

## **GOVT 2305: Federal Government**

**Fall 2019**

**South Plains College, Department of Social Sciences**

Course Time & Location: **T/R 4:00, Levelland Campus: TA 215**

Instructor: Ryan Fitzgerald, M.A.

Office Location: TA 110 (Levelland) Office Hours: TBA

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**Course Description:** This course is a survey of fundamental principles of political science, including the American system of government and the origins and development of the constitutions of the United States. This course satisfies the Legislative requirements for teacher certification.

Credit: 3 Lecture Hours

Prerequisites: TSI compliance in Reading

### **Course Purpose:**

Government 2305, as taught at South Plains College, is a reading intensive course designed to acquaint the learner with the origin and development of the US Constitution, structure and powers of the national government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties and civil rights. This course meets the statutory requirements as set forth by the State of Texas.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students who have completed this course will be expected to (1) explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States (2) demonstrate knowledge of our federal system through being able to:

Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.

Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.

Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.

Analyze the election process.

Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Analyze issues and policies in U.S. Politics

**Foundational Component Area of Core Curriculum:** Social Science and ALL Undergraduate Degrees

### **Fundamental Component Areas (FCAs):**

Students will be expected to perform satisfactorily in four FCAs.

1. Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information by:

a. Generating and communicating ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information,

b. Gathering and assessing information relevant to a question,

c. Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information.

2. Communication – to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral or visual communication by: developing, interpreting, and expressing ideas through written, oral, or visual communication.

3. Social Responsibility Skills – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively I regional, national, and global communities by:
  - a. Demonstrating intercultural competence,
  - b. Identifying civic responsibility,
  - c. Engaging in regional, national, and global communities.
4. Personal Responsibility –to include the ability to connect choices, action, and consequences to ethical decision-making by:
  - a. Reading, understanding and affirming agreement and acceptance of principles, guidelines and requirements set forth in the “Statement of Personal Responsibility of Students” (Attached)
  - b. Evaluating choices and actions and relating consequences to personal decision-making
  - c. Accepting personal responsibility for decisions and actions taken or not taken

**Text** – The following text is optional, but recommended:

*Keeping the Republic, Brief, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition* by Christine Barbour and Gerald Wright

**Student Study Site** - <https://edge.sagepub.com/barbourbrief8e>

\*Previous editions of this book will work as well. However, page numbers and content may be slightly different.

**Grading:**

**Exams** – 240 pts (Three exams, each worth 80 pts; includes final exam – **FINAL IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE**)  
Traditionally this consists of several multiple choice questions, and a couple of short answer questions – format is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

**Writing Assignments** – 60 pts (Two writing assignments, each worth 30 points - these writing assignments are assigned for you to reflect on key concepts, theories and approaches discussed in class, while in return applying them to the real world, in an attempt to understand current political issues. )

Each writing assignment will be posted to Blackboard as a .PDF file which will include detailed instructions.

**Total Possible Points: 300**

**A: 300 – 270 B: 269 - 240 C: 239 - 210 D: 209 – 180 F: 179 & below...**

If you think that an error has been made in calculating your final grade, it’s your responsibility to provide me with documentation demonstrating that a calculation error has been made.

Late Work – Your work must be turned in *on time, at the beginning of class* if you hope for your submission to be considered for full credit. Turning in assignments after the agreed upon due date is circumstantial and may be accepted at the discretion of the instructor and will be assessed a penalty.

Extra Credit: There will be several opportunities to collect extra points throughout the semester, therefore no major extra credit opportunities (additional papers, essays or special assignments...) will be offered to or accepted from students at the end of the semester.

Lastly, every assignment, due date, and the allotted number of points for each assignment are tentative. Additionally, the class structure is purely provisional, and subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

**Attendance and Participation:** You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in a critical evaluation of each day's topic. Although participation & attendance do not make up a portion of the final grade for the course, both may prove to be a significant factor in determining borderline grades. For example, participation may be used as a criterion for a student whose final grade in the class is an 89.75% (B)...a student who participated often in class discussions may receive an A as the final course grade. Additionally, roll may be kept for SPC purposes.

Remember: Poor attendance normally results in a poor grade...

- Dire circumstances: If...upon reaching FOUR unexcused absences (at any time; for any reason) this will result in the student being dropped from the course, while receiving a final letter grade of an "F".
- Just FYI: "Whenever absences become excessive and, in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to [the excessive] absences, the student can be withdrawn [i.e., dropped] from the course..." – South Plains College Attendance Policy

Also, absences which are not "approved" or "excused" by the instructor are considered "unexcused" and will be documented as such. (Yes, I get to determine whether or not the reason for your absence is worth of an "excused" absence).

### **Classroom etiquette:**

Please demonstrate common courtesy to your fellow students by avoiding the following during class:

- Engaging in text messaging, Facebooking, and similar activities.
- Watching movies, television shows, and other media.
- Answering cell phone calls.

