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## GOVERNMENT 2301: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

**Course Homepage.** <http://hccs.blackboard.com/webct/entryPageIns.dowebct>

**Course Description.** In this course, we will examine several topics and problems central to the understanding and practice of American politics. Since this is a presidential election year, we will begin with topics most relevant to the elections. These include democratic theory, the political party system, the electoral system, campaign financing, media, and public opinion. The next set of topics will focus on the constitutional foundations: the United States Constitution, federalism, and the Texas Constitution. Our final topic will be interest groups. Throughout, we will focus on the continuities and changes that have characterized the American political system.

This is a hybrid course, which means that we will meet in class once a week. Much of the work of the class will be done on the internet.

The course will be organized in a series of modules, with each module covering one of the major topics of the course. There will be fourteen modules, one for each week of the class. Each module will consist of some combination of readings, quiz, lecture notes, non-graded activities, and exercises. Go to the Blackboard site for this class to see the specifics for each module.

**Course Objectives.** The main objective of the course is to broaden and deepen our understanding of American politics. This objective has at least three parts. The first part is to develop a body of shared knowledge about American politics. The second part is to become acquainted with and understand a number of important concepts and theories with which to make sense of American politics. The third part is to develop some of the skills necessary to the understanding and practice of American politics.

**Course Requirements.** The course requirements are:

Quizzes	30% of the course grade
Exercises	50% of the course grade
Class Presentation	10% of the course grade
Class Participation	10% of the course grade

- Quizzes

1. There will be a total of fourteen quizzes. There will be a quiz for each module. The quiz will be over the readings and lectures for that module.
2. Each quiz must be taken by a specified date as stated in the calendar. If the deadline for a quiz passes, you can no longer take that quiz. The grade for a missed quiz is 0. Make sure you keep up with the schedule for the quizzes and take them on time.
3. The quizzes will be taken online and you must complete each quiz within a specified amount of time. The time allotted for a quiz is based on the concept of one minute per question plus five minutes. For example, you will have twenty-five minutes to take a twenty question quiz and forty-five minutes to take a forty question quiz.
4. One important caution to keep in mind. When you take the online quizzes, Blackboard provides a clock that shows how much time is left for the quiz. However, the time shown will not change until you click on an answer choice for a question. Thus, the amount of time shown by Blackboard can be misleading. The way to have a more accurate and up to date statement of the time remaining for a quiz is to have a regular clock or watch that you can view as you take the quiz.

- Exercises

1. There are a total of thirteen exercises, but you only need to do six of them.
2. Everyone must do Exercises #7 and #11.
3. For the remaining four exercises, select any four from Exercises #1, #2, #3, #4, #5, #6, #8, #9, #10, #12 and #13.
4. If you do more than six exercises, I will grade only Exercises #7, #11, and the first four other exercises you submit. Browse through the exercises and decide which six you want to do.
5. Each exercise you do must be submitted by the due date specified for that exercise.

- Class Presentation

See the instructions for the class presentation.

- Class Participation

See the instructions for the class participation.

**Make-Up Policy.** The general make-up policy for work missed is the following:

Quizzes:	No make-up is possible. The grade for a missed quiz is 0.
Exercises:	For most exercises, there will be a five point penalty for each calendar day an exercise is late.
Class Presentation:	No make-up is possible. The grade for missing your class presentation is 0.
Class Participation:	No make-up is possible. The grade for a missed class participation is a 0.

**Extra Credit.** There is no extra credit work for the course. Given the amount of required work, it is best to concentrate your time and efforts on the required work. Keep in mind that a 0 for a quiz, exercise, or the class presentation significantly lowers your overall grade average for the course. Make sure you do all the work for the class in a timely manner and by the specified deadlines. Give yourself a margin of error. Don't wait until the deadline to turn in work. You can always turn in assignments early.

**Course Attendance and Withdrawal Policy.** Attendance will be taken on a daily basis. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw from the class. A student may officially drop at the registrar's office anytime up to and including November 6. Students who do not officially drop from the class will receive a course grade based on the work submitted to meet the course requirements stated above.

Students who take a course for the third time or more face significant tuition/fee increases at HCC and other Texas public colleges and universities. If you are considering course withdrawal because you are not earning passing grades, confer with your instructor or a counselor as early as possible about your study habits, reading and writing homework, test-taking skills, attendance, course participation, and opportunities for tutoring or other assistance that might be available.

**AskOnline.** All government students are encouraged to use HCC's online tutoring system for help with any GOVT class. Questions submitted to the ASK queue will be answered within 24 hours – and usually much before that. Tutors are on duty 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Online tutors will not do homework for you, but they will guide you in the right direction. To maximize the effectiveness of the system, be specific when you ask questions, and let the tutor know what class you are taking. You will receive two responses – one from an English tutor and one from a government tutor.

