

**Common Course Syllabus
GOVT 2305: Federal Government
Department of Social Sciences
South Plains College**

Department: Social Sciences

Discipline: Government

Course Number: GOVT 2305

Course Title: Federal Government

Credit: 3 Lecture, 0 Lab

This course partially satisfies a core curriculum requirement: Government/Political Science Foundational Component Area (070)

Available Formats: Conventional (Fully Face-to-Face), Fully Online, Hybrid, ITV

Campus: Levelland, Downtown Center, Plainview, Dual Credit

Textbook: Varies according to instructor. Refer to each instructor's instructions for textbook requirements.

Course Specific Instructions: Each instructor will attach his/her course with specific instructions.

Course Description: Origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, structure and powers of the national government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties and civil rights.

Course Objectives addressed:

1. **critical thinking:** to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
2. **communication:** to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
3. **social responsibility:** to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
4. **personal responsibility:** to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO):

Students who have completed this course will:

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

Course Requirements: To maximize a student's potential to complete this course, he/she should attend all class meetings, complete all homework assignments and examinations in a timely manner, and complete all other projects or papers as assigned in the instructor's specific instructions.

Course Evaluation: See the instructor's course information sheet for specific items used in evaluating student performance.

Attendance Policy: Students must make every effort to attend face-to-face courses. Whenever absences become excessive and in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to absences, the instructor may recommend that the student withdraw from the course. Each instructor will have additional information about attendance on his/her course information sheet.

Dropping a Course: Students may drop courses through Texan Connect, the Admissions and Records Office, or Advising and Testing Center through the late registration period. After late registration has closed, a student must complete the online [Student Initiated Drop Request](#) to drop a course.

Students may also drop courses in person at any campus location by completing a Student Initiated Drop Form. Complete a [Student Initiated Drop Form](#) and return the signed form to the Levelland Admissions and Records Office, the Student Support Center at the Lubbock Downtown Center, the Lubbock Career and Technical Center, or Plainview Center. You must have a picture ID to complete the drop.

A mark of "W" will be given for student-initiated drops that occur prior to and through the last day to drop as indicated in the online Academic Calendar found here: <https://www.southplainscollege.edu/academiccalendar/index.php>.

Syllabus Statements: For information about Artificial Intelligence, Disabilities, Non-Discrimination, Intellectual Exchange, Title IX Pregnancy Accommodations, CARE (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation) Team, Campus Concealed Carry, and COVID-19, please use this link: <https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements/>.

Fall 2026
GOVT 2305-153 Federal Government
Department of Social Sciences
South Plains College

Instructor Information

Dr. Jonathan Martin

Office: Student Services Building Room 116

E-mail: jmartin@southplainscollege.edu

Office Phone: 806-716-2198

Office Hours:

- Monday: 9:00–10:30am
- Tuesday: 11:00 am–12:00pm
- Wednesday: 9:00–10:30 am and 1:00–3:00 pm
- Thursday: 11:00am–12:00pm
- Friday: 10:00–11:00am

Textbook

We are using an OER (Open Educational Resource) from OpenStax. The textbook is FREE and available online through this link:

American Government 4e by Glen Kurtz and Sylvie Waskiewicz

ISBN-13: 978-1-961584-79-2

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-4e>

OpenStax allows you to read the textbook online at the URL I have provided, or you can download it to your computer as a PDF file. In addition to the textbook, I may assign other reading material in Blackboard throughout the semester.

Participation Statement

For online courses, students **MUST** actively participate by completing an academic assignment by the official census date **September 9**. Students who do not do so, will be dropped from the course.

Attendance Policy: Since this is an online course, I will not take daily attendance. However, you are expected to complete your work on time in accordance with the course calendar. You may be dropped from the course if you miss two or more consecutive weeks of activities. Please email me if you are sick or have another valid reason for a prolonged absence.

Blackboard Information

We will be using Blackboard for this course. Blackboard is used for announcements, completing assignments, emails, discussion boards and the gradebook. You will also find additional resource materials to help you this semester, such as lecture notes, power point presentations, video clips, audio clips, and more.

Blackboard can be accessed by logging into the MySPC portal or going directly to <https://southplainscollege.blackboard.com>.

