

Common Course Syllabus
GOVT 2305
Department of Social Sciences
South Plains College

Department: Social Sciences

Discipline: Government

Course Number: GOVT 2305

Course Title: Federal Government

Credit: 3 Lecture, 0 Lab

This course partially satisfies a core curriculum requirement: Government/Political Science Foundational Component Area (070)

Available Formats: Conventional (Fully Face-to-Face), Fully Online, Hybrid, ITV

Campus: Levelland, Downtown Center, Plainview

Textbook: Varies according to instructor. Refer to each instructor's instructions for textbook requirements.

Course Specific Instructions: Each instructor will attach his/her course with specific instructions.

Course Description: 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.

Course Objectives addressed:

1. **critical thinking:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
2. **communication:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
3. **social responsibility:** to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
4. **personal responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Students who have completed this course will:

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of our 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.
6. Analyze the election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. Politics.

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.

Course Requirements: To maximize a student's potential to complete this course, he/she should attend all class meetings, complete all homework assignments and examinations in a timely manner, and complete all other projects or papers as assigned in the instructor's specific instructions.

Course Evaluation: See the instructor's course information sheet for specific items used in evaluating student performance.

Attendance Policy: Whenever absences become excessive and in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to absences, the student will be withdrawn from the course. Each instructor will have additional information about attendance on his/her course information sheet.

Dropping a Course: Students may drop courses through Texan Connect, the Admissions and Records Office, or Advising and Testing Center through the late registration period.

After late registration has closed, a student must complete the online [Student Initiated Drop Request](#) to drop a course.

Students may also drop courses in person at any campus location by completing a Student Initiated Drop Form. Complete a [Student Initiated Drop Form](#) and return the signed form to the Levelland Admissions and Records Office, the Student Support Center at the Lubbock Downtown Center, the Lubbock Career and Technical Center, or Plainview Center. You must have a picture ID to complete the drop.

A mark of "W" will be given for student-initiated drops that occur prior to and through the last day to drop as indicated in the online Academic Calendar found here:

<https://www.southplainscollege.edu/academiccalendar/index.php>.

Fall 2025
GOVT-2305-007-442-511: Federal Government
T/TH 9:30am
Department of Social Sciences
South Plains College

Instructor Information

Dr. Jonathan Martin

Office: Student Services Building Room 116

E-mail: jmartin@southplainscollege.edu

Office Phone: 806-716-2198

Office Hours:

- Monday: 8:45-10:45am
- Tuesday: 10:45-11:45am
- Wednesday: 8:45-10:45am
- Thursday: 10:45-11:45am
- Friday: 9:00-11:00am

Textbook

We are using an OER (Open Educational Resource) from OpenStax. The textbook is FREE and available online through this link:

American Government 3e by Glen Kurtz and Sylvie Waskiewicz

ISBN: 978-1-951693-38-1

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e>

OpenStax allows you to read the textbook online at the URL I have provided, or you can download it to your computer as a PDF file. In addition to the textbook, I may assign other reading material in Blackboard throughout the semester.

Policies and Procedures

Classroom Decorum

You are expected to conduct yourself in an appropriate manner. It is important to arrive to class on time and not disturb others by talking, using your cell phone, or leaving class early.

Furthermore, I expect every student to be respectful to other students and instructor when discussing politics. Failure to adhere to classroom decorum may result in a point deduction to your participation grade.

Participation Statement

For online courses, students **MUST** actively participate by completing an academic assignment by the official census date **September 10**. Students who do not do so, will be dropped from the course.

Syllabus Statements

South Plains College policies concerning Disabilities, Non-discrimination, Title IX Pregnancy and Parenting Accommodations, CARE (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation), Intellectual Exchange, Campus Concealed Carry, COVID-19, and AI (Artificial Intelligence) can be found here: [Syllabus Statements](#).

Course Withdrawals

The last day to withdraw from this class with a grade of 'W' is **December 4**. Students are expected to do the required reading and turn in assignments by the due dates. As stated, if you get behind in your assignments, it is likely you will not finish the course and/or fail.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or unauthorized assistance, will not be tolerated in this course. This includes, but is not limited to, copying another student's work, submitting work completed by someone else, or using unapproved tools or sources. The use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT or similar, to generate, assist with, or complete any part of an assignment is strictly prohibited. If I determine that a student has used AI on an assignment:

1. On the first offense, the student will receive a zero on the assignment. In addition, the highest possible letter grade the student can earn in the course will be a C.
2. On the second offense, the student will receive a zero for the entire course, and I might file an academic dishonesty report to South Plains College.

