

**Issues in American Politics
POSC 20123; Fall 2015
TR 12pm-1:50pm, Scharbauer 1010**

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Office Hours: By Appointment M/T/R**

We have the best government that money can buy.—Mark Twain

In politics the middle way is none at all. —John Adams

*The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter.—
Winston Churchill*

*When the people fear the government, there is tyranny. When the government fears the people,
there is liberty.—Thomas Jefferson*

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the institutions, processes, and influences of American government, politics, and political behavior. It is roughly broken into two sections. The first half of the course will focus on political elites, discussing the history and theories of American democracy, as well as its political institutions (Congress, Executive, Judiciary, and Bureaucracy). In the second half of the course, we will shift gears and focus on mass political behavior.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Midterm:	20%	Oct. 8
Final Exam:	25%	Dec. 17, 11:30am-2pm
REVEL reading quizzes:	10%	Weekly as assigned on syllabus
Current events quizzes:	10%	Randomly throughout semester
Current events presentation:	10%	To be scheduled
Debate:	10%	Dec. 6 & 8
Policy memo:	15%	Oct. 20 (rough draft due Oct. 6)

ATTENDANCE: Although attendance is not a stand-alone component of your grade, I will be taking attendance every class because attendance and participation are important for your success. You may accrue three total absences without penalty; however, each unexcused absence beyond three will result in a *5% deduction to your final grade*. It is your responsibility to obtain

material for any class missed. Also note that any assignment, such as a current events quiz, that you miss due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up.

For an absence to be considered *excused*, it must be an Official University Absence or a properly documented personal/family emergency or illness (as determined by me). It is your responsibility to provide official documentation from Campus Life. In the case of illness, you may alternatively provide a valid doctor's note (the note must be an original and must have your name and date on it). Documentation must be turned in within one week from the missed class to be considered excused.

Late arrivals and early departures (without documentation) and any rude or disruptive behavior (texting, sleeping, inappropriate computer/phone usage etc.) may also reduce your final grade.

EXAMS: There will be one midterm exam and a final exam. The final exam be comprehensive in the multiple choice section of the exam, but the remainder of the final will cover material from only the second half of the semester. Both exams are a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and essay. Makeup exams are not permitted unless you missed the exam due to an Official University Absence or a properly documented illness. Note that the final exam will be held during the course's University scheduled time for finals. Following University policies, any rescheduling arrangements for the final exam must be made by e-mail one week prior to the last day of classes. The midterm is worth 20% and the final is worth 25% of your grade.

REVEL READING QUIZZES: The course will include online quizzes that you must take through REVEL, Pearson's online system. The online quizzes follow your textbook chapter readings and will help you come to class better prepared. *The quizzes must be completed before class on the day the chapter is due.* Late REVEL quizzes will not be accepted. All REVEL assignments are open book but must be completed individually. You will be graded on a total points system. These quizzes are worth a combined 10% of your grade.

CURRENT EVENTS QUIZZES: There will be at least three unannounced quizzes covering current events in American politics in *The New York Times* at various times throughout the semester. If the quiz is given in class, you must be present that day to receive points. You will be able to drop your lowest current events quiz score. Together, these are worth 10% of your final grade.

CURRENT EVENTS PRESENTATION: You will sign up with a partner for a specific class day to give a presentation on some current event in American politics that pertains to the topic of the week. For example, if you sign up for the week we are covering Congress, your presentation must be on some current event in the news regarding Congress. You and your partner will come to the front of the classroom, present for 5-10 minutes on something of political significance in the U.S. in the news that week, and then lead a discussion and field questions from your classmates. I will provide a grade rubric for these presentations. This presentation is worth 10% of your grade.

POLICY MEMO: You are required to write one 1-page policy memo on the topic you chose for your debate. The specific readings associated with the memos will be uploaded to

LearningStudio. You are to write the memo as though you are a legislative aide for a U.S. representative who has tasked you with writing a memo about this issue.

