SYLLABUS
PCM

Govt 2305-PCM 081 (10984): U.S Government 1ST 5.5wks Sum ’10
Class: PCM
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A Note to Students

According to pedagogical experts, you are choosing to take this course via probably the more difficult route compared to a classroom setting. You will not have regular direct personal contact with your professor or classmates, you will not hear lectures, not be able to note the inflections in your professor’s voice as he emphasizes salient points and not be able to ask questions right there and then to have clarifications made. You will, therefore, have to compensate for all that with great personal discipline exercised at your convenience and pace to, essentially, learn on your own. That is the payoff—your convenience and pace. Fortunately, there is an abundance of additional credible resources out there for a serious self-starter.

Students should read "Passport to Success" on the Distance Learning Page at http://dl.austincc.edu/passport/ to get most of their “frequently asked questions” answered and also obtain success strategies for this distance learning class.

Students should also take the self-assessment instrument to gauge their preparedness for long distance learning in government. The instrument is available at: Learning Style Self-Assessment

Additionally, students may want to check their technical skills by visiting this “DL for Dummies” link http://dl.austincc.edu/students/TechCheck.html.

To be successful in this course, you must do these things:

Be disciplined. Limit procrastination.
Take the deadlines VERY SERIOUSLY.
Read the chapters, take notes
Pay attention to the section headings and the key concepts at the end of the chapters
Do the practice tests at the end of the chapters
Visit, often, the website associated with the text at: wwnorton.com/wtp6e
Use the test reviews/study guides provided at the end of the chapters /in Blackboard
Follow the directions for test taking and the research paper
Contact me often with questions and concerns

Email:
ACC provides personalized email accounts to all ACC students. For information about your email account, go to http://www.austincc.edu/google/index.php. I can only email you through your ACC email account. If you do not want yet another email account, you may forward your ACC email to another account but at your risk.

When contacting me by email, please:
-indicate your Class (Govt 2305-081) PCM and the reason for the contact in the SUBJECT line
-sign your actual name as it appears on the class roll, not a nickname
Required Contacts:
The Texas State Coordinating Board of Higher Education requires that, in order for an Open Campus course to be certified, instructors and students need to have at least two contacts with each other during the semester in addition to the orientation session. Therefore, for a student to get credit for this course, he/she must contact the instructor in the following ways and during the first week of the semester:

(1) Log into your ACC E-mail Account. Again, all of the e-mails that I send out through Blackboard will go to this e-mail account. Send me an e-mail through your ACC e-mail account to let me know that you have set it up. Then, in turn, I will reply to your e-mail thusly: “I got it.” This will count as one contact. To set up your ACC e-mail account, start at: http://www.austincc.edu/google/

(2) Call my office number during the first few days of the semester, identify yourself and leave a short message about your goals and expectations or concerns with regards to the course. This will count as your second contact.

ACC Blackboard:
I will also communicate with you through the ACC Blackboard. I will have class assignments, and announcements from time to time on there and you may access the Grade Book on Blackboard to check your grades. ACC Blackboard requires you to log in at http://acconline.austincc.edu. Click the "Login" button on the left. Enter your ACCeID and ACCeID Password in the provided boxes, and then click the "Login" button. For ACCeID Frequently Asked Questions go to http://www.austincc.edu/acceid/faq.php

Resources:
Distance Learning: http://dl.austincc.edu/ Many of your questions can be answered at the Distance Learning website. It includes information on testing centers, resources, technology support, and a host of other topics of concern to distance learning students.

Library: Students taking Distance Learning courses qualify for access to specialized library resources and services including an online library registration form and a real-time remote reference chat option. Visit the "Library Services for Distance Learning" link on the main Library Services web page at http://library.austincc.edu. Distance learning students also may use the standard off-campus library resources and services available to all currently-enrolled students.

Computer Labs: http://irt.austincc.edu/collegecomputers/
Learning Labs: http://www.austincc.edu/tutor/
Distance Tutoring: http://dl.austincc.edu/students/smarthinking.html
Testing Center: http://www.austincc.edu/testctr/

IRT Services-Media Centers and Computer Centers: http://itdl.austincc.edu/icts.htm
Blackboard: See “Resources” on the Blackboard page at http://acconline.austincc.edu/
Your instructor: 1-512-223-2144 or samachig@austincc.edu

Textbook:
The textbook can be purchased in any ACC bookstore.

Course Introduction.
This is a self-study, self-paced introductory course that is designed to familiarize the student with the political and governmental systems of the United States—a political and governmental system that “runs” a country that is, at the same time, the envy and the “thorn in the flesh” of most of the world.

A course in United States Government such as this is important, both for United States citizens and non-citizens alike, if for no other reason than the fact that the United States is the world’s sole super power and many of its activities have global effects and implications.
Course Description.
This course is an introduction to United States national government. The course includes an introduction to a framework for understanding 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.

The course covers the major institutions and processes of U.S. Government using the design of the Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir text as a guide. One major strength of the textbook is that it does not pretend to be anything other than what it is—a basic text that covers the "Foundations," "Institutions," and "Politics" of U.S. Government.

