

# AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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Course Title & Course Number:	<b>GOVT 2305: American Government: Federal Constitution &amp; Topics</b>
Credit Hours	<b>3</b>
Semester and Year:	<b>Spring 2014 (Regular Term)</b>
Class Days and Times:	<b>Monday &amp; Wednesday (9:30-11:00am)</b>
CRN Number	<b>81477</b>
Location of Class:	<b>ALIEF B110</b>
Instructor:	<b>Steven N. Tran</b>
Office Hours:	<b>By Appointment</b>
E-mail:	<b><a href="mailto:steven.tran@hccs.edu">steven.tran@hccs.edu</a> (Preferred form of Communication)</b>

## **Purpose of the Course:**

Government 2305 is one of two courses designed to introduce students to the study of the origin and development of the U.S. 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. The course goals are to develop an understanding of the institutions and political processes of the American political system; encourage critical thinking about political events; and introduce students to the discipline of Political Science and how political scientists study politics scientifically. This course is fully transferable to all Texas State colleges and universities.

## **Required Text:**

Bianco, William T. & David T. Cannon (2013) *American Politics Today, 3<sup>rd</sup> Essentials Edition*. W. W. Norton and Company.

## **Recommended:**

Study Guides are available on-line to accompany the required texts. Students are also encouraged to follow current political events by reading newspapers and following media news reports.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, each student will be able to:

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.

6. Analyze the election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

### **Grades**

#### **EXAMS (50 POINTS EACH; 150 POINTS TOTAL):**

Three exams will be administered during the semester. Though each exam should cover primarily assigned material from the text, it certainly will be to your benefit to keep up with the assigned chapter readings. The exams should not be difficult and you should have no problems doing well on the exam provided that you attend every class, take thorough notes, and keep up with the assigned readings.

Students are expected to arrive on time at the beginning of class on the day of the exam. Once the first test-taker turns in his exam, students arriving afterwards will NOT be allowed to take that test. *Students are required to supply their own no. 2 pencil and Scantron Form 882.*

I STRONGLY recommend that you make yourself available for the exam date. However, should you have to miss either the first or second exam for any reason, you may take a makeup exam on August 2, 2013. Students who miss BOTH Exams 1 and 2 will be allowed to make up only one of the two exams.

The makeup option does NOT apply towards Exam 3, as the makeup exam date is scheduled before Exam 3's date. Students who miss the third exam will have VERY limited, if any opportunity to makeup Exam 3 given its proximity towards the end of the semester. Expect the makeup exam to be at least subtly different from the originally scheduled exam, but not necessarily more difficult. Typically, students do not perform as well on the makeup.

#### **IN-CLASS QUIZZES (7 POINTS PER QUIZ, 40 POINTS TOTAL)**

Expect there to be about six quizzes assigned throughout the course. Simply put, while there may be classes in which no quiz is given, it is generally safe to assume there will be quizzes every day. These quizzes will be mostly short answer format and are intended to encourage students to keep up with assigned readings and lectures. Quizzes will be worth around 7 points each and, when combined, should sum up to a maximum possibility of 40 points. All quizzes are open note and textbook. *There will be absolutely NO makeups to any missed quizzes. NO EXCEPTIONS!!!*

#### **TWO PAPER ASSIGNMENTS (30 POINTS PER ESSAY, 60 POINTS TOTAL):**

You will also be given two short paper assignments. More information concerning the specific assignment themselves will be provided later during this term as the course progresses. It is the student's responsibility to remain up to speed once details concerning these assignments become available to the class.

Papers are required to be submitted BOTH in class AND electronically through Eagle Online. To submit your paper through Eagle Online, students will need to either look for the "Turnitin Activities" tab found under the "Assignments" tab found on the left side of your screen or on "Paper Assignments" found somewhere near the middle of your screen (you may have to scroll down to see the link). Papers not submitted to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) by weekend following the paper deadline WILL NOT be graded.