An example policy memo is uploaded to LearningStudio. *You must follow that format exactly. Use 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman Font.* A grading rubric for the memo is uploaded to LearningStudio. The memos will receive a 3% grade deduction for each day it is late past the deadline. For example, a memo that would have received an 87% that is one day late will receive an 84%. *You are encouraged to turn in a draft of the policy memo two weeks before the due date.* The policy memo is worth 15% of your grade.

DEBATES: There will be four debates the last week of class. You will choose which issue and side of the issue you would like to take (this is the same issue on which you will write your policy memo). There are eight people per topic, four people on the affirmative and four on the negative side. Explicit instructions on the debate can be found in LearningStudio, as well as the grade rubric and readings you may consider as you prep for the debates. The debate is worth 10% of your grade.

GRADING SCALE

You will receive a final grade according to the scale below. If a grade falls at 0.5 between a + or -, the grade will be rounded up. For example, a final grade of 92.5 will become a 93, a final grade of 89.5 will become a 90, etc.

A = 93-100	C+ = 77-79
A- = 90-92	C = 73-76
B+ = 87-89	C- = 70-72
B = 83-86	D+ = 67-69
B- = 80-82	D = 60-66
	F = < 60

COURSE READINGS

There is one textbook for this class. The book is available through the TCU bookstore, Pearson's website, or from other retailers. Be certain your textbook comes with the Access Card for REVEL as we will be using the online materials as part of the course [Used or rented copies generally do not include the Access Card for REVEL].

Shea, Daniel M., Joanne Connor Green, and Christopher E. Smith. 2015. *Living Democracy, 2014 Elections and Updates Edition (4th Edition)*. Pearson.

Current events will play a significant role in the class, so you must regularly read *The New York Times* (available online through the library and in hard copy across campus) to keep up with current events. Other readings for the policy memo and debates will be uploaded to LearningStudio.

GENERAL POLICIES BY WHICH I WILL ABIDE

1. *Email Communication*
 - I will return emails within 24 hours during weekdays.
 - Generally, I am unable to reply to emails sent after 5pm or emails sent over the weekend.
2. *Grading*
 - I will grade papers/assignments/exams within two weeks.
 - I will keep the gradebook in LearningStudio up-to-date.
 - I will provide you with grading rubrics when applicable
3. *Face-to-Face Communication*
 - I am always available and happy to meet with you in my office.
 - Feel free to email for an appointment or drop in.

GENERAL POLICIES BY WHICH YOU SHOULD ABIDE—“The 3 Rs”

1. *Be Resourceful—*
 - Search for instructions/definitions online if it’s something you can find an answer to yourself.
 - Before asking me a logistical question about class, thoroughly read and search the syllabus for an answer. If it’s not in there, then ask.
2. *Be Respectful—*
 - Use proper classroom etiquette
 - Take notes and come prepared
 - DO NOT search the internet, text, or check email during class. I have a zero tolerance policy on this and will not hesitate to ask you to leave the first time I see it.
 - Be civil and respectful to classmates
 - Use proper email etiquette. You should always start and end emails using proper salutations. Emails should also be written with proper grammar, full sentences, punctuation, etc. Write in proper English, not “textlish.”
3. *Be Responsible—*
 - Show up, meet deadlines, study hard, engage in class, plan ahead, ask questions, invite challenge.
 - If you do all these things, you can do well in this class.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

**Academic Misconduct (Sec. 3.4 from the Student Handbook) –Any act that violates the academic integrity of the institution is considered academic misconduct. The procedures

used to resolve suspected acts of academic misconduct are available in the offices of Academic Deans and the Office of Campus Life. Specific examples include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating: Copying from another student's test paper, laboratory report, other report, or computer files and listings; using, during any academic exercise, material and/or devices not authorized by the person in charge of the test; collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or laboratory without permission; knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in its entirety or in part, the contents of a test or other assignment unauthorized for release; substituting for another student or permitting another student to substitute for oneself.
- Plagiarism: The appropriation, theft, purchase or obtaining by any means another's work, and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of that work as one's own offered for credit. Appropriation includes the quoting or paraphrasing of another's work without giving credit therefore.
- Collusion: The unauthorized collaboration with another in preparing work offered for credit.

