

**Common Course Syllabus
GOVT 2305
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

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 Purpose: Government 2305, as taught at South Plains College, is a reading intensive course designed to acquaint the learner with the origin and development of the US 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. This course meets the statutory requirements as set forth by the State of Texas.

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: Whenever absences become excessive and in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to absences, the student will be withdrawn 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>.

Spring 2026
GOVT 2305-001-H001: Federal Government
Department of Social Sciences
South Plains College

Instructor Information

Dr. Jonathan Martin

Office: Student Services Building Room 116

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Office Phone: 806-716-2198

Office Hours:

- Monday: 1pm-3pm
- Tuesday: 10am-11:30am
- Wednesday: 1pm-3pm
- Thursday: 10am-11:30am
- Friday: 10am-11am

Textbook

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

American Government 3e by Glen Kurtz and Sylvie Waskiewicz

ISBN: 978-1-951693-38-1

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e>

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.

Policies and Procedures

Participation Statement

For online courses, students **MUST** actively participate by completing an academic assignment by the official census date **January 28**. Students who do not do so, will be dropped from the course.

Syllabus Statements

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](#).

Course Withdrawals

The last day to withdraw from this class with a grade of 'W' is **April 30**. Students are expected to do the required reading and turn in assignments by the due dates. As stated, if you get behind in your assignments, it is likely you will not finish the course and/or fail.

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. If I determine that a student has used AI on an assignment:

1. On the first offense, the student will receive a zero on the assignment. In addition, the highest possible letter grade the student can earn in the course will be a C.
2. On the second offense, the student will receive a zero for the entire course, and I might file an academic dishonesty report to South Plains College.

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.

Student Grievance Procedure

A student grievance is a College related issue or condition that a student believes to be unfair, inequitable, discriminatory, or a hindrance to the educational process. A grievance also includes discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. You can find more information about the student grievance procedure here:

http://www.southplainscollege.edu/human_resources/policy_procedure/fm.php

Grading and Evaluation

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%

Final Grade Calculation

Exams	60%
Quizzes	20%
Participation	15%
Reflection Essay	5%

Exams (60%)

There are three exams, and your exam average comprises 60% of your overall grade. Furthermore, all three exams will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. For the first two exams, there is a late penalty if you miss the exam for an unexcused reason. If you miss Exam 3 (final exam), you will receive a zero. Finally, you are not allowed to take any exam early.

Quizzes (20%)

I will assign at least five quizzes throughout the semester, assigned in class or through Blackboard. Quiz formats may vary, and all quizzes will be based on assigned readings and course content. Your final quiz grade will be calculated as the average of all quiz scores and will count for 20% of your overall course grade. A late penalty will apply if a quiz is missed for an unexcused reason.

Participation (15%)

Active participation is essential to your success in this class and, more broadly, to a meaningful learning experience. Your participation grade is based on the following components:

- Attendance
- Participation Assignments
- Class Discussions and Engagement

Your participation grade reflects your overall engagement, preparation, attendance, and professionalism throughout the semester. Participation is evaluated holistically rather than by assigning fixed percentage weights to each component.

Attendance

I will track your attendance throughout the semester. You are allowed up to six unexcused absences without penalty. Starting with the seventh unexcused absence, 5 participation points will be deducted for each additional unexcused absence.

Each student is also allowed three late arrivals without penalty. Starting with the fourth late arrival, three participation points will be deducted for each additional late arrival.

Participation Assignments

Participation assignments are given regularly and are typically completed during class. These activities are discussion-based, and students who complete them in good faith will receive full credit.

If you are absent on a day a participation assignment is given, you must make up the assignment in class to receive credit. At the end of the semester, 5 participation points will be deducted for each participation assignment not completed or made up.

Class Discussions and Engagement

Students are expected to remain engaged during class. Discussions typically occur on every regular class day, and you can contribute to your participation grade by answering questions or offering meaningful, constructive input during class discussions.

Finally, I may deduct participation points for violations of classroom expectations, including but not limited to excessive or distracting cell phone use during instruction or class discussions, leaving class early without an excused reason, wearing earbuds or headphones during instructional activities, and being disrespectful or rude to other students or the instructor. These deductions are applied only when classroom behavior interferes with the learning environment or fails to meet basic standards of academic professionalism and mutual respect.

If you have questions about your participation grade throughout the semester, you are welcome to ask me for feedback on how you are doing.

Reflection Essay (5%)

A reflection essay is a short paper where you explain how a topic connects to your own life. In this class, you will write at least one reflection essay. I'll give you a news article to read, and then you'll write an essay that includes a summary of the article, any questions you had or parts that were unclear, and an explanation of how the information relates to or affects you personally. I'll provide detailed instructions for the assignment later in the semester. Also, I may assign a second reflection essay as well.

Course Schedule*

Week 1 (Jan 12 & 14)

Course Overview

Chapter 1: American Government and Civic Engagement

Week 2 (Jan 21)

No Class on Monday, January 19 (MLK Day)

Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins

Week 3 (Jan 26 & 28)

Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins

Week 4 (Feb 2 & 4)

Chapter 3: American Federalism

Week 5 (Feb 9 & 11)

Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (Part One)

Week 6 (Feb 16 & 18)

Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (Part One)

Exam 1 is on Wednesday, February 18

Week 7 (Feb 23 & 25)

Chapter 6: The Politics of Public Opinion

Week 8 (March 2 & 4)

Chapter 7: Voting and elections

Week 9 (March 9 & 11)

Chapter 11: Congress

Spring Break is March 16 through March 20

Week 10 (March 23 & 25)
Chapter 12: The Presidency

Week 11 (March 30 & April 1)
Chapter 12: The Presidency
Exam 2 is on Wednesday, April 1

Week 12 (April 6 & 8)
Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (Part Two)
Chapter 13: The Courts

Week 13 (April 13 & 15)
Chapter 9: Political Parties

Week 14 (April 20 & 22)
Chapter 10: Interest Groups and Lobbying

Week 15 (April 27 & 29)
Chapter 5: Civil Rights

Week 16 (May 6)
Exam 3 is on Wednesday, May 6 at **8:00am**

*I reserve the right to alter the class schedule as I deem necessary. Any adjustments will be announced in class and/or listed on Blackboard.