Troubleshooting

If you experience technical difficulties with Blackboard, please submit at Blackboard help ticket on this webpage: <http://www.southplainscollege.edu/instructional-technology/Help.php>

Grading Scale

A: 89.5-100%
B: 79.5-89.4%
C: 69.5-79.4%
D: 59.5-69.4%
F: Below 59.5%

Overall Grade Formula

Exams	(30%)
Quizzes	(10%)
Discussions	(20%)
Short Answer Assignments	(30%)
Letter to the Editor	(10%)

Assignments

Exams (30%)

There are three exams in this course. Each exam will include 35 multiple-choice and true/false questions, and may also include some free-response questions. I use Honorlock to proctor exams, so you will need access to a laptop and webcam. Exams 1 and 2 are not cumulative, but Exam 3 may include some cumulative or capstone questions.

Quizzes (10%)

Most weeks that cover a textbook chapter will include a quiz. Generally, a quiz will have at least 10 questions (e.g., multiple choice, true/false, or free response) based on the assigned reading and videos for that particular week. Your *two lowest quiz grades* will be dropped. Also, the syllabus quiz will count as a regular quiz.

Discussions (20%)

There are four discussion assignments in this course. Some discussion threads might focus on a current event in American politics, while other discussions will examine the structure of the federal government. The purpose of the discussions is for students to demonstrate their knowledge of course material and engage with other students on important topics in American politics.

For each discussion, you will be required to make an initial post in which you answer the question(s) posed in the prompt. After you make your initial post, you must read the posts from your fellow classmates and make two additional posts in response to posts from other students. While I do accept late discussion assignments, there is a late penalty. Each discussion assignment will have detailed instructions.

Short Answer Assignments (30%)

There are four short answer assignments in this course. Each assignment will ask you to answer a series of questions covering important material from the textbook and lectures. It is important that you accurately answer all parts of the questions and cite the textbook (or another reputable source) to support your answers. All short answer assignments will be submitted through Blackboard. Late short answer assignments will be accepted, but there is a late penalty.

Letter to the Editor (10%)

There is one essay in this course with a required word count of at least 500 words. Detailed instructions will be provided in Blackboard.

Policies and Procedures

Syllabus Statements

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<https://www.southplainscollege.edu/syllabusstatements/>

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, including cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or unauthorized assistance, will not be tolerated in this course. This includes, but is not limited to, copying another student's work, submitting work completed by someone else, or using unapproved tools or sources. The use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT or similar, to generate, assist with, or complete any part of an assignment is strictly prohibited. The penalty for using AI is a zero for the assignment.

In addition, if a student cites a source in an assignment, I may request reasonable evidence that the student accessed and used the source directly, such as notes, page numbers, or screenshots. Failure to provide such evidence may be treated as academic dishonesty. In short, students are expected to complete their work with honesty, integrity, and in accordance with college policies.

Course Withdrawals

The last day to withdraw/drop with a grade of "W" is **December 3**. It is the student's responsibility to withdraw from this course. Otherwise, students will be assigned their earned letter grade at the end of the course. Course averages will be updated twice each week, and guidance will be provided throughout the term to help students decide whether they need to drop the class or not. For more information regarding drops/withdrawals, please visit

<https://www.southplainscollege.edu/admission-aid/apply/schedulechanges.php>.

Course Schedule

Week	Assignments	Due Date
1: Introduction	Syllabus Quiz	Aug 25
2: The Constitution	Quiz, Discussion	Sept 1
3: Federalism	Quiz	Sept 8

Week	Assignments	Due Date
4: Civil Liberties	Quiz, Short Answer Assignment #1	Sept 15
5: Exam 1	Exam 1	Sept 22
6: Public Opinion	Quiz	Sept 29
7: Congress	Quiz, Discussion	Oct 6
8: Presidency	Quiz, Short Answer Assignment #2	Oct 13
9: The Federal Courts	Quiz, Discussion	Oct 20
10: Exam 2	Exam 2	Oct 27
11: Voting and Elections	Quiz, Discussion	Nov 4
12: Parties and Interest Groups	Quiz, Short Answer Assignment #3	Nov 10
13: Essay	Letter to the Editor	Nov 17
14: Civil Rights	Quiz	Nov 24
15: The Media	Short Answer Assignment #4	Dec 1
16: Exam 3	Exam 3	Dec 8