



***UNDRESSING THE CONSTITUTION:
PHILOSOPHIC FOUNDATIONS of AMERICAN GOVERNMENT***

**MW RGC6 A257 12pm – 1:15pm
Spring 2009**

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How To Reach Me:

Office Hours: MW 9:30am – 10:30am or by appointment RGC annex building room 250.1

E-mail: thadzian@austincc.edu ← best way to contact me. I check this every day. I have many students; please indicate in the subject line which section you are in.

Voice Mail: 512- 223-1795 mailbox #26198 ← This is the worst way to contact me. I check this mailbox very infrequently/never. If you have anything important to tell me, send an e-mail!

Blackboard: <https://acconline.austincc.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>

Readings:

Textbook: We The People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics by Thomas E. Patterson. Seventh Edition, McGraw-Hill 2007

A course packet containing selections from source texts will be available online. Please see the course schedule for a list of required readings. However, you are required to purchase Harvey C. Mansfield's Translation of The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli. I recommend that you get it from Amazon.com, where it's available for only \$10. You

should also have access to a good dictionary. *You are required to look up any words you do not know.*

Course Description:

This honors course in US Government will cover the basic information in the introductory survey course, but will place great emphasis on the political and philosophical thought on which our nation's government, constitution, institutions, processes, and policies are based. We will complement readings in the textbook with source texts, as we seek to understand what kind of thinking motivated the framers to create a government unlike any the world has seen? For instance, we will seek not only to understand *that* our nation is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy and the self-guided pursuit of happiness, but *how* the founders came to those ideas and what they mean. Further, we will try to gain an understanding of and appreciation for the unique nature of American Government by setting it in the context of the classical political thought which preceded it (eg. Plato and Aristotle), the modern political thought which spawned it (eg. Hobbes, Locke and Jefferson) and the contemporary political thought which challenges it (Marx and Nietzsche).

Honors Requirements:

Students will be required to read source texts in American Government and Political Thought, write critical research papers and participate in seminar discussions. Class meetings will mix lectures with seminars, in which students will be required to craft coherent, arguments and engage others in lively debate and discourse.

Course Objectives:

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Critically evaluate source texts in Classical, Modern, American and Contemporary political thought.
2. Understand the philosophical foundations of American Government as well as the constitutional framework of our government.
3. Engage others in reasoned debate about political issues.
4. Perform original research and construct well-crafted, written and oral arguments.
5. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our political system vis-à-vis classical political thought and contemporary criticism.
6. Discuss the ways civil liberties and civil rights protect both the individual and categories of people, and evaluate the modern philosophical arguments from which the very concept of inalienable, individual rights originates.
7. Describe the structure, functions and operations of the U.S. Congress, and understand the arguments of the federalists and the anti-federalists.
8. Describe the structure, functions and operations of the U.S. judiciary, and understand how to read and interpret key Supreme Court decisions and appreciate their significance in developing our government and society.
9. Discuss the powers and functions of the U.S. president, and evaluate Machiavelli's understanding of responsible executive authority in *The Prince*.

10. Discuss the role of political parties and elections in politics and government, and understand both the dangers and benefits of partisanship, as seen from a classical and modern perspective.
11. Discuss the benefits and problems associated with U.S. federalism, and understand how the practice of slavery relates to classical and modern political systems. Appreciate the insights of Lincoln and Frederick Douglass with respect to this matter.
12. Discuss the role of interest groups in uniting disparate political and social interests and evaluate Tocqueville's understanding of "civil associations" and "political associations" and assess their importance.
13. Discuss the role of religion in American Politics and understand the central place of religion in Classical Political arrangements as well as Tocqueville's thoughts regarding the proper role of religion in American Politics and Society.
14. Understand key foreign policy decisions, including the decision to invade Iraq, and evaluate what contemporary challengers of American Democracy might say.

CLASS POLICIES

Attendance:

You are expected to attend each class and to arrive on time. Given the fact that material covered in class lectures will appear on tests, it will be very difficult for you to do well in this class if you don't show up. Additionally, the success of this course has much to do with the success of classroom discussion, and if students develop a habit of skipping, discussion becomes quite difficult. Therefore, skipping class not only negatively reflects on your character and prevents you from doing well, it harms the whole class. Finally, students not showing up or showing up late to class is a major pet peeve of mine.

Starting Time and Taking Roll:

I start class on time and I take roll at the beginning of class. If you are not present when I take roll, you will not be marked present for that day.