When submitted to Eagle Online, your paper will also be submitted to [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com), an antiplagiarism tool many professors use to check for plagiarism. Papers in which [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) reports at least 20% of which are from uncited and/or improperly outside sources also WILL NOT be graded.

**EXTRA CREDIT**

Any and all extra credit opportunities to improve your grade, which may include but are not limited to Service Learning, will be announced **ONLY** in class. Points awarded will be calculated in your overall grade in addition to points earned from quizzes, assignments, and exams at the end of the semester. No other extra credit chances will be provided beyond what I announce in class.

**LETTER GRADE ASSIGNMENT:**

To calculate your grade, simply add up your top three exam scores and both of your written assignments. You can earn a maximum of 250 points.

<b>Course Assignments</b>	<b>Points for Each Assignment</b>
EXAM 1	50 POINTS
EXAM 2	50 POINTS
<i>EXAM 3</i>	50 POINTS
<i>QUIZZES</i>	40 POINTS
<i>PAPER 1</i>	30 POINTS
<i>PAPER 2</i>	30 POINTS
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>250 POINTS</b>

After adding up all the necessary grades, match your total number with the appropriate letter grade as follows below.

<b>Total Points</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
225-250	A
200-224	B
175-199	C
150-174	D
0-149	F

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

While you should expect attendance to be taken everyday, aside from missing any quizzes and/or in-class assignments administered that day, there will be no other direct penalty for being absent. However, much of the material tested over will consist of information I present in class. It is the student's responsibility to obtain lecture notes from other students should they miss a class. My personal lecture notes will not be made available to students.

**CLASS PARTICIPATION POLICY:**

There is no penalty for not participating in class discussions, but I will discuss current events and politics and you are welcome to add to these political discussions. There is also no such thing as a dumb

question. Please feel free to ask any question and engage in political discussions relevant to the class. Please also be cognizant that there are fellow students who may not necessarily agree with your point of view. So please engage in any and all discussions in a civil, mature manner.

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE POLICY:**

Disruptive behavior/ activities, which interfere with teaching and /or learning will not be tolerated, and may result in an administrative withdrawal without refund. At a minimum, such disruption may result in the student in question being asked to leave the classroom and not be allowed back until a sincere, contrite apology is forthcoming.

While I will be happy to discuss any grade inquiries and concerns with students especially on graded written assignments, I will not discuss grades individually until AT LEAST 24 hours after I hand back these assignments. Patience is virtue.

**USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES:**

Students with disabilities who need to use a recording device as a reasonable accommodation should contact the Office for Students with Disabilities for information regarding reasonable accommodations.

Laptop computers are permitted for note-taking purposes on a conditional basis. However, if it is clear to me that laptops become a source of disruption at any point during the semester, I reserve the right to prohibit any and all laptop use.

**Student Notification Statements:**

**FINAL GRADE OF FX:** Students who stop attending class and do not withdraw themselves prior to the withdrawal deadline may either be dropped by their professor for excessive absences or be assigned the final grade of "FX" at the end of the semester. Students who stop attending classes will receive a grade of "FX", compared to an earned grade of "F" which is due to poor performance. Logging into a DE course without active participation is seen as non-attending. Please note that HCC will not disperse financial aid funding for students who have never attended class. Students who receive financial aid but fail to attend class will be reported to the Department of Education and may have to pay back their aid. A grade of "FX" is treated exactly the same as a grade of "F" in terms of GPA, probation, suspension, and satisfactory academic progress.

**SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:**

Houston Community College is committed to a high standard of academic integrity in the academic community. In becoming a part of the academic community, students are responsible for honesty and independent effort. Examples of these violations include, but are not limited to, the following: Plagiarizing written work or projects, cheating on exams or assignments, collusion on an exam or project, and misrepresentation of credentials or prerequisites when registering for a course.

Simply put, violations of academic integrity will NOT be tolerated. At a minimum, a grade of "0" will be recorded on the assignment or exam in question. Additional sanctions may include but are not necessarily limited to the following: Being assigned a grade of "F" for the course, being withdrawn from the course, or being expelled from the College.

