exams on February 8, March 1, and April 12 are each worth 125 points. The final, 125 points, will be cumulative in that you are asked to draw connections across topics covered throughout the class. Each exam will offer different types of short-answer, matching, and multiple choice questions. Each question will hold different point values. Missing an exam without the confirmation of an alternative test date, before the exam date, will result in a zero.

Grading

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<td>Pre-Test</td>
<td>10 points + bonus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>100 points</td>
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<td>Community Colloquium (2 events &amp; letter)</td>
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<td>Chapter Quizzes (5 count)</td>
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<td>Polling Project (3 surveys)</td>
<td>150 points</td>
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<td>Exam I (Feb 8)</td>
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<td>Exam II (Mar 3)</td>
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<td>Exam III (Apr 12)</td>
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<td>Post-Test</td>
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<td>Final Exam</td>
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Student Conduct

I have high expectations for each student in this class, which are based on your academic performance to get to this point and my belief that you will treat each of your fellow classmates with respect. My goal is to facilitate a supportive and engaging class experience for everyone and one part of that is eliminating disruptive behavior. Using technology in a way that distracts others and demonstrates a lack of respect for the instructor is unacceptable.

Concealed Handgun Campus Policy

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure (cover the entire trigger guard area) and concealed. More information is available at http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php

Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quit-lines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.

Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and dishonesty. The University of Texas at Tyler Policies and Procedures for Student Affairs will be strictly followed and can be found here at: http://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/documents/8Student%20Conduct%20and%20Discipline.pdf. Tests and assign-

\[1\] Should the class schedule need to be amended, I will advise the class in advance by email and via the course page
ments are designed to assess your understanding of the material—do not reference another student’s answers.

Violations of academic integrity are serious and will have a negative consequence on your classroom performance. In each instance a violation occurs, a failing grade will be assigned for the assignment or the course, require work to be redone, and have you identify what the cause of the violation was. The matter will be referred to the Dean of Students if institutional action is necessary. Reference the rights and responsibilities of students: http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php.

**Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:**

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar. Each semesters Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

**State-Mandated Course Drop Policy:**

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

**Disability Services:**

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns
please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to cstaples@uttyler.edu.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance:

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor with official documentation at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA Statement:

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructors directions regarding the appropriate exit.

If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

If you have any questions or concerns about what is expected or permissible in this course or about academic integrity in general, please contact me.

Class Schedule

Week One

Jan 18-20 Governance, Engagement, and Politics
   Readings: Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 1

Week Two

Jan 23-27 Roots of American Politics and an Early Constitution
   Readings: Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 2

Week Three

Jan 30-Feb 3 Constitutional Convention and The Constitution
   Readings: Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 2

Week Four

Feb 6 Amending the Constitution & Exam Review
Feb 8 Exam I
Feb 10  Federalism: Division of Power and Competition Among States  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 3

**Week Five**

Feb 13-17  Federalism: How do states and the nation leverage authority to affect policy?  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 3 and 4

**Week Six**

Feb 20-24  Measuring and Understanding Public Opinion  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 6

**Week Seven**

Feb 27  Exam Review
Mar 1  Exam II
Mar 3  No Class

**Week Eight**

Mar 6-10  Voter Registration and Turnout  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 7.1-7.3

**Week Nine**

Mar 13-17  *Spring Break, No Class*

**Week Ten**

Mar 20-24  Campaigns and Media  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 7.4 - 8.

**Week Eleven**

Mar 27-31  Organizations Like-minded People: Parties and Interest Groups  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 9 & 10

**Week Twelve**

Apr 3-5  The People’s House: Power of Organization  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 11

Apr 7  Senate: Representing States and Power of Individuals  
_Readings:_  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 11

**Week Thirteen**

Apr 10  Exam Review
Apr 12  Exam III
Apr 14       No Class, due to Southwest Social Science Association Meeting

Week Fourteen

Apr 17-21    Presidents and the Organization of the Executive Branch
             Readings:  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 12

Week Fifteen

Apr 24-28    Jurisdictions and Selection of the Federal Courts
             Readings:  Krutz and Waskiewicz, Ch. 13

Exam Week

May TBA      Final Exam