POLS 2305 – Introductory American Government
MWF 10:10am – 11:05am
Braithwaite Building, Room 1055
University of Texas at Tyler
Fall 2015

Course Description and Objectives

The genius of the Constitution often gets overlooked due to a political system that is characterized by its constant gridlock and partisan fighting. Through constitutional design, America’s governing document defines (limits) the powers and responsibilities of government, while simultaneously enshrining the rights and liberties of the American people. Consequently, this distribution of power is not only the foundation of American politics, but also the source of our political differences. To better understand these concepts, this course is designed to provide
an introductory analysis and evaluation of the political system established by the U.S. Constitution. Throughout the course students will:

- Critically examine the philosophical foundations of the American political system by exploring the historical debates and writings that shaped the formation of the Constitution.
- Distinguish and identify the key differences and similarities between the three branches of government in the United States.
- Appraise current events to highlight the applicability and importance of the Constitution in today’s society.
- Consider the formation of partisan preferences and how partisanship has shaped American politics.

Credit Hours: 3; Prerequisites: None

**Required Texts**

2) The Professor, through Blackboard, will post additional readings.

In addition, students are required to read the Political News in the either the *New York Times* or *Washington Post* every day. You should regularly read the articles in the sections labeled Politics.


**Requirements, Dates, and Grades**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

**Quizzes**

Eight in-class, unannounced quizzes will be given throughout the semester and five will count towards your final grade (i.e. your three lowest quiz scores will be dropped). The quizzes and format will be explained during lecture days and will cover information that should have been read for the day. Absolutely no make-ups will be allowed on these quizzes.

**Exams**

The exams will be held, in class, on the dates specified below and the format of each will be detailed prior to the exam (also, a review session will be held prior to each exam). There will be 3 exams this semester and each exam will only cover readings and course materials prior to the
date of the exam. (Note: Each week I will post review questions in Blackboard that, cumulatively, will form the basis of a review for your upcoming exam.)

- Exam 1 will test your comprehension of material from 8/24 – 9/18
- Exam 2 will test your comprehension of material from 9/21 – 10/30
- The Final Exam will test your comprehension of material from 11/2 – 12/4

The following are the weights given to the quizzes and the exams and the date each will be held:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date (Subject to Change)</th>
<th>Grade Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>Friday, September 18, 2015</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>Friday, October 30, 2015</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Semester-Long</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final grades will be granted on the following scale: A=100%-90%, B=89%-80%, C=79%-70%, D=69%-60%, and F=59%-50%.

**Students’ Rights and Responsibilities**

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:
http://www2.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php

**Attendance Policy**

Your attendance in this course is not mandatory and your grade in this course will not suffer directly from missing class. However, the examination material in this class is not only based on the required readings, but on class participation and class discussions, which means that your grade will almost certainly suffer by missing too many classes. Further, borderline grades will be determined by the quality of your overall contribution to the course.

Class notes, either of my own or transcribed by other students, will be made available to those students whom miss class due to their observance of holidays and special events by organized religions or to students who have a pre-approved absence by the Dean of Students (see also: Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities and Student Absence due to Religious Observance sections of the syllabus).

For those students who attend lecture, photography of any class notes/lectures is strictly prohibited. Any student found in violation will be asked to leave class for the day.

**“Make Up” Policy**
Make up exams will only be offered to those students that have a University approved absence, a doctor’s note detailing your inability to take the exam on the date provided on this syllabus, or a sudden emergency (i.e. death in your family, illness) that prohibits your attendance for the exam on the date provided on this syllabus. Anyone who has not satisfied any of these requirements and does not take the exam will be given a grade of “0.”

If any conflict (others tests, travel plans, etc.) with the exams exists, notify me by September 4, 2015. Be advised that allowances will only be given in extreme cases with my discretion as to what I define as extreme. (see also: Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities and Student Absence due to Religious Observance sections of the syllabus).

Student Absence Due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the Professor 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 Professor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the Professor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Policy on Academic Integrity

The UT Tyler community regards cheating as an extremely serious matter and deals severely with those who violate the standards of academic integrity.

Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

• Copying from another person’s test paper
• During a test, possession of materials not authorized by the person administering the test
• Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination or the divulging of examination contents to another when the Professor has allowed the exam to be kept by the student
• Working with others in taking tests or preparing academic assignments when not authorized by the Professor
• Obtaining by any means another person’s work and submitting that work as one’s own. This includes the downloading of academic papers or the purchase of papers written by others.
If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the classroom instructor may ask the student to meet with him or her to discuss the incident. A student may admit to allegations of academic dishonesty, waive the right to a hearing and accept penalties imposed by the instructor. The student may also deny all allegations and ask to see the Dean of Student Affairs. An accused student may accept the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs or ask for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer appointed by the university. Witnesses may be called and evidence presented. The hearing officer will consider all evidence and make a decision. The decision of the hearing officer may be appealed to the President by either the student or the Dean of Student Affairs. For further discussion of academic dishonesty and possible penalties, please see: http://www.uttyler.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php

Class Conduct and Threatening Behavior

Given the nature of political discourse, some of the topics discussed and debated in class may be sensitive to some students. It is expected that students, regardless of the subject matter, maintain civility in their class comments. The University and the Professor seek to promote a safe environment where students may participate in debates, discussion, and other objectives concurrent with the educational process without compromising their health, safety, and welfare. Concurrent with this ideal, mutual courtesy and respect should govern all classroom conduct. Therefore, threats of physical harm or verbal abuse will not be tolerated in this class.