Readings and Lectures:

Students are expected to complete the scheduled readings before coming to class. Since seminar discussions are a large portion of this course, it will be impossible for you to do well if you are not prepared.

Scholastic Dishonesty

Acts prohibited by the college for which discipline may be administered include scholastic dishonesty, including but not limited to cheating on an exam or quiz, plagiarizing, and unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing outside work. Academic work submitted by students shall be the result of their thought, research, or self-expression. Academic work is defined as, but not limited to tests, quizzes, whether taken electronically or on paper, projects, either individual or group; classroom presentations, and homework.

If a student commits any of these actions, I will seek disciplinary action in the form of an academic penalty, which may include a course grade of "F." Such disciplinary action

will be at the discretion of the instructor following College procedures outlined in the Student Handbook.

Academic Freedom

In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. These differences enhance the learning experience and create an atmosphere where students and instructors alike will be encouraged to think and learn. On sensitive and volatile topics, students may sometimes disagree not only with each other but also with the instructor. It is expected that faculty and students will respect the views of others when expressed in classroom situations. Therefore, be assured that students' grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in class or in assignments.

Each person has the right to express his or her opinion. As a colleague of mine so aptly stated, "Our Bill of Rights not only guarantees us the right to express our opinions but also provides us the opportunity to learn from our fellow citizens as they express their own."

Office for Students with Disabilities

Each ACC campus offers support services for students with documented physical or psychological disabilities. Students with disabilities must request reasonable accommodations through the Office for Students with Disabilities on the campus where they expect to take the majority of their classes. Students are encouraged to do this three weeks before the start of the semester.

Late Papers:

I do not accept late papers unless there is a verifiable and documented medical emergency. Written assignments are due at the beginning of the class on which they are due. Unless prior arrangements have been made, papers need to be printed out and handed to me at the beginning of class.

Make-up Exams:

I will not schedule a make-up exam unless a verifiable and documented medical emergency prevents you from taking the exam on the day on which it was scheduled.

Cell Phones:

Cell phone use in class is prohibited. This includes sending and reading text messages. Cell phones must be put away during class. Using a cell phone or ipod in class sends a clear message to the instructor that you do not care about the class or your grade.

Withdrawal Policy:

I will not withdraw you from the course. If you wish to drop the course for whatever reason, you must take action. The last day to withdrawal is April, 27th 2009. If you do not withdraw by that date you will not be able to drop the course.

Incompletes:

I will only give you an incomplete if a doctor can verify that you are unable to complete assignments, and that only after you have completed all the required work up until April 22nd and you have a C or better average.

Lectures:

Lectures will serve to clarify and complement materials from the textbook and source text packet. Further, they will introduce background material and offer interpretation of the texts we read. Students are encouraged to take notes and ask questions.

Seminars:

The small class size of an honors course gives us the luxury of frequently exploring concepts in a seminar style setting. Most class meetings are conducted in a seminar setting. Students will be encouraged to share their thoughts on the reading assignments and will be challenged by their instructor to refine and clarify their points.

Papers:

4 papers will be due. Students will explore and develop their own ideas and expand their interests in American Government. Paper topics will encourage independent thought and research. I will provide paper topics, but students are encouraged to write on a topic of their choosing after conferencing with me.

Exams:

The midterm and final exam serve to ensure that students learn the basic information of the Govt 2305 course. Students will be provided with a detailed study guide before each exam. Both the midterm and final exam will include multiple choice and short answer questions.

Readings:

Students are expected to complete reading assignments before coming to class.

Unannounced Reading Quizzes:

Fruitful discussion and careful engagement with the texts will only be possible if students come to class prepared. Therefore, I will give frequent and unannounced reading quizzes to ensure that students are prepared.

Participation:

Students must participate in class discussions and seminars in order to get the most out of this course. Therefore, participation (which includes attendance) will be factored into your grade.

Extra Credit:

Find a news story which relates to one of our course readings. Submit the story along with a one page essay in which you explain how the story connects with a concept in our course readings. You'll get 5 points added to your exam grade. The extra credit assignments are due on exam days. So, if you turn the assignment in on the day of the

midterm, you will get five points added to your midterm grade. If you turn it in on the day of the final, you get five points added to that exam.

