

Introduction to Government

Political Science 261, Section 05, CID 4083

Fall 2009

Tuesdays and Thursdays

11 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.

CHSS 070

Office Hours: T, H 1–2

By appointment

Dr. Melinda Kovács

CHSS, Room 496 C

294 - 4761

mxk004@shsu.edu

Course description

This course deals with the origin, development and Constitution of the American governmental system. It covers both the federal and state levels of the party system, executive structures, legislatures, and judiciaries.. This course meets the legislative requirement for a course on the Constitution of the United States and Texas.

Prerequisites: None.

Credit hours: 3.

Course objectives and learning outcomes

While this is clearly a ‘content’ course intent on conveying basic introductory information about government on the federal and the state level, it is also an objective of this course to encourage critical thinking and to foster inquiry. It is my hope that in addition to introducing participants to American politics, the course will also foster responsible citizenship both among those with and those without a pronounced interest in politics. In other words, this course will allow you to develop an informed and educated position. The information will be provided, and so will be the opportunity to think and talk about it – the work of figuring out where you stand is up to you.

Course text

The textbook for this course is “We The People” by Ginsberg, Lowi and Weir. Edition: Seventh Texas Edition. ISBN: 978-0-393-93239-3. There are a variety of editions out there – please make sure you get this particular one.

You are responsible for completing the readings by the time they first appear on the syllabus.

Grading plan

You can earn a total of 400 points in this class.

Grades will be assigned on the standard grading scale, which translates to the following cut-offs in terms of points:

A = 400 - 360 points, B = 359 - 320 points, C = 319-280 points, D = 279-240 points, F = 239 points and below.

The grade composition in this class is the following:

Quiz 1	20 questions	40 points
Quiz 2	20 questions	40 points
Quiz 3	20 questions	40 points
Quiz 4	20 questions	40 points
Quiz 5	20 questions	40 points
Final exam	40 questions	160 points
“Slips”		40 points

Assignments

There will be five quizzes and a final in this course. All quizzes and the final will be multiple-choice. Please come to the exams with a long Scantron sheet and a pencil on the days of the quizzes.

Each **quiz** will cover the chapters since the previous quiz, with 10 questions on each chapter.

The **final exam** will feature 20 questions on the chapters since quiz 5 and it will also feature 20 questions on absolutely anything from the course of the semester.

The “**slips**” are very brief **un-announced** assignments that will be given at random times (at the beginning, the middle or the end of class meetings). There will be a total of **ten** of them. Each will be worth 4 points (1 per cent of the total grade in the class). On each ‘slip’ you will have to put your name, the date for that day and your answer to a very brief question. The questions will be along the lines of ‘what is one thing you remember reading from the chapter for today?’ or ‘what is one thing you learned in class today?’ or ‘what is one question about today’s topic that you can think of?’. On each ‘slip’ you will only be asked one question. Please make sure that in every class, you have a pen or pencil and some paper with you, because you will not know when you have to write one of the “slips”.

Extra credit

Even though it is a controversial and sometimes discouraged practice, there will be two opportunities for extra credit in this class: Constitution Day and the common reader, Fly in the Ointment.

During **Constitution Day** celebration events (in mid-September), you will be asked to sign in at every event. For **every event** where you sign in and indicate that you are in this class, you will be given **2 points**, for a total of **no more than 8 points**.

During the months of **September and October**, you will also be able to turn in short papers (**800 to 1500 words**, with word counts clearly appearing next to your name), on this year’s common reader, **Fly in the Ointment**. For the purposes of this class, you will have to write about **a connection** that you see between the **subject of the book and themes covered in this class**. The maximum points you can earn for these papers is **8**. The fact that you wrote a short paper does not guarantee the 8 points. You will not be allowed to turn in papers in August, November or December.

Classroom policies

The policies that govern this course are included on the BlackBoard site of the course, under Course Documents. Please note that you are responsible for knowing and abiding by, the

contents of the 'Course Policies' document and that everything in it has the same force as other items on the syllabus. Please familiarize yourself with the document early on.

Course evaluations

Towards the end of the semester, you will be asked to fill out anonymous evaluations about the course.

Tentative course schedule

Date	Day	Theme	Reading
25-Aug	T	Intro	none
27-Aug	H	Federal Political Culture	Ch 1
1-Sep	T	Federal Political Culture	Ch 1
3-Sep	H	Texas Political Culture	Ch 19
8-Sep	T	Texas Political Culture	Ch 19
10-Sep	H	QUIZ 1	
15-Sep	T	Federal Constitution	Ch 2
17-Sep	H	Federal Constitution	Ch 2
22-Sep	T	Texas Constitution	Ch 20
24-Sep	H	Texas Constitution	Ch 20
29-Sep	T	QUIZ 2	
1-Oct	H	Federal Political Parties	Ch 9
6-Oct	T	Federal Political Parties	Ch 9
8-Oct	H	Texas Political Parties	Ch 21
13-Oct	T	Texas Political Parties	Ch 21
15-Oct	H	QUIZ 3	
20-Oct	T	Federal Legislature	Ch 12
22-Oct	H	Federal Legislature	Ch 12
27-Oct	T	Texas Legislature	Ch 23
29-Oct	H	Texas Legislature	Ch 23
3-Nov	T	QUIZ 4	
5-Nov	H	Federal Executive	Ch 13
10-Nov	T !!!	Federal Executive	Ch 13
12-Nov	H !!!	Texas Executive	Ch 24
17-Nov	T	Texas Executive	Ch 24
19-Nov	H	QUIZ 5	
24-Nov	T	Federal Judiciary	Ch 15
1-Dec	T	Federal Judiciary	Ch 15
3-Dec	H	Texas Judiciary	Ch 25
8-Dec	T	Texas Judiciary	Ch 25
10-Dec	H	review for final	