The text looks at enduring concepts such as Liberty, Equality and Democracy. It examines the colonial and constitutional foundations of American government and takes notes of inherent constitutional conflicts such as the desire for an effective (read “powerful”) national government versus the need to secure the freedoms and liberties of the people. The role of powerful but “unofficial” participants in the political process such as political parties and the media is discussed. Students will also find that the formal institutions of American government—Congress, the Presidency and the Judiciary are covered.

Course Objectives.
Students:
Will think through and examine their positions on various US governmental and political issues with a view to “making sense” of them.
Will understand the rules of US government (Federalism, Separation of Powers and Individual Liberties and Rights),
Will become familiar with the "nuts and bolts" of US government (Congress, the Presidency and the Judiciary) and be introduced to the problem of bureaucracy in a democracy.
A major objective of this course is to encourage student participation in the political process as informed actors.

Grading.

1. Tests:
There will be three tests required. Test one will be over chapters 1-4, test two on chapters 5-8 and test three on chapters 9-12. Each test will have 45 multiple-choice items [objectives, True and False, Identification]. Each item will be worth two points. Also, students will be asked to respond to 1 short-answer question which will be worth ten points. This means that each test will be worth 100 points.

Test Deadlines:
Test I. 6/9  II. 6/21  III. 6/30

You may take a test anytime you are ready to do so but must have a test taken by its deadline. There are no “re-tests” or “make-ups.”

ACC Testing Centers:
Tests may be taken at the Testing Centers on the Northridge, Rio Grande, Pinnacle, Cypress Creek, Riverside, South Austin or Eastview campuses of ACC, or at the San Marcos or Fredericksburg High Schools and the Round Rock Higher Education Center. Go to http://www.austincc.edu/testctr for locations and times the centers are open as they vary per campus per day. Please note that the San Marcos and Fredericksburg testing centers are only open a few days each week.

You are not required to use the same testing center for each test. Use the one that is most convenient for you. Testing Centers tend to be very, very busy at the end of the semester and periodically, so please be aware that there may be a significant waiting period to take a test.
To take a test at any of the Testing Centers you will be required to show an ACC photo ID. You may obtain an ACC ID from any campus Admissions and Records office. See the following link for more info: http://www.austincc.edu/support/admissions/student_id.php. For complete information on the policies and procedures of ACC Testing Centers go to http://www.austincc.edu/testctr/studentarea.php. You will need a #2 pencil and a scantron.

When you go to take an exam at any Testing Center, you must first fill out a form (“Student Test Request and Grade Form”). Fill out the sheet carefully, including all information such as ID number, class (GOVT 2305), section number (081), synonym (10984) and form. When you finish the exam, it will be sent to me for grading. Please make sure that you retain the sheet you will receive as proof that you took the exam in the event that we have a mailing mishap.

All grades will be posted on the ACC Blackboard ASAP. BUT it will take a few days for the test to get to me, so don't panic if the grade is not posted immediately. However, it is your responsibility to make sure that your grades are posted and should there be any questions please contact me. Please go to the ACC Blackboard site http://acconline.austincc.edu/ to check your grades.

Again, Testing Centers are often very, very busy at the end of the semester, so please be aware that there may be a significant waiting period to take the exam so plan ahead, plan ahead and plan ahead!


Students will write a research paper (not an opinion paper) on an important US constitutional court case of their choice. A number of these cases are mentioned in our text. Nothing wrong with opinion papers, of course, but students are to write a research paper as plainly defined. That is, gather information about a subject (court case) and share that with the reader.

As defined, here is a possible outline of a research paper about “my water bottle.”

**Intro:**
State the reasons why you chose the topic (case)-fascinated/ intrigued by it, desire to know more about it for what reasons.

**Body:**
- The physiological need for liquids generally
- The superiority of water, physiologically, in comparison to other liquids (sodas, alcohol, “power” drinks) etc
- A brief history of drinking water-purification issues, portability issues, availability issues
- A modern history of water bottling and the variety of water bottles available-plastic, metal and glass
- Controversies: environmental (plastic), commercial (tap water)
- Who makes my water bottle, their process, share of the market and other water bottle products
- Why I chose my particular kind-80oz silver colored water bottle with a screw-on cap: cost, size, usage, care of

**Conclusion:**
Water as a vital necessity of life
Hauling a water bottle around may be one habit we should all have
It could make a dent in the cost of health care

Students will describe and analyze the case and the litigants involved and talk about the ascent of the case to the US Supreme Court, if applicable. A description and analysis of one or two related cases may be included. Students will also describe the impact/consequences of the case and state their reaction to it. Students may thoughtfully take issue with the ruling, or the rationale for it, making sure that their opinions are defensible.

Essentially, students are to tell the story of the case.-who did what to whom, when, where, why- and to talk about how the courts disposed of the resulting litigation. Students are strongly advised to seek the help of tutors at the writing lab as all the rules of common writing are expected to be kept-paragraphing, punctuations, spelling, grammar etc. Students should not be verbose and should pretend that the reader is a very bright 7th grader.
Research Paper Requirements
Students must use five (5) sources from at least three (3) different genres including books, articles in professional journals, news magazines or newspapers, or internet sources. Students must document direct quotes or paraphrased information that are/is included in the papers in the Modern Language Association (MLA) style. For information about the MLA style or how to cite internet sources, consult the ACC Learning Resource Service’s MLA Documentation Guide at http://library.austincc.edu/help/MLA/.