**IMPORTANT:** Please silence your cell phone, laptop, iPad, etc. If your electronic device goes off in class, you will be required to perform an embarrassing task (i.e. sing) in front of the class (hint: learn the words and motions to "I'm a Little Teapot")

**Additionally:** Referencing the rule above - "Please silence your cell phone, laptop..."

If you are texting, you will be required to sing something in front of the class. This rule also applies to students caught pursuing other entertaining alternatives on the world wide web, instead of focusing on yours truly....if I catch you on Facebook during class, you will get up and lead the entire class in a group sing-along.

If you engage in any of these activities you will be asked to leave the classroom for the day, and your behavior will be noted. Moreover, I reserve the right to eject any student who violates these or other rules, in addition to commonly accepted classroom norms (i.e., be on time, be polite to fellow classmates, etc.)

**Academic Integrity (Also, see Academic Catalog for Additional Information):**

Anything that borders on cheating, plagiarism, or affects the academic integrity of the assignment or of the course will be dealt with using the harshest measures possible –more than likely, you will receive zero credit for the assignment, and be dismissed from the class roster with a failing grade.

For the purposes of this class, plagiarism refers to offering the work of another as one's own, without proper acknowledgment. Therefore, any student who fails to give credit for quotations or essentially identical expression of material taken from books, encyclopedias, magazines and other reference works, or from the themes, reports or other writings of fellow student, is guilty of plagiarism.

Moreover, dishonesty of any kind on examinations or on written assignments, illegal possession of examinations, the use of unauthorized notes during an examination, obtaining information during an examination from the textbook or from the examination paper of another student, assisting others to cheat, alteration of grade records, illegal entry or unauthorized presence in an office will be considered cheating.

**It's simple:** If you copy something from an internet source (say, Wikipedia...) and present it as your own, that is cheating – 'copying', and it is against the rules.

SPC Policy regarding "Academic English": South Plains College requires all students to become proficient in "academic English," a form of English that is typically used in academic, professional, and business contexts. While slang, regional idioms, and informal kinds of self-expression are appropriate in some contexts, they are out of place in academic writing. Students in this course are expected to demonstrate proficiency in using the conventions of academic English in all written work. Therefore, I reserve the right to take off points on all written assignments do to use of bad grammar, and general negligence of one's duties to pursue proper written scholarship.

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in this class should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office at Levelland (Student Health & Wellness Office) 806-716-2577, Reese Center (Building 8) 806-716-4675, or Plainview Center (Main Office) 806-716-4302 or 806-296-9611.

**Title IX Pregnancy Accommodations Statement**

If you are pregnant, or have given birth within six months, Under Title IX you have a right to reasonable accommodations to help continue your education. To activate accommodations you must submit a Title IX pregnancy accommodations request, along with specific medical documentation, to the Director of Health and Wellness. Once approved, notification will be sent to the student and instructors. It is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to arrange accommodations. Contact Chris Straface, Director of Health and Wellness at 806-716-2362 or email [cstraface@southplainscollege.edu](mailto:cstraface@southplainscollege.edu) for assistance.

**Nondiscrimination Policy**

South Plains College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Vice President for Student Affairs, South Plains College, 1401 College Avenue, Box 5, Levelland, TX 79336. Phone number 806-716-2360.

**Diversity Statement**

In this class, the teacher will establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding and respecting multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world and about ourselves. By promoting diversity and intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

**Recording Devices**

The use of recording devices is prohibited.

**Amendment(s) to the Syllabus**

If need arises, the instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time. Students will be notified of such change(s) with adequate time to adapt.

## **Thematic Calendar**

(Subject to change, depending on course progress)  
(Book Chapters found in KTR)

### **Week 1 - 2**

Syllabus. What is Politics? What is Government? Who Governs (Ch. 1)

The Founding and the origins of the Constitution (Ch. 2)

### **Week 3 - 4**

Federalism & the role of State and Local Politics in the Federal System (Ch. 3)

### **Week 5 - 6**

Civil Liberties (Ch. 4)

Civil Rights (Ch. 5)

### **Week 7 - 8**

Political Parties (Ch. 11)

Voting & Elections (Ch. 12)

### **Week 9 - 10**

Public Opinion & the Media (Ch. 10 & Ch. 13)

Presidency (Ch. 7)

### **Week 11 - 12**

Bureaucracy (Ch. 8)

Interest Groups & Lobbying (Ch. 11)

### **Week 13**

Congress (Ch. 6)

*PAPER – Conclusion Due*

### **Week 14**

Legal System & Federal Courts (Ch. 9)

***\*NO CLASS Wednesday, November 27<sup>th</sup> – Friday, November 29<sup>th</sup>***

**Exam 3 (Final Exam): TBA**

Notifications for Unforeseen Course Cancellations will be posted in Blackboard