

Houston Community College System Government

GOVT 2305 - American National Government

Fall Semester, 2015

CRN#72569 Tuesdays/Thursdays, 12:30- 2PM; Felix Fraga Campus (FFAC), Room 348

3 hour lecture course/48 hours per semester/ 16 weeks

Instructor: Belinda S. Wilson, M.A.

Office Hours: Before or after class and by appointment. My email address is

Belinda.wilson1@hccs.edu

Course Description This is an introductory survey of the government and politics of the United States. Topics include: the origins of democracy in America; the Constitution of the United States; institutions of the United States government; federalism; interest groups; political parties; political socialization and voting behavior; the electoral system; the media and public opinion; civil liberties and civil rights; and public policy. Upon completion of this course, students should have a basic understanding of:

1. The historical evolution of democracy in America, the creation of the Constitution and the system of government created by it.
2. The process of political socialization and the role of the media and public opinion in the American political system.
3. The function of political parties and interest groups in the political system and their impact on government.
4. The presidential nomination process and the function of the electoral college in presidential elections.
5. The evolution of civil liberties and the advancement of civil rights in the United States.
6. The range of public policy issues confronting the national government today and how policy decisions are influenced by the political environment.

Course Prerequisites: Must be placed into college-level reading and college-level writing.

Course Goal: Have students successfully complete the course with the ability to think critically about theories, history, and policies that would generate interest to continue future learning about government and the ability to participate as an active citizen in American democracy.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Identify and evaluate information sources for political news, data and opinion;
2. Analyze the effects of the historical, social, political, economic, cultural and global forces on government;
3. Understand the institutions of American national government and how they function;
4. Recognize and assume the responsibilities of citizenship by developing critical thinking skills, engaging in public discourse and by obtaining accurate and objective information through the news media.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. Examine the historical basis of the United States Constitution and the system of government established by it.
2. Understand the importance of the articles and amendments of the Constitution of the United States.
3. Understand how the U.S. system of federalism distributes power between the national government and state governments.
4. Analyze the effects of political socialization, political ideology, and public opinion on American political behavior.
5. Understand the role of the media in politics and government.
6. Discover the impact of interest groups and political parties on the conduct and outcome of elections and the functioning of American government.
7. Recognize the role played by “ordinary” citizens in American politics.
8. Understand the workings of the electoral system including the Electoral College, the incumbency advantage and how campaign financing affects the outcome of elections.

Core Curriculum Statement and Other Standards

Credit: 3 (3 lecture)

This is a core curriculum course. Government 2305 is one of the two courses designed to introduce students to the politics of national, state, and local government. Government 2305 and 2306 are fully transferable to other colleges and universities.

Course Outline: *The following course assignments fulfill the reading, listening, speaking, writing, computer literacy, and critical thinking components required by the core curriculums.*

It is the student’s responsibility to read the text, *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government*, Third Edition, according to the dates shown below.

UNIT I

Week 1

August 25 Introduction: Course overview and requirements

August 27 Chapter 1: Introduction to American Politics

Week 2

September 1 Continue chapter 1; **movie: Patriocracy**

September 3 Complete chapter 1

Week 3

September 8 Chapter 2: The Constitution

September 10 Complete chapter 2

Week 4

September 15 Chapter 3: Federalism

September 17 Complete chapter 3; review for Unit I

Week 5

September 22 EXAM I

UNIT II

September 24 Chapter 4: Civil Liberties

Week 6

September 29 **Movie:** *Gideon's Trumpet*

October 1 Complete movie; complete chapter 4

Week 7

October 6 Chapter 15: The Judiciary

October 8 Complete Chapter 15

Week 8

October 13 Chapter 5: Civil Rights

October 15 Complete Chapter 5

Week 9

October 20 **Exam II**

Unit III

October 22 Chapter 8: Interest Groups: Video: *Gunned Down: the Power of the NRA*

Week 10

October 27 Continue Chapter 8

October 29 Chapter 9: Political Parties

Week 11

November 3 Chapter 10: Elections; Video: *Electoral Dysfunction*

November 5 Complete chapter 10

Week 12

November 10 Chapter 11: Voting

November 12 **Exam III**

UNIT IV

Week 13

November 17 Chapter 12: Congress

November 19 Complete Chapter 12

Week 14

November 24 Chapter 13: The Presidency

November 26 **Thanksgiving Holiday!**

Week 15

December 1 Chapter 16: Economic, Domestic and Foreign Policy

December 3 Complete Chapter 16

Week 16

December 8 **No class**

December 10 **FINAL EXAM**

**The Final Exam for this class will be on Thursday, December 10 at 12 noon.
Please see me if you have any conflicts with the final exam schedule.**

In order to best suit the needs of the class, the information on this syllabus is subject to change. I will notify you if any changes occur.

