

**GOVT 2305: Federal Govt. (Federal Constitution and Topics)  
Fall 2017**

**South Plains College, Department of Social Sciences**

Course Time & Location: **T/R 5:30, Reese Campus: RC323**

Instructor: Ryan Fitzgerald, M.A.

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**Course Description:** This course is a survey of fundamental principles of political science, including the American system of government and the origins and development of the constitutions of the United States. This course satisfies the Legislative requirements for teacher certification.

Credit: 3 Lecture Hours

Prerequisites: TSI compliance in Reading

**Course Purpose:**

Government 2305, as taught at South Plains College, is a reading intensive course designed to acquaint the learner with the origin and development of the US 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. This course meets the statutory requirements as set forth by the State of Texas.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students who have completed this course will be expected to (1) explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States (2) demonstrate knowledge of our federal system through being able to:

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

**Foundational Component Area of Core Curriculum:** Social Science and ALL Undergraduate Degrees

**Fundamental Component Areas (FCAs):**

Students will be expected to perform satisfactorily in four FCAs.

1. Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information by:
  - a. Generating and communicating ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information,
  - b. Gathering and assessing information relevant to a question,
  - c. Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information.
2. Communication – to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral or visual communication by: developing, interpreting, and expressing ideas through written, oral, or visual communication.

3. Social Responsibility Skills – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively I regional, national, and global communities by:
  - a. Demonstrating intercultural competence,
  - b. Identifying civic responsibility,
  - c. Engaging in regional, national, and global communities.
4. Personal Responsibility –to include the ability to connect choices, action, and consequences to ethical decision-making by:
  - a. Reading, understanding and affirming agreement and acceptance of principles, guidelines and requirements set forth in the “Statement of Personal Responsibility of Students” (Attached)
  - b. Evaluating choices and actions and relating consequences to personal decision-making
  - c. Accepting personal responsibility for decisions and actions taken or not taken

**Text** – No text is required. However - for purpose of supplemental reading, the following text is optional:

*American Government* by Glen Krutz

**Available via OpenStax** - <https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government>

\*Free PDF copy of text available, at the link listed above.

**Grading:**

**Exams** – 210 pts (Each exam is worth 70 pts; including the final exam – **FINAL IS NOT COMPREHENSIVE**)

**Writing Assignment** – 90 pts (In this class, each student will complete a major research paper composed of the three parts – an introduction, body, and conclusion. Each section will be turned in separately, marked-up by the instructor, and returned to the student to revise and re-submit as a final document.

Introduction – 20 pts

Body – 40 pts

Findings & Conclusion – 30 pts

**Total Possible Points: 300**

**A:** 300 – 270 **B:** 269 - 240 **C:** 239 - 210 **D:** 209 – 180 **F:** 179 & below...

If you think that an error has been made in calculating your final grade, it's your responsibility to provide me with documentation, demonstrating that a calculation error has been made.

Late Work – Your work must be turned in *on time, at the beginning of class* if you would like your submission to be considered for full credit. Turning in assignments after the agreed upon due date is circumstantial and may be accepted at the discretion of the instructor...but will be assessed a penalty.

Extra Credit: There will be several opportunities to score extra points throughout the semester, therefore no major extra credit opportunities (additional papers, essays or special assignments...) will be offered to or accepted from students at the end of the semester.

Lastly, every assignment, due date, and the allotted number of points for each assignment are tentative. Additionally, the class structure is purely provisional, and subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

**Attendance and Participation:** You are expected to come to class prepared to engage in a critical evaluation of the topic of the day. At a minimum, you must complete the assigned readings before the start of class on the day that the reading is scheduled. In addition, you should be prepared to contribute voluntarily to class discussion. Although participation & attendance does not make up a portion of the final grade for the course, both may prove to be a considerable factor in determining borderline grades. For example, participation may be used as a criterion for a student whose final grade in the class is an 89.75% (B)...a student who participated often in class discussions may receive an A as the final course grade. Additionally, role may be kept for SPC purposes.

Remember: Poor attendance normally results in a poor grade...

- Dire circumstances: IF, upon reaching FOUR unexcused absences (at any time; for any reason) this will result in the student being dropped from the course, while receiving a final letter grade of an "F".
- Just FYI: "Whenever absences become excessive and, in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to [the excessive] absences, the student can be withdrawn [i.e., dropped] from the course..." – South Plains College Attendance Policy

Also, absences which are not "approved" or "excused" by the instructor shall be considered "unexcused," and documented as such. (Yes, I get to determine whether or not the reason for your absence was an acceptable one).

### **Classroom etiquette:**

Please demonstrate common courtesy for your fellow students by avoiding the following during class:

- Engaging in text messaging, Facebooking, and similar activities.
- Watching movies, television shows, and other media.
- Answering cell phone calls.

**IMPORTANT:** Please silence your cell phones, laptops, iPads, etc. If your cell phone goes off in class, you will be required to perform an embarrassing task (i.e. sing) in front of the class (hint: learn the words and motions to "I'm a Little Teapot")

**Additionally:** Reference above rule: "Please silence your cell phones ..." If you are texting, your cell phone is on and chances are, you are not paying attention in class. Therefore, texting is now a punishable offense. If caught, you will be required to sing something in front of the class. This rule also applies to students caught pursuing other entertaining alternatives on the world wide web, instead of focusing on yours truly....if I catch you on Facebook during class, you will get up and lead the entire class in a group sing-along.