DISABILITY

Texas Christian University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 regarding students with disabilities. Eligible students seeking accommodations should contact the Coordinator of Student Disabilities Services in the Center for Academic Services located in Sadler Hall, 1010. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations. Further information can be obtained from the Center for Academic Services, TCU Box 297710, Fort Worth, TX 76129, or at (817) 257-6567.

Adequate time must be allowed to arrange accommodations and accommodations are not retroactive; therefore, students should contact the Coordinator as soon as possible in the academic term for which they are seeking accommodations. *Each eligible student is responsible for presenting relevant, verifiable, professional documentation and/or assessment reports to the Coordinator.* Guidelines for documentation may be found at http://www.acs.tcu.edu/disability_documentation.asp.

Students with emergency medical information or needing special arrangements in case a building must be evacuated should discuss this information with their instructor/professor as soon as possible.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Questions and ideas of American Democracy

August 25: Introduction

August 27: LD, Appendix 1: Declaration of Independence

Week 2: Constitution

Sept. 1: LD, Chapter 2, “Early governance and the constitutional framework”

Sept. 3: LD, Appendix 2: U.S. Constitution
Complete Ch. 2 REVEL quiz

Week 3: Federalism

Sept. 8: LD, Chapter 3, “Federalism”

Sept. 10: No Class (conference)
Complete Ch. 3 REVEL quiz

Week 4: Congress

Sept. 15: LD, Chapter 6, “Congress”

Sept. 17: LD, Chapter 6, “Congress”
Complete Ch. 6 REVEL quiz

Week 5: Presidency

Sept. 22: LD, Chapter 7, “The Presidency”

Sept. 24: LD, Chapter 7, “The Presidency”
Complete Ch. 7 REVEL quiz

Week 6: Bureaucracy

Sept. 29: LD, Chapter 8, “Bureaucracy”
Complete Ch. 8 REVEL quiz

Oct. 1: CATCH UP DAY

Week 7: MIDTERM

Oct. 6: CATCH UP/CAMPUS CARRY DISCUSSION
Rough draft of policy memo due

Oct. 8: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8: Judiciary

Oct. 13: No Class (Fall Break)

Oct. 15: LD, Chapter 9, "The Judiciary"

Week 9: Judiciary

Oct. 20: LD, Chapter 9, "The Judiciary"

Oct. 22: Judiciary/Civil Liberties
Complete Ch. 9 REVEL quiz

Week 10: Civil Liberties

Oct. 27: LD, Chapter 4, "Civil Liberties"
Policy Memo Due

Oct. 29: LD, Chapter 4, "Civil Liberties"
Complete Ch. 4 REVEL quiz

Week 11: Civil Rights

Nov. 3: LD, Chapter 5, "Civil Rights"

Nov. 5: LD, Chapter 5, "Civil Rights"
Complete Ch. 5 REVEL quiz

Week 12: Political Socialization and Public Opinion

Nov. 10: LD, Chapter 10, "Political Socialization and Public Opinion"

Nov. 12: LD, Chapter 10, "Political Socialization and Public Opinion"
Complete Ch. 10 REVEL quiz

Week 13: The Media

Nov. 17: LD, Chapter 11, "The Politics of the Media"

Nov. 19: No Class (conference)
Complete Ch. 11 REVEL quiz

Week 14: No Class (Give Thanks!)

Week 15: Elections & Political Parties

Dec. 1: LD, Chapter 13, "Elections and Political Parties"
Complete Ch. 13 REVEL quiz

Dec. 3: *Resolved:* Increased gun control will curb gun violence
Resolved: Enhanced interrogation techniques for suspected enemy
combatants are constitutionally justified.

Week 16: Policy Debates

Dec. 8: *Resolved:* Increased border security will decrease illegal immigration.
Resolved: Affirmative action advances racial equality.

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, Dec. 17, 11:30am-2pm