Instructional Methods

The format of this course is basically lecture-oriented with class discussion. This means that coursework is conducted in a traditional classroom environment with instructor led discussion and inquiry by students. Students are expected to come to class having read the material assigned for that day in order to be able to contribute to discussions. Class discussions are liveliest and most beneficial when students utilize critical thinking skills as they learn the material in order to bring their own reactions and ideas to share with the class. This syllabus was constructed with the goal of dividing up the textbook material into manageable segments so that the reading does not become overwhelming. From time to time there may also be online reading assignments; you will be notified of these in advance.

The Student's responsibility for this class

As an instructor, my goal is for students to successfully complete the course and retain and utilize the information taught. While it my responsibility to provide you with the information in a manner that utilizes strategies that engage the student in an active learning environment, it is your responsibility to put forth your best effort to complete the required assignments and actively engage yourself in class every time we meet. **Attending class regularly is essential.**

Student Assessment

Students' performance in this course will be assessed via four exams and one written assignment. Values toward the total course grade for each of these is as follows:

Exam I – 20%

Exam II – 20%

Exam III – 20%

Exam IV – 20%

Written Assignment – 20%

Additionally, there may be optional bonus assignments that will be assigned during the course of the semester.

Grading Scale:

90 to 100% - A

80 to 89% - B

70 to 79% - C

60 to 69% - D

59% and below – F

There are NO make-up exams. Students who have missed an exam will not be allowed to take it at a later date. However, if you have a medical reason, or a valid personal/family emergency please notify the instructor with proper documentation to discuss an alternative.

Instructional Materials:

Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government, Third Edition. John G. Geer, et.al. Cengage Learning. 2014. Boston, MA. Various online articles of current interest may be assigned during the semester. We also will be watching various documentary films and videos relevant to each unit.

ADA Statement: Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Disability Services Office at the respective college at the beginning of each semester. Faculty is authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office. To contact the ADA counselor at Southeast College, call (713) 718-7218.

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly. Students are responsible for materials covered during their absences. Although it is the responsibility of the student to officially withdraw from the course, a student may be dropped from the course for reasons stated in the Policy Regarding W, F and I section of the syllabus. ***The last day for administrative and student withdrawals is Friday October 30, 2015, by 4:30 P.M. Failure of a student to withdraw officially will result in the student receiving a grade of "F" in the course.***

Student Services Policies

POLICY REGARDING "W," "F," AND "I":

Withdrawal from a Course ("W")

It is your responsibility to officially withdraw from a class and prevent an "F" from appearing on your transcript. When considering withdrawal from a course, remember the following information:

- If you withdraw before the Official Date of Record, no grade is given and your transcript reflects no record of the course.
- A "W" (indicating withdrawal) appears on your transcript if you drop a course after the Official Date of Record and before the final deadline.
- College policy requires instructors to write "never attended" on the official roll sheet next to the names of those students who do not attend class by the Official Date of Record. If you do not attend class before the Official Date of Record, the college may automatically drop you from the course.
- A "W" (withdrawal) may negatively impact your ability to receive financial aid or your visa status if you are an international student.
- Students who repeat a course three or more times face additional tuition/fee increases at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities. If you are considering course withdrawal because you are not earning passing grades, confer with your instructor/counselor as early as possible about your study habits, reading and writing homework, test-taking skills, attendance, course participation, and opportunities for tutoring or other assistance that might be available.
- The Texas Legislature passed a law limiting first time entering freshmen to no more than **SIX** total course withdrawals throughout their educational career in obtaining a baccalaureate degree. This policy is effective beginning with the Fall 2007 semester. There may be future penalties imposed.
- If you **MUST** withdraw, visit with your instructor, a counselor or online student services associate prior to withdrawing (dropping) the class **BEFORE** the "Last Day for Administrative/Student Withdrawals" posted in the HCC Schedule of Classes. Instructors are no longer allowed to process a "W" on their final grades—**YOU** are responsible for processing the paperwork in a timely manner.

