SYLLABUS

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT I [POSC 1113]

POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM
DIVISION OF SOCIAL WORK, BEHAVIORAL AND POLITICAL SCIENCES
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES <> PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY

FALL 2007

Woolfolk Building

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK:
Living Democracy: Custom Edition for Prairie View A&M University
by Daniel M. Shea, Joanne C. Green, Christopher E. Smith, L. Tucker Gibson, Jr., and Clay Robison.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a survey course in American government and politics. The course introduces students to the United States and Texas constitutions as well as American political process. It covers topics such as democratic theory, federalism and local government, political culture, political socialization, public opinion and political participation, mass media, interest groups, political parties, campaigns and elections, and civil liberties. The overriding objective of the course is to stimulate the students’ thinking about the mutually reinforcing relationship between economics and politics, and the extent to which certain interests are served or compromised by the American political practice.

SPECIFIC OUTCOMES (GOALS):

Upon completion of this course, a student will be able to:

- Identify the conceptual, theoretical and scientific foundation of political science.
- Understand the meaning of politics, political culture, and evaluate the role of government.
- Identify the characteristics and developments of the U.S. and Texas constitutions.
- Analyze the concept of federalism and its operations.
- Define public opinion, how it is measured, and its impact on public policy.
- Explain the role, activities and major types of interest groups and describe various techniques used by groups to promote their interests.
- Trace the evolution of political parties and describe their role in the American political system.
- Analyze the dynamics of electoral process and political behavior.
- Assess the major functions of the media and its role in American politics.
- Analyze the development of civil rights and civil liberties.
- Acquire the skills necessary to participate meaningfully in the American political process.
• Recognize the similarities and differences of the American political system and other political systems found around the world.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

For purposes of grade determination, there will be five (5) components of evaluation. The five items upon which grades will be based are as follows:

1. Exam 1  25%
2. Exam 2 (Midterm)  25%
3. Exam 3  25%
4. Exam 4 (Final)  25%
5. Assignments  25%

[A=90-100  B=80-89  C=70-79  D=60-69  F=Below 59]

There will be four (4) exams in the course. Exams will have a variety of questions including multiple-choice, true and false questions, each worth 25% of the final grade. Each exam will cover all topics to that date. Midterm and final examinations are common exams designed by the political science faculty. One exam score will be dropped (i.e., the lowest score on exam numbers 1 and 3). Midterm and final exam scores cannot be dropped.

MAKE-UP EXAMS:
Only students with legitimate reasons for missing a regularly scheduled exam will be allowed to take the makeup. Students who cannot, for any reason, take an exam must notify the instructor at least 24 hours before the scheduled examination. Make-up times will be determined by consultation between the student and the instructor. Failure to take an exam will result in a failing grade in the course.

ASSIGNMENTS:
Assignments require students to provide responses to questions or instructions identified in the Course Schedule and Reading Assignments section of the syllabus. Other assignments to be given at the discretion of the instructor (including Internet site visits or group assignments) are due on the dates outlined in the reading section of this syllabus.

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND CLASS CONDUCT:
Regular and punctual class attendance is mandatory. Excessive absences may lead to a final grade reduction. Students are expected to come to class having read the assigned readings. Remember, in-class participation means taking an active part during class meetings. The best way for you to develop and sharpen your capacity to think is for you to be actively involved in class discussions. If you should miss a class, it is your responsibility to obtain lecture notes and assignments from your classmate. Students should avoid any form of class disturbance. Therefore, all cell phones or pagers must be on the off mode during class meetings and failure to comply will result in a five-point penalty. Friends or visitors can only come to class with the instructor's permission.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:
Students must obey the University policy on academic dishonesty. Therefore, **cheating or plagiarism in any form is unacceptable, including the presentation by one as his or her own work the work of another student.** The penalty for any type of plagiarism or cheating will be an “F” on the assignment or exam (see the *Undergraduate Catalog* for a detailed information on academic appeals process).

**WITHDRAWAL POLICY:**
Should you decide to drop this course at any time, you must do so by yourself. Failure to drop a course because of not passing or excessive absences will result in an “F” grade at the end of the semester. To receive a grade of “W” you must drop the class by Monday, October 29, 2007.

**ADA STATEMENT:**
The Prairie View A&M University and the Texas A&M University System are dedicated to providing the least restrictive learning environment for all students. PVAMU promotes equity in academic access through the implementation of reasonable accommodations as required by the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title V, Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA -- Public Law 101-336) which will enable students with disabilities to participate in and benefit from all post-secondary educational programs, courses and activities.

If you require reasonable accommodations because of a physical, mental, or learning disability, please notify the instructor of this course as soon as possible and preferably before the end of the first two weeks of class to arrange for reasonable accommodations or register with the Office of Disability Services (Evans Hall, Room 317 ☞ Phone 936-261-3581).

**COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS (POSC 1113)**

**Week 1**


**Week 2**

Aug 27-28: **Assignment #1:** Independent Study on current issues in American politics.  
*(No Class). This assignment requires you to go to the University Library and explore current political news at [http://www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) [Go to Politics News Section].

Attach one page (typed double-spaced) response to your computer printout on any topic that captured your attention and turn in class on Monday, August 27, 2007 for MWF sections, or Tuesday, August 28, 2007 for TR sections). **You must be able to explain why you selected any particular article at the site visited.**
Aug 29: General Student Assembly with President C. Wright [10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.]