The paper must be 5 whole pages in length counting neither the cover page (name, course & class time) nor the works cited page both of which are required. It must have one-inch margins (top, bottom, left, and right) and must utilize a standard font size-Times New Roman 12. Papers must be typed, double-spaced and must be stapled. Papers that violate any of the above requirements will be penalized 10 points per requirement and/or 20 points per page or its fractions correspondingly. Students must avoid plagiarism and collusion. See academic dishonesty under Course Policies below. Due date for the paper is June 25th. Late papers will NOT be accepted. The paper is worth 100 points at the rate of 20 points per page. Therefore, again, a 2-page paper can earn up to a maximum of 40 points only, etcetera.

It is your responsibility to make sure that the paper gets to me. You must send it attached as a word document only and ensure that you receive an “I got it” response from me in a return email. Alternate instructions for submitting assignments can be found at http://irt.austincc.edu/blackboard/stassignment.html.

3. Discussion Forums.

See Blackboard under “Discussion Board” http://acconline.austincc.edu/webapps/login. For information about using the Discussion Board go to http://irt.austincc.edu/blackboard/stdiscussion.html.

Final Grade Computations.
A=450-500; B=400-449; C=350-399; D=300-349; F= 0-299

Course Policies.

Academic Freedom
Each student is strongly encouraged to participate liberally in the discussion forums. In any academic situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may freely disagree with each other at times and find that they have disparate views on many sensitive and volatile topics. It is my hope that these differences will enhance the discussion forums and create an atmosphere where one and all will be encouraged to think and learn. Therefore, be assured that your grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in those discussions or in assignments. However, there is a serious expectation of civility in how you state your views and in how you state your disagreement with the views of others. Unrepentant offenders will be dropped from the class.

Scholastic Dishonesty
As described in the ACC Student Handbook, scholastic dishonesty constitutes a violation of college rules and regulations and is punishable according to the procedures outlined in the Handbook. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an exam (either providing answers to or stealing answers from another student), plagiarism, and collusion. Plagiarism includes use of another author’s words or arguments without attribution. Collusion is defined as the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement. If a student commits any of the above actions, the instructor will seek disciplinary action in the form of an academic penalty (which may include a course grade of ‘F’).

Learning Disability
Each ACC campus offers support services for students with documented physical, cognitive, or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability and need accommodations please contact the Office of Students with Disabilities at 512-223-3142 or at http://www2.austincc.edu/osd/index.html as soon as possible. You should also let me know if you plan to take the tests at an OSD office and where.
Test “Make-ups” and “Incompletes”
No “make-up” examinations or “incompletes” will be allowed.

Students who fail to fulfill ALL of the requirements above will fail the class irrespective of their accumulated points.

Withdrawals
Students may withdraw themselves from the class anytime during the semester up to the deadline for withdrawals (June 30) without an academic penalty by filling out the required form with Admissions & Records. I will not withdraw you from the class for lack of progress. That responsibility lies entirely with you. If you stop taking the course but do not officially withdraw, you will receive a grade of “F.” I may withdraw “no shows,” that is, students who fail to post on BB and take tests.

Discussion Forum Conduct
Again, discourteous, demeaning, disrespectful and such other entries are unwelcome. Such comments are not collegial and do not add to a learning environment. Students are welcomed to disagree without being disagreeable with one another or with the professor.

Extra-Credit and “Curves”
Students who fail to post on ANY question as required will not get the benefit of ANY curves, if warranted, on ANY test with retro-active effect. This means that you will lose the curve points on Test 1, say, if you subsequently fail to post on question 10 on the discussion board. The same students will also not qualify to participate in any extra-credit work that might be assigned.

Office Hours
The instructor is eager to help all students achieve their goals for this course. But students must do their part and communicate by e-mail or voice mail with the instructor regarding any difficulties or challenges with course materials.

Course Deadlines and Due Dates:
Students are encouraged and expected to work sufficiently ahead of deadlines so that last minute emergencies or technical problems do not cause them to miss deadlines. Deadlines should not be regarded as mere due dates but as the last possible opportunity an assignment may be submitted. Students with time-management issues and serious problems with procrastination will not do well in this course.

ORIENTATION:
Now that you have read the syllabus, you are required to submit your orientation information. See “Tasks” in Blackboard. Due date for the orientation form is June 2.

To sum it up, the requirements for the course include:
- Orientation (due by 6/2)
- 2 contacts (due by 6/3)
- 10 Discussion Boards (due as indicated with each forum question)
- 3 tests (due by 6/9; 6/21; 6:30)
- 1 Research Paper (due by 6/25)

Note: This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Warning, this is a Sophomore-level class and you are an adult for purposes of this class even if you are not 18. So, no whining! Be responsible! You can do this, “Just do it!”