

GOVT 2305-013 (25220) U.S. Government, First Summer Session 2005

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Days: Monday-Friday
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COURSE GOALS

This course is an introduction to United States national government. The course includes an introduction to a framework for analyzing United States government and politics, the constitutional basis for United States government and politics, the processes of United States government and politics, the institutions of United States government and politics, and the policies of United States government and politics.

During the course of the semester I hope to convince you of the importance of national government, and more importantly, to pique your interest in becoming an informed, responsible, and critical citizen.

EXPECTATIONS

Even though this is an introductory class that most (if not all) of you “have to” take, I expect high quality performance. You are expected to: 1) attend all classes; 2) read the assigned material in advance; and, 3) arrive prepared to participate in discussion. You are responsible for the material covered, including information on deadlines and examinations. **Ignorance is not an excuse** for failing to show up for exams or missing due dates for assignments.

COURSE READINGS

Required readings are drawn from:

Patterson. *We The People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*. Fifth edition, soft cover. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

Students are also required to read the “A” or National section of the *Austin American Statesman* or other major newspaper (*New York Times*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle*, or *USA Today*) in print or online each class day. The *American Statesman* is available at a substantial discount to ACC students. In addition, I highly encourage students to watch the national news on at least one television station (KLRU 18, KVUE 24, KXAN 36, KEYE 42, CNN, or MSNBC) and to listen to National Public Radio (NPR) on KUT-FM (90.5 FM) before class

GRADES

There are three components to your final grade:

1. Participation

Every class begins with a discussion of a topical story (or stories) from the “A” or National section of the *Austin American Statesman* or other national newspaper. Each student **must** lead at least one discussion over the course of the semester. All students should arrive to class ready to lead or join in discussion on one or more of the stories. Although I am a strong believer in volunteerism, I will “cold call” on students to elicit their input should the volunteer spirit wane.

Participation counts for 16.6% of your final grade. Participation is graded on: 1) depth of knowledge displayed about the story; 2) presentation of the story to your classmates; and, 3) linking the story to issues discussed in lectures or the textbook.

In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may not only disagree with each other at times, but the students and instructor may also find that they have disparate views on sensitive and volatile topics.

It is the instructor’s hope that these differences will enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where students and instructor alike will be encouraged to think and learn from each other. Therefore, be assured that students’ grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in class or in assignments. Rather, we will all respect the views of others when expressed in classroom discussions.

And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?

Milton, *Aeropagitica*, 1643

2. Exams

There are four exams. Each exam counts for 16.6% of your final grade. The last exam is NOT comprehensive.

3. Reaction papers

Four (4) “reaction” or opinion papers count for 16.6% of your final grade (4.15% each). There is a reaction paper due approximately every 9 days. The due dates are:

- May 27
- June 9
- June 20
- June 28

These are the guidelines for the reaction papers:

Topic

Select a significant opinion/editorial article from a national daily newspaper OR a significant entry in a political weblog (“blog”). Any topic involving U.S. government is fair game. Consult me if you’re unsure about a topic or need a suggestion.

Suggested sources

Newspapers

New York Times <<http://www.nytimes.com>>
Washington Post <<http://www.washingtonpost.com>>
Los Angeles Times <<http://www.latimes.com>>
Dallas Morning News <<http://www.dallasnews.com>>
Austin American Statesman <<http://www.statesman.com>>

Political blogs (arranged alphabetically, not ideologically)

Andrew Sullivan <<http://www.andrewsullivan.com/>>
Counterpunch <<http://www.counterpunch.org>>
Daily Kos <<http://www.dailykos.com>>
Eschaton <<http://atrios.blogspot.com/>>
Free Republic <<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/browse>>
Instapundit <<http://www.instapundit.com>>
Little Green Footballs <<http://www.littlegreenfootballs.com/weblog/weblog.php>>
Matthew Yglesias <<http://yglesias.typepad.com/matthew/>>
Michelle Malkin <<http://www.michellemalkin.com>>
National Review <<http://www.nationalreview.com>>
Talking Points Memo <<http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/>>
The Washington Monthly <<http://www.washingtonmonthly.com>>

Format

Length

The body of the reaction papers (not including the cover) must be between one and two typed double-spaced pages long. There is no extra credit for papers over two pages long.