In addition, if a student cites a source in an assignment, I may request reasonable evidence that the student accessed and used the source directly, such as notes, page numbers, or screenshots. Failure to provide such evidence may be treated as academic dishonesty. In short, students are expected to complete their work with honesty, integrity, and in accordance with college policies.

Student Grievance Procedure

A student grievance is a College related issue or condition that a student believes to be unfair, inequitable, discriminatory, or a hindrance to the educational process. A grievance also includes discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. You can find more information about the student grievance procedure here:

http://www.southplainscollege.edu/human_resources/policy_procedure/fm.php

Grading and Evaluation

Grading Scale

A: 89.5-100%
B: 79.5-89.4%
C: 69.5-79.4%
D: 59.5-69.4%
F: Below 59.5%

Final Grade Calculation

Exams	55%
Participation	15%
Quizzes	10%
Reflection Essays	10%
Letter to the Editor	10%

Exams (55%)

There are three exams, and your exam average comprises 60% of your overall grade. Furthermore, all three exams will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. For the first two exams, there is a late penalty if you miss the exam for an unexcused reason. If you miss Exam 3 (final exam), you will receive a zero. Finally, you are not allowed to take any exam early.

Participation (15%)

Active participation is crucial to your success in this class and, more broadly, to the success of any learning experience. There will be numerous opportunities throughout the semester to participate by engaging in class discussions and completing participation assignments. Moreover, I expect you to show up to class on time and be ready to participate. At the end of the semester, you will receive a participation grade based on the quality of your participation (e.g., participating in discussions, completing participation assignments, attendance, and adhering to classroom decorum).

I will track your attendance, and you will get a low participation grade if you do not regularly attend class. Furthermore, I reserve the right to deduct points from your participation grade for excessive unexcused absences, excessive tardiness, violations of classroom decorum (e.g., cell phone use, leaving class early for unexcused reason, wearing earbuds, rude to other students or the instructor). If you have questions about your participation grade throughout the semester, you are welcome to ask me for feedback on how you are doing.

Letter to the Editor (10%)

For this essay, you will write about a current issue in federal government and develop a persuasive argument. I will provide you with detailed instructions later in the semester.

Quizzes (10%)

I will assign at least 4 quizzes throughout the semester in Blackboard. Quiz format will vary and will be based on assigned readings.

Reflection Essays (10%)

A reflection essay is a short paper where you explain how a topic connects to your own life. In this class, you will write at least three reflection essays. I'll give you a news article to read, and then you'll write an essay that includes a summary of the article, any questions you had or parts that were unclear, and an explanation of how the information relates to or affects you personally. I'll provide detailed instructions for the assignment later in the semester.

Course Schedule*

Week 1 (Aug 26 & 28)

Course Overview

Chapter 1: American Government and Civic Engagement

Week 2 (Sept 2 & 4)

Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins

Week 3 (Sept 9 & 11)

Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins

Week 4 (Sept 16 & 18)

Chapter 3: American Federalism

Week 5 (Sept 23 & 25)

Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (Part One)

Week 6 (Sept 30 & Oct 2)

Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (Part One)

Exam 1 is on Thursday, October 2

Week 7 (Oct 7 & 9)

Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (Part Two)

Week 8 (Oct 14 & 16)

Chapter 6: The Politics of Public Opinion

Week 9 (Oct 21 & 23)

Chapter 11: Congress

Week 10 (Oct 28 & 30)

Chapter 7: Voting and elections

Week 11 (Nov 5 & 7)

Chapter 12: The Presidency

Exam 2 is on Thursday, November 7

Week 12 (Nov 11 & 13)

Chapter 13: The Courts

Week 13 (Nov 18 & 20)

Chapter 9: Political Parties

Chapter 10: Interest Groups and Lobbying

Letter to the Editor is due Thursday, November 20

Week 14

***No Class on Tuesday, November 25 or Thursday, November 27 (Thanksgiving Break)

Week 15 (Dec 1 & 3)

Chapter 5: Civil Rights

Week 16 (December 9)

Exam 3 is on Tuesday, December 9 at 9:30am

*I reserve the right to alter the class schedule as I deem necessary. Any adjustments will be announced in class and/or listed on Blackboard.