**POLS 1333-205: AMERICAN AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT I**
Midwestern State University
Spring 2012
12:30 PM – 1:50 PM
PY 209

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Office Hours:  
Monday/Wednesday 12-3, Tuesday/Thursday 11-12:30, and Tuesday 2-3

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

Political Science 1333 is an introductory course in American and Texas government and politics that focuses on how the U.S. government and Texas government work and why they work the way that they do. The purpose of this course is to assist you in developing a better understanding of the government institutions and the political processes that you will interact with as citizens. This course is also designed to provide you with analytical tools so that you can understand and meaningfully participate in American and Texas politics throughout your life. This course will be challenging and critical thinking about Texas and American government will be part of everything that we do. The syllabus provides a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary.

**REQUIRED TEXT:**


**BREAKDOWN OF GRADES:**

- 30% Exam 1
- 30% Exam 2
- 30% Final Exam
- 10% Participation and Ancillary Work  
*This category includes participation, quizzes, in-class writing, homework, and other assignments.*

**GRADING:**
On each quiz, or exam, or assignment points will be assigned according to the following scale:

A: 90-100
B: 80-89
C: 70-79
D: 60-69
F: 0-59

CLASS POLICIES -- POTENTIAL PITFALLS
Political Science 1333 is, on many levels, a challenging course. You will need to put forth quite a bit of effort to reach your goals in the class, so I would suggest steering clear of some easily avoidable problems:

- **Weak Attendance and Tardiness** – You should attend class. Students who do not attend class often have difficulty with the course and receive lower grades. Attendance will not be formally taken at each class. However, I will periodically take attendance at the very beginning of class and will only count those in attendance at that time. Any attendance taken will be noted in Participation, Ancillary Classwork and quizzes. If you do miss class, you are responsible for all material missed. The only excused absences will be those accepted by the university, in accordance with the handbook.

- **Quizzes**: From time to time, there may be a “pop” quiz given in class covering recent lecture and textbook material. These encourage attendance and help make sure people are keeping up with reading and lecture material. If you are absent for a quiz and do not have a university-approved excuse, you will be given a ZERO on the quiz.

- **Late Work** – All assignments will lose one-third of a letter grade (approximately 4 points) for each day they are late. For example, a B+ paper that is two days late will be marked down to a C+. This count begins immediately after assignments have been collected. Classwork cannot be made up.

- **Make-up Exams** – Students are expected to be present for all exams on the dates which the class will take them. If a student has a university-approved excuse and the instructor is notified IN WRITING, PRIOR to the examination, arrangements for a make-up exam will be made. If a student fails to notify the instructor, the student will receive a zero for the exam. Only under extraordinary circumstances can a student take an exam early. Only university-approved excuses, death in the family, or illness be considered for taking an exam early. The request for an early exam must be made IN WRITING.

- **Plagiarism and academic dishonesty** – I have NO TOLERANCE for plagiarism or cheating of any kind, though I do have extensive experience identifying and proving academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty on exams, quizzes and assignments will result in a ZERO on the quiz, assignment, and the student or students in question may receive an F in the course and/or be turned over to the University for sanction.

CLASS POLICIES -- PROFESSIONALISM AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT:
We will have a great deal of discussion throughout the course, sometimes of controversial topics. A classroom thrives on mutual respect. I expect considerate behavior from each of you, as well as for you to be respectful of your classmates, in order to make the most of your time in
class. Most situations that would fall into this discussion are simple common sense; below, though, are a few of the more prevalent distractions, and some:

- Do not read non-class materials during class time (novels, the newspaper, textbooks for other classes, etc.) and do not be otherwise distracting. Talking, passing notes, etc during lecture or while other students are asking or answering questions. In other words, you are expected to behave like responsible adults in class. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated and will result on removal from the class.
- Please turn off cellular phones, pagers, extraneous computer programs, or any other noisy/disturbing device. Anything that might happen during class will be waiting for you when class is over. No cell phones or electronic devices may be used during the exam. Students observed looking at cell phones or other similar electronic devices during quizzes or exams will receive an automatic zero on that exam or quiz.
- Participation is a graded component of the course, but keep in mind that you should be considerate of other students when you are participating. Stay on topic and think about what you are saying. Also, do no monopolize the conversation; you can learn quite a bit from your classmates.
- At all times, adopt a tone that is respectful of your classmates’ racial, ethnic, and class backgrounds; religious and political beliefs; sexual orientations; and gender. The University will not tolerate verbal or written abuse. Disrespectful behavior towards the instructor or fellow classmates will not be tolerated and will result in removal from the course.
- Similarly, the University takes a very strict view on matters of academic integrity, especially in cases involving plagiarism and illegitimate assistance. The best academic communities consist of students and teachers who are at all times considerate and respectful of the contributions and work of others. Further details regarding these issues please consult the student handbook.
- Discussion of Grades: If you have questions about your grades, please make an appointment to discuss it with me. Discussion of grades is a matter between the instructor and the student. This may only be done in my office during my office hours or a pre-arranged appointment. I will not discuss an individual student’s grade in the classroom, hallway, or via email. If the grading concern is in regard to a fellow student receiving more points for an answer, both students must be present at the grade discussion appointment.
- Communication: The best way to reach me outside of class is to visit me during my office hours or contact me via email. My email address is listed on the first page of the syllabus. When emailing me, if you would like a response, you must include your name, a subject line, the name of the course in which you are enrolled, and your question. Please use full sentences and not texting language. During the week, I will usually respond within 24 hours, however, it may be 48 during the weekend.

**ACCOMMODATIONS:**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Office of Disability Services. Please be sure contact me privately regarding your specific needs. If you have not yet registered and need to do so, please contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible.
CLASS OUTLINE:
The following is a tentative outline of the semester. Students will be notified of any changes.

Week 1:
Tuesday, January 17: Introduction to Course
Thursday, January 19: Chapter 1: American Political Culture

Week 2: January 24 and 26
Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution

Week 3: January 31
Chapter 3: Federalism

Week 3-4: February 2 and 7
Chapter 6: Public Opinion

Week 4-5: February 9 and 14
Chapter 7: The Media

Film excerpts: All the President’s Men

Exam I: Thursday, February 16

Week 6: February 21 and February 23
Chapter 8: Political Participation and Voting

Week 7: February 28 and March 1
Chapter 9: Political Parties

Week 8: March 6 and 8
Chapter 10: Campaigns and Elections

Week 9-10: March 20, 22 and 27
Chapter 11: Groups and Interests

Exam II: Thursday, March 29

Week 11: April 3 and 5
Chapter 19: The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas

Week 12: April 10 and 12
Chapter 20: The Texas Constitution

Week 13: April 17 and April 19
Chapter 21: Parties and Elections in Texas
Film: *Last Man Standing: Politics, Texas Style*, 2004

**Week 14:** April 24 and 26  
Chapter 22: Interest Groups, Lobbying and Lobbyists

**Week 15:** May 1 and May 3  
Chapter 26: Local Government

**Final Exam:** Tuesday, May 8, 1:00 – 3:00 PM