Margins and typeface

Use one-inch margins (top, sides, and bottom), and a standard 12-point typeface (font).

Cover page

Provide a title for your reaction paper. Center your title vertically and horizontally. List your name, the course name (U.S. Government), course number (GOVT 2305), and course section beneath the title.

Body

The body of your paper must contain these three sections:

1. Section one. Introduction.

Briefly summarize the editorial or blog entry.

2. Section two. Your reaction.

Explain your reaction to the editorial or blog. Consider questions such as these:

- A. How do you feel about what was said?
- B. Do you agree or disagree with the author? Why or why not?
- C. Have you had any applicable experience?
- D. Have you read or heard anything that applies to this what the author said?
- E. Does the author use sufficient evidence to support their claims?
- F. In your opinion, does the author succeed in making their case? Why or why not?
- G. Does the author add to your understanding of the issue?

3. Section three. Conclusion. Provide a brief conclusion.

OTHER GUIDELINES

1. Attendance is highly recommended. It is extremely unlikely that you will perform well in this class if you do not attend.
2. Make-up exams are granted only under **extraordinary circumstances**, such as a family emergency or illness severe enough to require a visit to a health professional.
3. Complete the required readings before class. The course is conducted as a lecture/discussion, aimed at teaching you how to think about politics.
4. Scholastic dishonesty is not acceptable. In accordance with ACC policy, I will issue a grade of "F" to any student caught engaging in academic dishonesty.

Acts prohibited by the college for which discipline may be administered include scholastic dishonesty. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating on an exam or quiz, plagiarism (using another author's words or arguments without attribution), and collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement).

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, papers, and homework.

If a student commits any of the above actions, the instructor will seek disciplinary action in the form of an academic penalty (which will include a zero on the academic work in question and 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.

5. Incompletes

I will assign a temporary grade of "I" under the following conditions: (a) the student has a valid medical reason for requesting an incomplete and completed at least three-quarters of the course requirements; (b) the student requests a grade of "I" and completes the required form; and (c) the student agrees to complete the course by the deadline established on the Report of Incomplete Grade form.

NOTE: I will not process incompletes unless requested to do so.

6. Withdrawing from the course

The last day to withdraw is June 22, 2005. You **must** withdraw on your own. Failure to withdraw combined with failure to complete the course requirements will result in an "F."

NOTE: I will not process withdrawals for students.

7. Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)

Each ACC campus offers support services for students with documented physical, cognitive, 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.

Tentative schedule of events

Date	Topic	Readings
May 23, 2005	Introduction/Why study government?	None
May 24, 2005	Why study government? (continued)	Chapter 1
May 25, 2005	Political ideology/frameworks	Pages 187-198
May 26, 2005	The Constitution	Chapter 2, Federalist #10
May 27, 2005	Federalism Reaction Paper 1 Due	Chapter 3
May 30, 2005	NO CLASS (Memorial Day)	
May 31, 2005	FIRST EXAM	
June 1, 2005	Public opinion and socialization	Chapter 6
June 2, 2005	Mass media and politics	Chapter 10
June 3, 2005	Mass media (continued)	None
June 6, 2005	Political parties	Pages 231-257
June 7, 2005	Campaigns	Pages 257-263
June 8, 2005	Participation, voting, and elections	Chapter 7
June 9, 2005	Voting and elections (continued) Reaction Paper 2 Due	
June 10, 2005	SECOND EXAM	
June 13, 2005	Interest Groups	Chapter 9
June 14, 2005	The Congress	Pages 325-346
June 15, 2005	The Congress (continued)	Pages 346-352
June 16, 2005	The Presidency	Chapter 12
June 17, 2005	The Presidency (continued)	None
June 20, 2005	The Judiciary Reaction Paper 3 Due	Chapter 14
June 21, 2005	THIRD EXAM	
June 22, 2005	Civil liberties	Chapter 4
June 22, 2005	LAST DAY TO WITHDRAW	Chapter 5
June 23, 2005	Civil rights	
June 24, 2005	Economic policy	Chapter 15
June 27, 2005	Domestic/social policy	Chapter 16
June 28, 2005	Foreign policy Reaction Paper 4 Due	Chapter 17
June 29, 2005	FOURTH EXAM	None