All electronic devices must be silenced during class (if possible, please turn off all electronic devices) unless you have received prior permission from the Professor. Any such device that interrupts class will be confiscated and returned to the student during the Professor’s office hours. ANYONE USING AN ELECTRONIC DEVICE WITHOUT PRIOR PERMISSION DURING AN EXAMINATION WILL RECEIVE A “0” ON THAT EXAM.

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
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 semester’s 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

The Census Date for this semester is Friday, September 4, 2015.

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.

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 Professor’s directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform the Professor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Changes to the Syllabus

The information contained in this syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the Professor.

Course Outline and Readings (subject to change)

Week 1 (August 24 – August 28)

- 8/24 – Introduction to the Course
  - Overview of the course, class policies, and the syllabus
- 8/26, 8/28, 8/31, 9/2, & 9/4 – The U.S. Constitution
  - The Declaration of Independence (Blackboard)
  - Barnett, Randy. “What the Declaration of Independence Really Claimed.” The Volohk Conspiracy (Blackboard)
  - Virginia Declaration of Rights (Blackboard)
  - Federalist #’s 10, 39, & 51 (Blackboard)
  - Articles of Confederation (Blackboard)
  - The Constitution of the United States (Blackboard)
  - Geer et al. Chapters 2 & 3

Week 2 (August 31 – September 4)

- 8/31, 9/2, & 9/4 – continue, The U.S. Constitution
- 9/4, 9/9, & 9/11 – Civil Rights and Liberties
  - Geer et al. Chapters 4 & 5
- 9/4 – FYI: CENSUS DATE
Week 3 (September 7 – September 11)
- 9/7 – NO CLASS (LABOR DAY)
- 9/9 & 9/11 – continue, Civil Rights and Liberties

Week 4 (September 14 – September 18)
- 9/14 – Catch-up and Prepare for Exam 1
- 9/16 – Review for Exam 1
- 9/18 – Exam 1

Week 5 (September 21 – September 25)
- 9/21 & 9/23 – Partisanship and Its Development
  o Green et al. Chapter 1 (Blackboard)
  o Campbell et al. Chapter 7 (Blackboard)
- 9/25, 9/28, & 9/30 – Public Opinion
  o Geer et al. Chapter 6

Week 6 (September 28 – October 2)
- 9/28 & 9/30 – continue, Public Opinion
- 10/2, 10/5, & 10/7 – The News and Social Media
  o Geer et al. Chapter 7

Week 7 (October 5 – October 9)
- 10/5 & 10/7 – continue, The News and Social Media
- 10/9, 10/12, 10/14, & 10/16 – Political Parties
  o Geer et al. Chapter 9

Week 8 (October 12 – October 16)
- 10/12, 10/14, & 10/16 – continue, Political Parties
- 10/16, 10/19, 10/21, & 10/23 – Elections, Campaigns, and Voting
  o Geer et al. Chapters 10 and 11

Week 9 (October 19 – October 23)
- 10/19, 10/21, & 10/23 – continue, Elections, Campaigns, and Voting

Week 10 (October 26 – October 30)
- 10/26 – FYI: Last Day to Drop/Withdraw From Classes
- 10/26 – Catch-up and Prepare for Exam 2
- 10/28 – Review for Exam 2
- 10/30 – Exam 2

Week 11 (November 2 – November 6)
- 11/2, 11/4, 11/6, & 11/9 – The Congress
  o Federalist #51 (Blackboard)
  o Article 1 of the Constitution (Blackboard)
  o Geer et al. Chapter 12
Week 12 (November 9 – November 13)

- 11/9 – continue, The Congress
- 11/11, 11/13, 11/16, & 11/18 – The Presidency
  - Federalist #70 (Blackboard)
  - Article 2 of the Constitution (Blackboard)
  - Thomas Jefferson – First Inaugural (Blackboard)
  - Wendland, Jay, Eric Lopez, and Nikkita Edmond. “Moving Beyond Debate and Speculation: The Role of Federalism in Electoral College Reform.” (Blackboard)
  - Geer et al. Chapter 13

Week 13 (November 16 – November 20)

- 11/16 & 11/18 – continue, The Presidency
- 11/20, 11/30, 12/2, & 12/4 – The Judiciary
  - Federalist #78 (Blackboard)
  - Article 3 of the Constitution (Blackboard)
  - Geer et al. Chapter 15

Week 14 (November 23 – November 27)

- NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)

Week 15 (November 30 – December 4)

- 11/30, 12/2, & 12/4 – continue, The Judiciary

Final Exam (TBD)

- Final Exam Week: December 8-12