

Common Course Syllabus

Government 2305

Revised March 26, 2024

(As required by the Texas Legislature and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board)

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.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment: A writing assignment rubric will be used to determine the extent of improvement that the students have gained during the semester.

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/>.

Nelson Course Syllabus GOVT 2305
Federal Government (Federal Constitution and Topics)

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.

Assistant Professor	Email	Office Location and Hours
Ms. Be Nelson, M.A.	hnelson@southplainscollege.edu	Office: AD132, <i>Levelland Campus</i> Office Phone: (806) 716-2466 Office Hours: <i>Mondays</i> 11:00AM-Noon, 2:20PM-3:20PM <i>Tuesdays/Thursdays</i> 2:20PM-3:50PM <i>Wednesdays</i> 11:00AM-Noon <i>Fridays</i> 10:00AM-Noon *Please email to schedule in-person or virtual meetings.

COURSE RESOURCES

Krutz, Glen, and Sylvie Waskiewicz. *American Government*. 4th ed., OpenStax, 2025,
<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-4e>.

Additional Materials: Instructor will provide additional materials from a variety of sources including current event articles.

Course Structure: This online course will include videos, PowerPoints, readings, quizzes, and tests. All materials, including the class required textbook, may be found on or accessed via Blackboard.

Attendance: To participate in this online-only course, it is essential to maintain a reliable internet connection. Students must ensure their computers (desktop or laptop) and internet access are functioning correctly, as technical issues will not be accepted as excuses for incomplete or missed assignments. If any problems arise with technology or connectivity that affect graded work, contact your instructor immediately. Please note that *tablets or iPads* may not provide full functionality, so using a desktop or laptop is necessary.

Students are responsible for keeping up with all course information and announcements. It is advised to log into Blackboard daily to stay informed about updates, changes, and new notices. Regularly reviewing the course homepage and announcements is important, and checking school email each day ensures you receive instructor communications. Course rules and expectations may be updated. Printing, saving, photographing, or recording graded course materials is strictly forbidden.

Student Performance: Maintain consistent standards all semester because extra credit is not available, and late catch-up time is limited. Failure on any **three** consecutive assignments, discussions, or quizzes may result in being dropped with a failing grade without further notice. Repeated late submissions can also lead to being dropped at the instructor's discretion. When in doubt, please email the instructor for guidance.

GENERAL POLICIES

- **Behavior:** Students should treat both each other and the instructor with respect. For guidance, consider these words from the late Justice Antonin Scalia: “I attack ideas. I don’t attack people. And some very good people have some very bad ideas. And if you can’t separate the two, you gotta get another day job.” Any behavior that disrupts other students’ learning will not be accepted.
- **Getting help:** If you are having trouble with readings, videos, or assignments, please send an email. The sooner you reach out for assistance, the simpler it will be to resolve your issue. I cannot help unless I know about it. When emailing, remember to include your full name, course number, and section number in the subject line (e.g., GOVT 2305-152; where 2305 is the course number and 152 is the section number). This will help ensure a speedy response. Communication needs to remain courteous and professional in both emails and course assignments. Any disruptive or disrespectful conduct can lead to losing assignment credit and possible referral to the Office of Student Conduct.
- **Academic Honesty:** Adherence to honesty is required of all students. Plagiarism and cheating, including copying answers from external sources, other students, or using AI-generated work, are strictly prohibited and may result in dismissal from South Plains College. Instances of academic dishonesty on examinations will lead to course failure and may result in further disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from South Plains College.
- **AI (artificial intelligence):** If there is reasonable suspicion that a student used artificial intelligence to complete their assignment, the student will be notified and must arrange a video meeting with the professor. Not attending or failing to explain adequately during this meeting will result in a grade of zero. AI can be useful, but genuine learning comes from personal effort.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

South Plains College policies concerning Disabilities, Non-discrimination, Title IX Pregnancy and Parenting Accommodations, CARE (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation), Intellectual Exchange, Campus Concealed Carry, COVID-19, and AI (Artificial Intelligence) can be found here: [Syllabus Statements](#).

Student Absence for Observation of Religious Holy Days: A student who is absent from classes for the observation of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence **if, not later than the fifteenth day after the first day of the semester, the student had notified the instructor of each scheduled class that the student would be absent for a religious holy day.**

If you have a disability, please contact me in the first week to discuss accommodations. Reach out with any concerns so we can make a plan.

