Syllabus for POLS 1333 (Honors)
American Government I Politics
Fall 2009

Course: POLS 1333 American Government I (Honors)

Class: T & R 9:30–10:50, DB 121

Lecturer: Steve Garrison, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: M & W 10-12:00, W 4:30-5:30 and T & R 8:00-9:30 & 11:00-12:20 and by appointment

American Government I POLS 1333 This course introduces students to the political system of the United States and the state of Texas. In this course we will study the role of democracy in government; how history has influenced the state and federal constitutions; the impact of federalism; elections, the media, political parties; public opinion and interest groups.


In addition to text books there are a series of readings for our discussions that I have placed in blackboard/webct so that you can easily access them. To access blackboard go to http://distance.mwsu.edu/webct.asp and login using your webworld username and password.

Expectations, Examinations, and Grading: Students are expected to attend class. Lectures will not reproduce the texts. During lectures, students are expected to behave in an adult fashion: i.e. no note passing, punching, kissing, kicking or other juvenile behavior. Also, please turn cellular phones off during class. Most importantly, there are absolutely no firearms in the classroom. There will be a midterm examination and a final exam. The format of each is short answer questions and
identification of key terms. The highest grading scale will be 90 (A), 80 (B), 70 (C), and 60 (D). If for any reason you should have to miss a test or assignment you must inform the instructor prior to the time of the test and proper documentation is required for any makeup test. The privilege of additional work will not be granted.

Since this is an honors course students will also complete a research project. This project is designed to allow students to pursue a political issue relating to their area of study or interest. Additional requirements and details will be presented at the beginning of the course, including due dates for the topic and certain sections of the paper. In addition to the exams students will be graded on periodic quizzes which are designed to prepare students for the examinations. Throughout the semester we will devote several class periods to discussion of some contemporary political events. In order to engage in thoughtful discussions it is imperative that students begin paying attention to some reliable news source, such as National Public Radio, NewsHour with Jim Lehrer (PBS), CNN, FOXNEWS, MSNBC, The New York Times, USA Today, Dallas Morning News, Austin American Statesman or any variety of Internet news sources. Separate discussion readings will be posted in WEBCT to guide these discussions. Students are expected to participate in classroom discussion and will be graded on their participation.

Grading:

- Midterm Examination: 25%
- Final Exam: 25%
- Research Project: 30%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Classroom Participation: 10%

Disability Policy: Any student in this course who has a disability that may preclude demonstrating fully his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible. We will discuss the accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate education.

Plagiarism: I take plagiarism very seriously and will check your work. By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a “limited right” in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The “limited right” shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student’s work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, for educational purposes. The University’s minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a failure of assignment. Cheating or plagiarism can lead to expulsion from the university. If you have questions about original work, please consult the Student Handbook Code of Student Conduct section 10.

Calendar: The following course schedule represents the schedule of readings and topics for the
course. The reading assignments are located under the date and topic. Student’s should read the assigned readings prior to class. The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule.

Note: the following key applies to the reading schedule.
KH = Keith and Hagg. *Texas Politics and Government: Roots and Reform*

Course Schedule

**August 23: Introduction?**
- No Readings

**August 25: Why do we need government? & The Process of Institutional Design**
- Syllabus

**Section I: Foundations of American Politics**

**August 30, Sept. 1 and 6: Declaration of Independence and Constitutional Convention**
- GP Chapter 1, Chapter 2 pages 25-33, and A3-A4.

**September 8 and 13: U.S. Constitution**

**September 15 and 20: Federalism**
- GP Chapter 3.
September 22: Discussion I

- Discussion I Readings (WebCT).

September 27: Exam I

- Study guide One.

Sept. 29 and October 4: Texas History and Constitution

- KH Chapter 1 and 2.

Section II: Societal Influences on American Politics

October 6 and 11: Public Opinion

- GP Chapter Five

October 13: Discussion II

- Discussion II Readings (WebCT).

October 18 and 20: Media

- GP Chapter Six.

October 25: Discussion III

- Discussion III Readings (WebCT).
October 27: Exam I

- Study Guide II

November 1 and 3: Interest Groups

- GP Chapter Seven.

November 8: Discussion IV

- Discussion III Readings (WebCT).

November 10 and 15: U.S. and Texas Political Parties

- GP Chapter Nine and KH Chapter Three.

November 17: Research Paper Workshop

- Read and comment on group members papers.

Section III: Local Politics

November 22: Local Texas Government

- KH Chapter Seven

November 24: Thanksgiving Break

- no class
November 29: Local Texas Government (Cont.)
  
  - KH Chapter Seven

December 1: Discussion V

  - Discussion V Readings (WebCT).
  - Final papers due

Final Exam

December 6, Tuesday (8:00-10:00): Final Exam

  - Study Guide III.