

Course Syllabus for Government 2305 (12/SP)

If men were angels, no government would be necessary. – James Madison

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Course objective: Since 1947, the Texas state legislature has required that public college and university students complete six semester-hours in American national, state, and local government. The survey course in national government is designed not only to meet that requirement but also to provide you with the basic knowledge and understanding of government activity at the federal level. This course should also give you a better understanding of certain germane disciplines such as history, sociology, philosophy, literature, and economics while preparing you for careers in teaching, public service and the law. You also benefit from taking a course such as this by not only learning how government affects your life but how you can affect public policy.

Course outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
2. Demonstrate an understanding 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.

Textbook: Dye, Thomas R., *Politics in America*, 9th ed.

Course outline:

Unit One: Power – chs. 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, and 13
Unit Two: The Pursuit of Power – chs. 2 and 5-9
Unit Three: Policy: the Exercise of Power – chs. 12 and 16-18
Unit Four: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights – chs. 14 and 15

Examinations: During the course of the semester, there will be six short quizzes (or equivalent), three unit examinations and a final examination. Dates for the examinations are **TBD**. The quizzes will occur at random. A Scantron Answer Form is required for each exam.

Examination make-up policy: Remember that making up a missed examination is a privilege and **NOT** a right! If you have to miss an exam, see me for further instructions. There are **no** make-ups for the quizzes.

Grading policy: All examinations are equally weighted and will count for 4/5 (80%) of the course grade. The short quizzes/assignments will count for the other 1/5 (20%). Final semester grades will be based on the following averages: **90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, and below 60=F**. Also keep in mind that once a grade is assigned, it is **final!!!** The need to retain eligibility, please your parents, get into law school, med school, grad school, etc., may be important reasons to change a grade, but they are not valid. A final grade is just that – **final**.

Academic dishonesty: Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Suspected cheating or plagiarism may result in a reexamination in a controlled environment, a failing grade, or dismissal from the course. As per OC Board Policy the **option is with the instructor**: *In cases of academic dishonesty, the instructor has the authority to impose appropriate scholastic penalties.*

Academic assistance: Help with preparing for exams, writing essays, setting up student e-mail, Blackboard, etc., is available at the Student Success Center. Contact them at 335-6878 or <http://www.odessa.edu/dept/ssc/>

Drops/withdrawal: The last day to drop/withdraw with a “W” for this semester is **Friday 13 April**. Keep in mind that this is a student responsibility. Drops/withdrawals initiated after this date are granted in only the most extraordinary circumstances and are at my discretion.

Attendance policy: Attendance is mandatory and, along with class participation, can influence your final grade. Roll will be taken for every class period. If you are late to class, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are not counted absent. All material covered in class is your responsibility. Excused absences may require documentation.

Bonus points: If you attend class, take notes, read the assigned material and study for the exams, “extra credit” is generally not necessary. However, since students often request opportunities for “extra credit,” I have decided to offer up to ten **pre-average** points for any **one** of the following:

- 1) by registering to vote if you are **not** currently registered
- 2) if you are already registered, encourage someone else (family member, friend, etc) to register
- 3) by voting in a national, state, or local election
- 4) by volunteering to work at the Parker House Museum
- 5) by donating blood (may be done by proxy)
- 6) by joining and participating in the Student Government Association

Documentation will be required and bonus points awarded at my discretion. Ten is the maximum.

Special needs: Odessa College complies with Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Issues with special needs will be referred to the Office of Disability Services.

Classroom conduct policy:

- **Attend class ... it's the easiest part of your college/university experience**
- **Be on time ... don't be late ... or leave early ... it's rude, it's disrespectful, and these types of things are duly noted**
- **Stay awake ... look fascinated, even if you are bored out of your mind**
- **Don't talk ... free speech is not absolute ... but do volunteer to answer questions ... and submit pertinent comments**
- **TURN OFF CELLULAR TELEPHONES, BEEPERS, OR OTHER SIMILAR FORMS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS DURING LECTURE!!!**
- **NO TEXTING, TWEETING, ETC.**
- **DO NOT WORK ON OTHER ASSIGNMENTS OR READ OTHER MATERIALS DURING LECTURE!!!**

Additional tips:

- Don't ask if you missed anything important when you miss a class ... or classes ... if it wasn't important, we wouldn't have talked about it
- Don't ask if this material will be on the exam ... you are responsible for everything that is covered in class
- Don't ask if there is anything that you can do to improve your grade ... do what is required during the semester and you won't have this problem
- Do take advantage of office hours ... it's a good way to get to know the instructor and be remembered ... in a positive way
- Be aware that college is an adult environment ... lecture topics may include material that is somewhat controversial in nature as well as adult language and subjects