*Foundations of Political Science & American Government*

Aug 29-31: The Unique American Democracy and the Individual Citizen

**Read** Chapter 1, pp. 3-9

*Historical, Cultural, Social and Economic Underpinnings*

**Week 3**

Sep 3: Labor Day Holiday (University Closed).

Sep 4-5: Themes of Book and Class – One Example of Citizen Participation

**Read** Chapter 1, pp. 9-23

Change and Stability in American Government

**Read** Chapter 1, pp. 23-31

Read What you can do on p. 11

Sep 6-7: The Social and Economic Milieu of Texas Politics

**Read** Chapter 15 (but will probably be 17 in custom)

**Week 4**

*Origins and Development of the United States Constitutional System*

Sep 10-12: U.S. Constitutional Government: Early Governance

**Read** Chapter 2, pp. 33 - 52

Sep 13-14: U.S. Constitution Continued

**Read** Chapter 2, pp. 53-60

U.S. Constitution: Ratification and Amendments

**Read** Chapter 2, pp. 60-76

Visit [http://www.constitution.org](http://www.constitution.org)

**Week 5**

*Origins and Development of the Texas Constitutional System*

Sep 17=19: The Constitutional Legacy

**Read** Chapter 16, pp. 639-650.

General Principles of the Texas Constitution: Constitutional Change and Adaptation

**Read** Chapter 16, pp. 650-665.

Sep 18: Test Review for Exam 1

[Tuesday for TR sections]

Sep 19: Test Review for Exam 1 [Wednesday for MWF sections] Sep 20: Exam 1 [Thursday for TR sections]

Sep 21: Exam 1 [Friday for MWF sections]

**Week 6**
U.S. Federal System

Sep 24-25: Why Divide Authority in the First Place: Read Chapter 3, pp. 79-85.

Week 7


Oct 4-5: Recent Trends in Federalism Read Chapter 3, pp. 96-109.

Read What you can do on p. 97

Local Government and Politics in Texas

Cities, Counties and Special Districts Read Chapter 21, pp. 817-849.

Sep 26-28: Cities, Counties and Special Districts Revisited

Week

Oct 9: Test Review for Exam 2 [Tuesday for TR sections]
Oct 10: Test Review for Exam 2 [Wednesday for MWF sections]
Oct 11: Midterm Exam [Exam 2, Thursday for TR sections]
Oct 12: Midterm Exam [Exam 2, Friday for MWF sections]

Civil Liberties and Individual Freedoms

Week 9


Week 10
Political Socialization and Public Opinion

Read Chapter 10, pp. 373-414.

Oct 24-26: Mass Media
The Politics of the Mass Media
Read Chapter 11, pp. 417-.

Read material from Your Turn on p. 452

Week 11
Oct 29: Mass Media Revisited
Oct 30: Test Review for Exam 3 [Tuesday for TR sections]
Oct 31: Test Review for Exam 3 [Wednesday for MWF sections]

Nov 1: Exam 3 [Thursday for TR sections]
Nov 2: Exam 3 [Friday for MWF sections]

Week 12

Political Parties
Nov 5-9: Read Chapter 15, pp. 579-617.

Interest Groups, Political Parties and Elections in Texas
Read Chapter 17, pp. 669-704 (Optional).

Week 13
Elections and Political Participation
Nov 12-14: Read Chapter 14, pp. 533-552.

Read “Separation of Powers and Democratic Equity in the 2000 Presidential Election” by Andrew I.E. Ewoh, Euel Elliott and James S. Guseh in Public Integrity, vol. 4, no. 3, (2002), pp. 225-238. This article is available on Reserve at the PVAMU Library (Optional).

Nov 15-16: Evolution of the Electoral Process
Read Chapter 14, pp. 552-574
Week 14

Interest Groups

Nov 19-21  From the Role of Interest Groups in the Policy Process to Influence of Interest Groups

Read Chapter 13, pp. 499-531.

Assignment # 2: Interest Group Activism

Read Race, Public Policy, and the Environmental Justice Activism by Andrew I.E. Ewoh, R-61 to R-72 in the Additional Readings Section.

Respond to questions to be provided by your instructor in class on Monday, November 19, 2007 for MWF sections, and Tuesday, November 20, 2007 for TR sections.

Nov 22-24: Thanksgiving Holiday (University Closed)

Week 15

Final Exam Review

Nov 26-27: Final Exam Review (Exam 4)

[Monday, November 26, 2007 for MWF sections]
[Tuesday, November 27, 2007 for TR sections]

Nov 28-29: Study Days for exams that will take place on November 30 to December 5, 2007.
Nov 30: Final Exam period [November 30 to December 5, 2007]

Week 16

Final Exam Period

Dec 3-5: Final Exam Period Continued

IMPORTANT DATES

- General Student Assembly with President George C. Wright, Wednesday, August 29, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. in the William J. “Billy Nicks Field House on campus. (Note: Classes Dismissed at 9: 30 a.m. and Classes Resume at 12: 00 p.m.
- Last day to withdraw from course(s) without record, Wednesday, September 5, 2007
- Courses dropped for nonpayment, Wednesday, September 5, 2007
- Graduation application deadline for Fall 2007, Saturday, September 8, 2007
- Last day to withdraw from course(s) with automatic "W" Ends, Monday, October 29, 2007
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• Final grades due for graduating candidates, Wednesday, December 5, 2007
• Commencement, Saturday, December 8, 2007
• Final Grades due for all students, Tuesday, December 11, 2007

*There will be a review for each scheduled examination. Also, the instructor reserves the right to modify course content without affecting the common exam agreement.