Registering for online tutoring is easy. Go to [www.hccs.askonline.net](http://www.hccs.askonline.net). (This link is on the front page of Blackboard.) Select a user name and password that you will remember. Use any e-mail address, and add your student ID number (W number). It will probably take five minutes to set up your askonline account. After that, you can submit questions in seconds. Tutor responses are not e-mailed to you. To see the answers, log back in to the system and click the bright yellow NEW button.

**International Students.** Receiving a W in a course may affect the status of your student Visa. Once a W is assigned for the course, it will not be changed to an F because of the visa consideration. Please contact the International Student Office at 713.718.8520 if you have any questions about your visa status and other transfer issues.

**Students with Disabilities.** Students who require reasonable accommodations for disabilities are encouraged to report to Room SJAC 102, or call 713.718.6164 to make necessary arrangements. Faculty are only authorized to provide accommodations requested by the Disability Support Services Office.

**Course Readings.** The three textbooks for the course can be purchased at the bookstore at HCCS Central College, 1300 Holman. Take this syllabus with you to make sure you get the correct books.

The three texts for the course are:

1. Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, and Margaret Weir, *We the People*, 6th ed. (Norton, 2007) ISBN 0-393-17882-X
2. Neal Tannahill, *Texas Government*, 9th ed. (Longman, 2007) ISBN 0-321-41466-7
3. David Canon, *et al.*, eds., *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*, 4th ed. (Norton, 2006) ISBN 0-393-92618-4

The bookstore should have the *We the People* and *The Enduring Debate* textbooks packaged together. The package is significantly less expensive than buying the two books separately. Ask the bookstore if they have the package. The ISBN for the package is 0-393-16874-3.

Several additional readings will be assigned. Stay tuned.

### **Course Topics and Schedule of Readings.**

<u>Week of</u>	<u>Module Topics and Readings</u>
Aug 24	COURSE OVERVIEW
Aug 31	I. DEMOCRACY AND AMERICAN POLITICAL CULTURE <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Declaration of Independence</i> in Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, <i>We the People</i>, pp. A1-A3</li><li>2. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, <i>We the People</i>, Ch. 1 and pp. 197-214</li><li>3. Tannahill, <i>Texas Government</i>, Ch. 1</li><li>4. Louis Hartz, "From The Liberal Tradition in America" in <i>The Enduring Debate</i>, pp. 3-8</li><li>5. Gordon Wood, "From The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787" in <i>The Enduring Debate</i>, pp. 9-16</li><li>6. Rogers Smith, "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America" in <i>The Enduring Debate</i>, pp. 17-26</li></ol>
Sep 7	II. POLITICAL PARTIES I <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, <i>We the People</i>, Ch. 9</li><li>2. Morris Fiorina, "The Decline of Collective Responsibility" in <i>The Enduring Debate</i>, pp. 374-384</li><li>3. Gerald Pomper, "Parliamentary Government in the United States?" in <i>The Enduring Debate</i>, pp. 385-396</li></ol>

Sep 14

III. POLITICAL PARTIES II

1. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, Ch. 6
2. Morris Fiorina, "What Culture Wars?" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 415-418
3. James Q. Wilson, "How Divided Are We?" (Access in Module 3 Readings on the Blackboard course website)
4. Morris Fiorina, "Polarized America: Letter in Response to Wilson" (Access in Module 3 Readings on the Blackboard course website)

Sep 21

IV. ELECTIONS: ELECTION SYSTEMS AND REDISTRICTING

1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. 351-359, 443-448
2. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, pp. 159-165, 168-178, 188-189
3. Dean Murphy, "Who Should Redistrict?" (Access in Module 4 Readings on the Blackboard course website)
4. Michael P. McDonald, "Regulating Redistricting" (Access in Module 4 Readings on the Blackboard course website)

Sep 28

V. ELECTIONS: PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION PROCESS

1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. 361-377
2. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, pp. 165-167
3. Larry Sabato, "Politics: America's Missing Constitutional Link" (Access in Module 5 Readings on the Blackboard course website)
4. Bruce Stinebrickner, "The Presidential Nomination Process: The Beginnings of a New Era" (Access in Module 5 Readings on the Blackboard course website)

Oct 5

VI. ELECTIONS: GENERAL ELECTION

1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, Ch. 8 and pp. 377-387
2. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, Ch. 4 and pp. 181-187
3. Louis Menand, "The Unpolitical Animal" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 345-353
5. Bob Williams, "Election Fraud: Remains Commonplace" (Access in Module 6 Readings on the Blackboard course website)
6. Phil Keisling, "Election Fraud, American Style" (Access in Module 6 Readings on the Blackboard course website)
7. Meg E. Cox, "Access Denied" (Access in Module 6 Readings on the Blackboard course website)