If you engage in any of these activities you will be asked to leave the classroom for the day, and your behavior will be noted. Moreover, I reserve the right to eject any student who violates these or other rules, in addition to commonly accepted classroom norms (i.e., be on time, be polite to fellow classmates, etc.).

**Academic Integrity (See General Catalog/Handbook for Additional Information):**

Anything that borders on cheating, plagiarism, or affects the academic integrity of the assignment or of the course will be dealt with using the harshest measures possible –more than likely, you will receive zero credit for the assignment, and be dismissed from the class roster with a failing grade. For the purposes of this class, plagiarism encompasses individuals who turn in the same or closely related assignments. Your work must be *in your own words* and it must be original (cheating and plagiarism - that is copying your friend's work or copying from another source - will be dealt with in the harshest manner: again, you will be dropped from the class with a letter grade of an "F" for the course).

**It's simple:** If you copy something from an internet source (say, Wikipedia...) and present it as your own, that is cheating - copying, and it is against the rules.

SPC Policy regarding "Academic English": South Plains College requires all students to become proficient in "academic English," a form of English that is typically used in academic, professional, and business contexts. While slang, regional idioms, and informal kinds of self-expression are appropriate in some contexts, they are out of place in academic writing. Students in this course are expected to demonstrate proficiency in using the conventions of academic English in all written work. Therefore, I reserve the right to take off points on all written assignments do to use of bad grammar, and general negligence of one's duties to pursue proper written scholarship.

**Students with Disabilities (ADA Statement)**

Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in this class should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office through the Guidance and Counseling Centers at Reese (Building 8), or at Levelland in the Student Services building.

**Nondiscrimination Policy:**

It is the policy of South Plains College and this instructor not to discriminate on the basis of age, race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation. (However, a student's choice in movies and music are fair game.)

**Student Privacy**

South Plains College is bound by the Texas Open Records Law and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Information regarding these topics can be found in the South Plains College Catalog. As far as this class is concerned, I will NOT release or discuss your class performance, grades, averages, or attendance with anyone but you. This means that your parents, class counselors, principals, or any other interested party will not gain this information from me – if they need this sort of information they must ask you for it. This provision does not apply to student athletes or those for whom a grade check is part of their scholarship support.

## Recording Devices –

The use of recording devices is prohibited, except when the use of such devices has been approved as an accommodation by the instructor and Disability Services.

## Amendment(s) to the Syllabus:

If need arises, the instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time. Students will be notified of such change(s) with adequate time to adapt.

## Dropping the course:

YOU must drop this course at the SPC registrar's office (there is **no on-line drop system**, so on-line students must take care of this in person at the registrar's office). This is an official procedure which is described in the SPC Catalog. No one but YOU can initiate the drop and it must conform to the procedure for dropping a course. Failure to initiate and finalize the drop procedure will result in an F grade on your transcript. The drop cannot be made retroactive. The drop date can be found on the SPC calendar.

Students who stop attending a class should go through the procedure for dropping a course; otherwise they may be administratively withdrawn for lack of attendance and their record will show an "X," "U," or "F" instead of a "W." Failure to follow college policy by withdrawing according to this procedure will be reflected on a student's transcript by the presence of "X," "U," or "F" marks, as determined by the instructor. A mark of "W" will be given for student-initiated drops or withdrawals that occur prior to and through "The Last Day to Drop" as indicated in the appropriate class schedule. A student who quits attending class and is administratively withdrawn from class will receive a grade of "X," or "F" as determined by the instructor. "The Last Day to Drop" is indicated in the college class schedule.

Then, how do I get out of this class?

- If the student is in Lubbock or Levelland they will need to go to the admissions office (Levelland or Reese Campus) to drop the class.
- If the student is in does not live in Lubbock or Levelland they should contact the Registrar's Office (806-716-2371) for further instructions.

You will need the following:

1. Statement indicating which class you want to drop
2. Student's Name
3. Student's Date of birth
4. Student ID# or last 4 digits of social security #
5. Telephone #
6. Student signature
7. Photo ID (usually a driver's license)
8. payment of drop fee
9. If you follow these instructions you do NOT need my signature.

## **Tentative Thematic Calendar**

(Subject to change, depending on course progress)  
(Book Chapters found in Krutz)

### **Week 1 - 2**

Syllabus. What is Politics? What is Government? Who Governs (Ch. 1)

The Founding and the origins of the Constitution (Ch. 2)

### **Week 3 - 4**

Federalism & the role of State and Local Politics in the Federal System (Ch. 3)

*PAPER - Introduction Due*

### **Week 5 - 6**

Civil Liberties (Ch. 4)

Civil Rights (Ch. 5)

### **Week 7 - 8**

Political Parties (Ch. 9)

Voting & Elections (Ch. 7)

### **Week 9 - 10**

Public Opinion & the Media (Ch. 6 & 8)

Presidency (Ch. 12)

*PAPER - Body Due*

### **Week 11 - 12**

Bureaucracy (Ch. 15)

Interest Groups & Lobbying (Ch.10)

### **Week 13**

Congress (Ch. 11)

*PAPER - Conclusion Due*

### **Week 14**

Federal Courts (Ch.13)

***\*NO CLASS Monday, September 4<sup>th</sup>! Labor Day Holiday***

***\*NO CLASS Friday, October 13<sup>th</sup> - Fall Break!***

***\*NO CLASS Tuesday, November 7<sup>th</sup>!***

***\*NO CLASS Wednesday, November 22<sup>nd</sup> - Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup> - Easter Holiday!***

**Exam 3 (Final Exam): TBA**

Final Draft of Research Paper w/ revisions having been addressed, is due the day of the final.