

Lone Star College-Montgomery

Lone Star College System

**COURSE
SYLLABUS
for
Government 2301
Spring 2008
*Distance Learning***

**American Government:
National, State and Local I**

Office Hours, Contact Information & Class Schedule

Contact Information:

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Office Hours:

MW, 10 am-noon.

TTH, 10-11:30 am.

And by appointment

eCampus Help Desk: (936) 273-7600 or (281) 765-7765

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Academic Division Info: Business & Social Sciences Division

Academic Dean: Becky Gustamante

Catalog Description

A survey of national, state, and local government including such topics as the US and Texas Constitutions; democratic theory; federalism; political culture, political socialization and public opinion; political participation and electoral behavior; political parties and interest groups; press; and local government. These phenomena are examined at the national, state and local levels with an emphasis placed on linkages with the

formulation of public policy. THIS COURSE SATISFIES STATE REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHER CERTIFICATION IN TEXAS.

Credit

3 Hours

PREREQUISITES

ENGL 0305 or 0316 and ENGL 0307 or 0326, or higher level course (ENGL 1301), or placement by testing.

ADA Statement

NHMCCD is dedicated to providing the least restrictive learning environment for all students. The college district 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) which will enable students with disabilities to participate in and benefit from all post-secondary educational programs and activities.

Purpose

This course, one of two introductory courses in US, state, and local government, has two objectives. The first is to teach you the nuts and bolts of U.S., state, and local government. Second, and more important, it seeks to develop the analytical skills needed to help make better sense of government and the subsequent impact government has in our daily lives.

Learning Outcomes

In completing this course, you will

- < Understand the meaning of power, politics, and political culture, and evaluate the role of government.
- < Identify the elements of democratic theory.
- < Identify the characteristics and development of the U.S. and Texas Constitutions.
- < Analyze the concept of federalism and its operation in the U.S.
- < 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 evaluate their role in the American political system.
- < Analyze the dynamics of the electoral process.
- < Assess the major functions of the media and its role in politics.

Course Requirements

As part of NHMCCD's E-Classroom curriculum, this course is designed to maximize flexibility while providing interaction between students and the instructor. This course IS NOT an independent studies course! We will be covering topics with group discussions to supplement the reading assignments, and there are regularly scheduled exam dates listed in the course schedule. This course IS set up to give students considerable flexibility over when you tackle your course assignments, take exams, participate in class discussion and, through the use of the Internet and WebCT, provides a convenient medium for completing the course requirements.

Class Assignments/Discussions

While you won't be physically attending class, you ARE **required to keep up with assigned readings, class assignments (25% of final grade) and participate in class discussions via WebCT (15% of final grade)**. I will be posting a new assignment and discussion topic each Monday morning, and students will need to turn in each assignment, and respond to each discussion topic, by the following Monday in order to receive credit. Each discussion posting should be roughly one to two paragraphs in length. I think you will enjoy (as well as learn from) the class dialogue!

Class Exams

During the semester there are three scheduled class exams. All exams will be administered online within our WebCT course environment. The exam dates are listed in the course calendar. Students who miss a scheduled exam due to extraordinary circumstances must contact me and provide a valid excuse within 24 hours (or as soon as physically able) following the scheduled exam. There is no makeup for the final exam.

Academic Dishonesty & Plagiarism:

I have ZERO tolerance for academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism. Any student found engaging in cheating or in plagiarism on any test or assignment WILL AUTOMATICALLY BE GIVEN A GRADE OF "0". Please ask if there are any questions on this important topic.

Required Materials

O'Connor, Karen, et. al. American Government: Continuity and Change, 2008 Texas edition

Exams and Grading:

Exam 1

20%

Exam 2	20%	Grading Scale:	A = 90-100
Final Exam	20%		B = 80-89
Class activities/assignments	25%		C = 70-79
Class participation	15%		D = 60-69
			F = 59 & below

Course Withdrawals:

Occasionally, students may find it necessary to drop a course during the semester. If you are having trouble completing the requirements for this course, please come talk to me before you decide to drop. There is always the possibility that special arrangements can be made to accommodate any temporary problems you may be facing. If you ultimately find it necessary to drop the course, please be advised that the last day to drop with a W is listed in the printed Spring schedule. Remember that *you must notify the Admissions Office or me if you wish to drop the class. It is your responsibility, not mine, to officially withdraw yourself from the course.* Students who stop attending class without officially withdrawing will receive an F.

Writing about Election 2008:

Since this is a presidential election year, some of your discussion assignments this semester will be replaced with short, reflective writings concerning the candidates and issues in the news.

For Weeks Three, Eight, and Twelve, you will be answering the following questions and posting your responses under the "Discussions" tab.

Week 3: Select a presidential campaign issue of particular interest to you. It can involve foreign policy (i.e., the war in Iraq), or domestic policy (i.e., tax relief, or the skyrocketing cost of health care). Investigate how, in terms of factual and opinion statements, one candidate discusses this issue, and write a 400-600 word report of your findings.

Week 8: Religion has been an important topic throughout the first months of this election year. In a recent study conducted by the First Amendment Center, sixty-five percent of Americans said that the founders of the U.S. intended that it be a Christian nation. (9/11/07, www.firstamendmentcenter.org). Is this majority view correct? Write a 400-600 word report on this topic--be sure to use quotes from significant historical figures and/or documents to support your answer.

Week 12: A poll by the Harvard University Institute of Politics in 2006 (www.iop.harvard.edu/pdfs/newsroom/fall_2006_release.pdf) showed that by a 3-1 margin young voters said the country was on the "wrong track." In that same year, 61% of voters in the 18-29 year old age bracket voted for Democratic party candidates in the midterm election.

Why do you think so many young people are pessimistic about the direction of the country? Do you believe that support for the Democratic party among young voters will be an important aspect of the 2008 election? Write a 400-600 word essay addressing these questions.

**More guidelines concerning these writing assignments will be posted under the "announcement" tab as their due dates approach.

Topics and Course Readings:

**Note that the instructor reserves the right to make changes to the following schedule as necessary. Any changes will be announced in class in a timely manner.

Week One	Democracy and American Politics	Ch. 1
Week Two	The US Constitution	Ch. 2
Week Three	The Texas Constitution	Ch. 21
Week Four	Federalism from the national perspective	Ch. 3

Test 1: Feb. 7-9

Week Five	Local Government	Ch. 22
Week Six	Public Opinion	Ch. 11
Week Seven	The Media	Ch. 15
Week Eight	Interest Groups	Ch. 16
Week Nine	Interest Groups in Texas	Ch. 26 (excerpts)

Test 2: March 20-22

Week 10	Political Parties at the National Level	Ch. 12
Week 11	Political Parties at the State/Local Level	Ch. 26 (excerpts)
Week 12	Voting and Elections	Ch. 13
Week 13	Campaigns	Ch. 14
Week 14	Political Participation	outside readings
Week 15	Review	

Final Exam: May 4-7