Oct 12 VII. ELECTIONS: ELECTORAL COLLEGE

1. *Constitution of the United States*, Article I (Section 3), Article II and Amendments 12, 20, 23, 25
2. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. 359-360
3. Alan B. Morrison, "A New Fix for the Electoral College" (Access in Module 7 Readings on the Blackboard course website)
4. Will Hively, "Math Against Tyranny" (Access in Module 7 Readings on the Blackboard course website)

Oct 19 VIII. CAMPAIGN FINANCING

1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. 387-395, 422-428
2. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, pp. 178-181
3. Steven Levin, "Keeping it Clean: Public Financing in American Elections" (Access in Module 8 Readings on the Blackboard course website)
4. John Samples, "Taxpayer Financing of Campaigns" (Access in Module 8 Readings on the Blackboard course website)

Oct 26 IX. MASS MEDIA

1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, Ch. 7
2. Robert Bresler, "Media Bias and the Culture Wars" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 312-314
3. Howard Myrick, "The Search for Objectivity in Journalism" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 314-320
4. Brent Cunningham, "Rethinking Objective Journalism" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 320-329

Nov 2 X. PUBLIC OPINION

1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, Ch. 6
2. George Gallup, "Polling the Public" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 293-300
3. Richard Morin, "Choice Words" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 301-305

Nov 6 LAST DAY FOR STUDENT WITHDRAWAL

- Nov 9 XI. UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION
1. "Declaration of Independence" in Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. A1-A3
  2. Constitution of the United States in Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. A8-A19
  3. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, Ch. 2
  4. Madison, "Federalist #51" in Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. A23-A24
  5. Madison, "Federalist #10" in Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, pp. A20-A22
  6. Michael Kammen, "The Nature of American Constitutionalism" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 37-45
  7. Charles Beard, "From An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 56-61
  8. Robert Brown, "From Charles Beard and the Constitution" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 62-67
- Nov 16 XII. AMERICAN FEDERALISM
1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, Ch. 3 and pp. 113-117
  2. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, Ch. 3
  3. Madison, "Federalist #46" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 82-86
  4. Paul Peterson, "From the Price of Federalism" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 73-81
  5. Martha Derthick, "American Federalism: Half-Full or Half-Empty?" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 91-97
- Nov 23 XIII. TEXAS CONSTITUTION
1. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, Ch. 2
- Nov 30 XIV. INTEREST GROUPS
1. Ginsberg, Lowi, and Weir, *We the People*, Ch. 11
  2. Tannahill, *Texas Government*, Ch. 5
  3. Alexis Tocqueville, "Political Associations in the United States" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 420-423
  4. Mancur Olson, "The Logic of Collective Action" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 424-433
  5. Theda Skocpol, "Associations Without Members" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 434-445
  6. Jonathan Rauch, "The Hyperpluralism Trap" in *The Enduring Debate*, pp. 459-466
- Dec 9 FINAL EXAMINATION (11:30-1 class will have exam at 11 AM)
- Dec 11 FINAL EXAMINATION (10-11:30 class will have exam at 10 AM)

**Class Attendance Schedule.** The class will meet on Tuesdays during the semester.

**Quiz Schedule.** There are a total of fourteen quizzes. All fourteen quizzes are required. Each quiz is to be taken online and must be submitted by its due date. Here is an overview of the quiz due dates.

Quiz 1	Monday, September 1
Quiz 2	Monday, September 8
Quiz 3	Monday, September 15
Quiz 4	Monday, September 22
Quiz 5	Monday, September 29
Quiz 6	Monday, October 6
Quiz 7	Monday, October 13
Quiz 8	Monday, October 20
Quiz 9	Monday, October 27
Quiz 10	Monday, November 3
Quiz 11	Monday, November 10
Quiz 12	Monday, November 17
Quiz 13	Monday, November 24
Quiz 14	Monday, December 1

**Exercise Schedule.** There are a total of thirteen exercises. You must do six of these thirteen exercises. Exercises 7 and 11 are required. Select any four exercises from the remaining exercises. Each exercise must be submitted online by its due date. Here is an overview of the exercise due dates.

Exercise 1	Saturday, September 13
Exercise 2	Saturday, September 20
Exercise 3	Saturday, September 27
Exercise 4	Saturday, October 4
Exercise 5	Saturday, October 11
Exercise 6	Monday, November 3
Exercise 7	Saturday, October 25 (required)
Exercise 8	Saturday, November 1
Exercise 9	Saturday, November 8
Exercise 10	Saturday, November 15
Exercise 11	Saturday, November 22 (required)
Exercise 12	Monday, December 1
Exercise 13	Saturday, December 6

**Class Presentation Schedule.** See the instructions for the class presentations.

**Class Participation Schedule.** See the instructions for the class participation.