Evaluations:

4 papers 40% (4-5 page research papers)
 Unannounced reading quizzes 10%
 Participation 10%
 Midterm 20%
 Final 20%

100-90 = A
 89-80 = B
 79-70 = C
 69-60 = D
 Below 60 = F

How I Will Help You Reach Your Goals

I want you to meet your goals for this course. I will give you all the tools you need to succeed, make use of them! Here are some additional ways I can help you reach your goal for this course. If you can think of other ways in which I can help you, please share them with me during office hours or via e-mail. I am willing to put in extra time to help you reach your goals if you are willing to work hard.

Exams:

I will provide a detailed study guide before each exam. It will tell you exactly what I want you to know on test day. **No surprises.** STUDY THE STUDY GUIDE

Written Assignments:

If you feel that you need help with your written work, I am here to help you. If you turn in your written assignment one week in advance of the due date, I will read, edit and then conference with you during office hours, where I will give you suggestions for improvement. You may then turn in an edited version for a grade. I am also able to comment on your papers via-email. However, I believe in person conferences are more helpful.

Schedule of Readings, Deadlines and Exams

Date	Topic	Source Readings	We The People
January 21st	Intro	-----	
January 26th	Classical Political Life	Plutarch: Life of Lycurgus	American Creed: Chapter 1
January 28th	Classical Political Life	Plutarch: Life of Solon	American Creed: Chapter 1
February 2nd	Classical Political Philosophy	Aristotle: Politics I (1-7 and 12-13)	Constitutional Founding: Chapter 2

February 4th	Classical Political Philosophy	Aristotle: Politics III (1-11 and 14-18)	Constitutional Founding: Chapter 2
February 9th	Classical Political Philosophy	Plato: Republic I	Constitutional Founding/ Federalism: Chapter 2/3
February 11th	Classical Political Philosophy	<u>Plato: Republic VII</u>	Constitutional Founding/ Federalism: Chapter 2/3
February 16th (Don't forget to buy the book!)	Early Modern Foundations: New Modes and Orders	Machiavelli: The Prince: Dedicatory Letter- Chapter 8	Civil Liberties: Chapter 4
February 18th *	Early Modern Foundations: New Modes and Orders	Machiavelli: The Prince: Chapter 9-17	Civil Liberties: Chapter 4
February 23rd	Early Modern Foundations: New Modes and Orders	Machiavelli: The Prince: Chapter 18-26 and Appendix	Civil Liberties: Chapter 4
February 25th	Modernity Unfolds: Natural Right	Hobbes: Leviathan (chapters 10-12)	Equal Rights: Chapter 5
March 2nd	Modernity Unfolds: Natural Right	Hobbes: Leviathan (chapters 13-15)	Equal Rights: Chapter 5
March 4th	Liberalism	Locke: Second Treatise of Government (chap 1-5)	Equal Rights: Chapter 5
March 9th	Liberalism	Locke: Second Treatise of Government (chap 6-9)	Equal Rights: Chapter 5
March 11th	Midterm Exam	-----	See Study Guide Online: Chapters 1-5
March 16th	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break
March 18th	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break
March 23rd	Liberalism	Montesquieu: Spirit of The Laws	-----
March 25th *	American Political Thought	Jefferson: Selected Letters and Essays	Congress: Chapter 11
March 30th	American Political Thought	Jefferson: Selected Letters and Essays	Congress: Chapter 11
April 1st	American Political Thought	Federalist: Selected Essays	Congress: Chapter 11
April 6th	American Political Thought	Federalist: Selected Essays	Participation and Voting: Chapter 7
April 8th	Executive at A Crossroads	Lincoln: Selected Speeches and Letters	The Executive: Chapter 12
April 13th	Executive at A	Lincoln: Selected	The Executive: Chapter 12

	Crossroads	Speeches and Letters	
April 15th	Supreme Court	Selected Cases	The Judiciary: Chapter 14
April 20th *	Supreme Court	Selected Cases	The Judiciary: Chapter 14
April 22nd	Reflections on American Democracy	Tocqueville: Democracy in America	Interest Groups: Chapter 9
April 27th	Reflections on American Democracy	Tocqueville: Democracy in America	Political Parties: Chapter 8
April 29th	Reflections on American Democracy	Tocqueville: Democracy in America	News Media: 10
May 4th	Critiques of Liberalism	Marx: Communist Manifesto	-----
May 6th	Critiques of Liberalism	Nietzsche: TBA	-----
May 11th	Critiques of Liberalism	Nietzsche: TBA	-----
May 13th *	Final Exam	----	See Study Guide Online: Chapters: Chapters 7-12 and 14

* Written Assignment Due