Failure of a Course ("F")

You will receive an "F" in this class if your grade is less than 60%. Receiving an "F" (failure) may negatively impact your ability to receive financial aid. It is **YOUR** responsibility to submit college level quality work in a timely fashion or to withdraw yourself from the course by the deadline if you cannot complete your work satisfactorily.

Incomplete ("I")

You will receive an "I" (incomplete) **only** in the event of a documented emergency situation that prevents you from completing the last assignment, such as the final exam. You must speak with your instructor as soon as possible in the event of such an emergency to arrange a course completion schedule. If you receive an "I," you must arrange with the instructor to complete the course work before the end of the next long semester. After that deadline, the "I" becomes an "I/F." All "I" designations must be changed to grades prior to graduation. The changed grade will appear on your record as "I/Grade" (ex: "I/B").

Student Course Reinstatement Policy

Students have a responsibility to arrange payment for their classes when they register, either through cash, credit card, financial aid, or the installment plan. Faculty members have a responsibility to check their class rolls regularly, especially during the early weeks of a term, and reconcile the official class roll to ensure that no one is attending class whose name does not appear on it. Students who are dropped from their courses for nonpayment of tuition and fees who request reinstatement after the official date of record payment of tuition and fees who request reinstatement after the official date of record (OE Date) can be reinstated by making payment in full and paying an additional \$75 per course reinstatement fee. A student requesting reinstatement should present the registrar with a completed Enrollment Authorization Form with the signature of the instructor, department chair, or dean who should verify that the student has been regularly attending class. Students who are reinstated are responsible for all course policies and procedures, including attendance requirements. A dean may waive the reinstatement fee upon determination that the student was dropped because of a college error. The dean should note the nature of the error in a memo to the registrar with appropriate documentation.

HCC Student Course Grade Appeal Procedure

Any student who takes issue with the course or how it is taught should first express his or her specific concerns to the instructor. Any challenges to the final course grade are governed by the HCC Student Course Grade Appeal Procedure. The following statements are excerpts from the Procedure:

(<http://www.hccs.edu/hccs/current-students/student-rights-policies-procedures>)

"A student has a right to appeal a grade that the student believes was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was based on bias, caprice, or computational or clerical error."

- "Faculty members have a right to have the grades they assign upheld unless it is clearly demonstrated that a grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was based on bias, caprice, or computational or clerical error."
- "The student has the burden of proof. The student must present clear evidence that a grade was contrary to procedures as specified in the course syllabus or was based on bias, caprice, or computational or clerical error."

NOTICE OF STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITY TO READ THE HCC *STUDENT*

HANDBOOK: Please refer to the HCC Student Handbook

(<http://www.hccs.edu/students/handbook/HandbookHome2.html>) for information about students' rights and responsibilities. It is your responsibility to be aware of the information provided in this document.

Scholastic Dishonesty: (as per Faculty Handbook located on the HCCS website)

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion.

Cheating on a test includes: - Copying from another student's test paper; - Using materials during a test not authorized by the person giving the test; - Collaborating with another student during a test without authority; - Knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an un-administered test; Bribing another person to obtain a test that is to be administered.

Plagiarism means the appropriation of another's work and the unacknowledged incorporation of that work in one's own written work for credit.

Collusion means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work offered for credit. In essence, there will be no sharing of answers on exams and the written assignment.

In addition, students must present their original work on all assignments and *document all outside sources*. Plagiarism is not allowed. Cheating will result in a grade of "F" in the course, as well as disciplinary actions.

Expectations of Civil Conduct

Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally in their communication with the instructor, their classmates, and college staff and administration. Behavior inappropriate to the collegiate setting (including but not limited to abusive/derogatory/threatening/harassing language directed at the instructor or towards other students, staff or administrators) will not be tolerated, and may result in removal from the course if severe and/or repeated.

EGLS3 – Evaluation for Greater Learning Student Survey System

At Houston Community College, professors believe that thoughtful student feedback is necessary to improve teaching and learning. During a designated time, you will be asked to answer a short online survey of research-based questions related to instruction. The anonymous results of the survey will be made available to your professors and division chairs for continual improvement of instruction. Look for the survey as part of the Houston Community College Student System online near the end of the term.