**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 Ability Services Office at the respective college at the beginning of each semester. Faculty is authorized to provide only the accommodations requested by the Ability Services Office. At Southwest College, students should contact Dr. Becky Hauri at 713-718-7909. Students who are requesting special testing accommodations must first contact the appropriate (most convenient) DSS office for assistance:

Disability Support Services Offices:

System: 713.718.5165

Central: 713.718.6164 – also for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and Students Outside of the HCC District service areas.

Northwest: 713.718.5422

Northeast: 713.718.8420

Southeast: 713.718.7218

Southwest: 713.718.7909

**EGLS3:** At Houston Community College, professors believe that thoughtful student feedback is necessary to improve teaching and learning. During a designated time near the end of the term, 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 department 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.

**HCC Course Withdrawal Policy:** The State of Texas imposes penalties on students who drop courses excessively. Students are limited to no more than SIX total course withdrawals throughout their educational career at a Texas public college or university. It is the student's responsibility to know all applicable deadlines during the semester, including the last day to withdraw from this class and receive a "W." After this date, a student will receive the grade that he/she has earned. College policy prohibits faculty from submitting a grade of "W" after the official drop date. For other important dates, refer to the current academic calendar found on HCC's webpage.

**Student Services:** DISTANCE EDUCATION ADVISING AND COUNSELING SERVICES: Much DE student information can be found on the DE Student Services website: [de.hccs.edu](http://de.hccs.edu). Advising or counseling can be accomplished through our online request form [AskDECounseling](#). Counselors and Student Services Associates (SSA) can assist students with admissions, registration, entrance testing requirements, degree planning, transfer issues, and career counseling. In-person, confidential sessions, can also be scheduled to provide brief counseling and community referrals to address personal concerns impacting academic success.

**International Students:** International Students are restricted to ONLY ONE online/distance education class per semester. Please contact the International Student Office at 713-718-8520 if you have additional questions about your visa status.

### **Core Curriculum Competencies**

Students in a core curriculum course are assessed on their ability to demonstrate all or most of the following core objective proficiencies as mandated by the Higher Education Coordinating Board, which are as follows:

**Critical thinking skills** – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information

**Communication skills** – to include effective written, oral, and visual communication

**Empirical and quantitative skills** – to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions

**Teamwork** – to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal

**Social responsibility** – to include intercultural competency, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities

**Personal responsibility** – to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

**\*\*The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus at any point during the semester \*\***

### Course Calendar and Assignments

CLASS DATE	READING ASSIGNMENT	REFERENCE CHAPTER
1/13	Syllabus and Course Expectations	
1/13-1/15	US Political Landscape	<i>1, Declaration of Independence</i>
1/20	<b>Martin Luther King Day: No Class</b>	
1/22-1/27	Public Opinion & The Media	5
1/29	Voting & Elections	7
2/3	Interest Groups	8
2/5-2/10	Political parties	6
2/12	<b>Paper 1 Due</b>	
2/12	<b>Exam 1</b>	
2/17	<b>President's Day: No Class</b>	
2/19-2/24	US Constitution	<i>2, US Constitution</i>
2/26-3/3	Federalism	<i>3, Federalist #10</i>
3/5 & 3/17	US Congress	<i>9, Federalist #51</i>
3/10-3/14	<b>Spring Break: No Class</b>	
3/19-3/24	US Presidency & Bureaucracy	10 & 11
3/26-3/31	US Judiciary	<i>12, Federalist #78</i>
4/2	<b>Exam 2</b>	
4/7-4/9	Economic & Social Policy	14
4/14	Foreign Policy	15
4/16	<b>Paper 2 Due</b>	
4/16-4/21	Civil Liberties	4
4/23	<b>Makeup Exam</b>	
4/28-4/30	Civil Rights	13
5/5 (Tentative)	<b>Exam 3</b>	