EVALUATION METHOD

Quizzes	30%
Exams	40%
Assignments	20%
Discussion	10%

Grading: The grading scale will be as follows:

90-100 = A	80-89 = B	70-79 = C	60-69 = D	59 or below = F
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You earn your grade; that grade is entered. Grades are updated biweekly (due date). Unsubmitted work will automatically be given a zero until late work is accepted and graded. If you have a question concerning grades, please email the instructor. Please allow for 24 hours for an email response.

- **Quizzes:** There will multiple quizzes. Missed deadlines require contacting the instructor. Students receive up to two attempts per quiz, but the **average score** will be recorded. **This method helps prevent students from viewing questions before they are prepared.**
- **Examinations:** Three examinations will be administered, collectively accounting for 40% of the final grade. The final examination is not cumulative. Exam formats may include any combination of multiple-choice, short answer, or fill-in-the-blank questions. **HonorLock** will be used to proctor exams. Requests for make-up exams must be submitted in advance to the instructor via email and will require supporting documentation; however, no make-up opportunities will be provided for the final examination due to end-of-semester time constraints. No matter what, please email the instructor if you miss an exam. Please note that assignment due dates will be adjusted during the last week of the summer session; be sure to pay attention to deadlines (check your calendar every Monday to ensure you do not miss deadlines).
- **Assignments:** Students will be given a reasonable number of **assignments** designed to enhance their knowledge and understanding. Assignments carry more weight than individual quizzes due to their lower frequency. It is advisable for students not to rely on offsetting a zero grade. Late submissions may incur a deduction of **10 points per day** beyond the deadline. Missed deadlines require contacting the instructor.
- **Discussion Threads:** Each semester, I organize discussion threads on topics related to Texas government. For each thread, you are required to write an initial post. Greek philosopher The Greek philosopher Plato once wrote: "Opinion is the medium between knowledge and ignorance." If you make a claim please provide supporting evidence. If you use outside sources, please provide evidence and proper citations using the citation guides ([SPC Citation Guides](#)). Additionally, you must respond substantively to at least two classmates. Each reply should be between 100-150 words. Make sure your responses add meaningful discussion by asking questions, providing additional information, or offering analysis. Simply agreeing or disagreeing will not receive credit.

You must log into your BlackBoard course to complete the Ice Breaker and Syllabus Quiz by September 9, 2026, the census date, or you will be automatically dropped from the course.

Tentative Course Schedule

The course runs for 16 weeks, with content organized by week for clarity. This schedule is subject to changes at the discretion of the professor.

Week	Topics	Read	Due
1	American Government and Civic Engagement	Ch. 1	Ice Breaker/Syllabus Quiz Ch. 1 Quiz
2-3	The Constitution and Its Origins	Ch. 2	Ch. 2 Quiz Assignment 1
4	American Federalism	Ch. 3	Ch. 3 Quiz
5	Civil Liberties	Ch. 4	Ch. 4 Quiz Discussion 1
6	Civil Rights	Ch. 5	Ch. 5 Quiz EXAM 1
7	The Politics of Public Opinion	Ch. 6	Ch. 6 Quiz
8	Voting and Elections	Ch. 7	Ch. 7 Quiz Assignment 2
9	The Media	Ch. 8	Ch. 8 Quiz
10	Political Parties	Ch. 9	Ch. 9 Quiz Discussion 2
11	Interest Groups and Lobbying	Ch. 10	Ch. 10 Quiz EXAM 2
12	Congress	Ch. 11	Ch. 11 Quiz Assignment 3
13	The Presidency	Ch. 12	Ch. 12 Quiz Discussion 3
14	The Courts	Ch. 13	Ch. 13 Quiz
15	The Bureaucracy Domestic Policy Foreign Policy	Ch. 15 Ch. 16 Ch. 17	Ch. 15, 16, 17 Combined Quiz
16	FINAL EXAMS DECEMBER 7-10, 2026		

***Please pay attention to due dates. Do not assume they follow a pattern.**

GETTING ADDITIONAL HELP

SPC Tutors: Tutoring is FREE for all currently enrolled students. Make an appointment or drop-in for help at any SPC location or online! Visit the link [SPC Tutoring](#) to learn more about how to book an appointment, view the tutoring schedule, and view tutoring locations.

Brainfuse: You also have 180 **FREE** minutes of tutoring with Brainfuse each week, and your hours reset every Monday morning. Log into Blackboard and click on the tools option from the left-hand menu bar. Click on the Brainfuse link and you will automatically be logged in for free tutoring. You may access Brainfuse tutors during the following times:

Monday - Thursday: 8pm - 8am
6pm Friday - 8am Monday morning

For questions regarding tutoring, please email tutoring@southplainscollege.edu or call (806) 716-2241.

