

US AND TEXAS GOVERNMENT
Summer 1 2008

POL261.01
MWF: 8:00-10:00

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Office Hours: M-F 7:30-8:00am, 10:00am-11:00pm, by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This purpose of this course is to introduce students to the dynamics of American and Texas government. In the first section of the course we will discuss the philosophical and cultural foundations of the American and Texas political systems. In the next section of the course we will discuss the political behavior of individuals and of groups. In the third section of the course we will discuss the constitutional and legal foundations of the government. In the fourth section of the course we will discuss the major political institutions: the executive branch, the legislative branch, and the judicial branch. Because this is an election year, we will devote a substantial portion of the course to discussing the nature of and implications for elections at the state and national level. At the end of this course, students should be equipped with an understanding of the processes, structures, behaviors, and dynamics of American and Texas politics sufficient for analyzing political phenomena at the national and state level.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: The objectives for students include:

- Building a knowledge base regarding US and Texas government
- Learning fundamental principles, theories, approaches in US and Texas government
- Learning how to analyze and evaluate arguments

COURSE READINGS:

Kenneth Janda, et. al. THE CHALLENGE OF DEMOCRACY with PRACTICING TEXAS POLITICS, 9th edition. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2008.

Additional Readings posted on Blackboard.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Exams: There will be four exams. They will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and matching questions. You will need a Scantron 882 for each exam. The exams will cover all reading assignments, videos, and lectures. The exams will be administered on Fridays – June 6th, 13th, 20th, and 27th. The exams are not comprehensive.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Exam I:	10%
Exam II:	30%
Exam III:	30%
Exam IV:	30%

Students earning 90-100% will earn an A, 80-89% will earn a B, 70-79% will earn a C, 60-69% will earn a D, and any grade below 60% will earn an F.

No extra credit will be given. Grades will not be curved. Students should not ask to have their grades raised in order to avoid suspension, loss of scholarship, financial aid, to avoid the wrath of their parents, etc. Grades are not negotiable; begging will not help.

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Make Up Exams: Make up exams will be given to students who miss an exam because of illness, a death in the family, or an official university activity. You must notify me immediately if you miss an exam. Make up exams will be given at the convenience of the faculty member. Make up exams will consist of essay questions only.

Attendance: After three unexcused absences, I reserve the right to deduct one point from the final grade for each additional unexcused absence.

Academic Dishonesty: Students found cheating on an exam will receive an F for the course. Cheating includes using any unauthorized material, notes, or information to assist in answering test questions as well as obtaining answers to exam questions from others. Again, you will receive an F for the course for this misconduct.

Classroom Conduct: Turn off your cell phones. Do not plan to get up in the middle of class and leave. If you find you must leave for any reason, do not re-enter the classroom. Once you leave, even for a brief moment, you may not come back in to class. Do not talk to each other while I am talking. I will ask you to leave if you disrupt the class.