

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.

Instructor	Email	Office Location & Hours
Ms. Be Nelson, M.A.	hnelson@southplainscollege.edu	Office: AD132, Levelland Campus Office Phone: (806) 716-2466 Monday 11AM - Noon; 1PM - 3PM Wednesday 11AM - Noon Tuesday/Thursday 2:30PM – 3:30PM Friday 10AM - Noon <i>*If you are unable to meet with me during office hours, please feel free to email to arrange a video conference.</i>

COURSE RESOURCES

O'Connor, Karen, and Larry J. Sabato, *American Government: Roots and Reform 2020 Presidential Election, 14th Edition*. New York (2020): Pearson

TexBook Syllabus Statement:

This course is part of your TexBook program, which means you don't need to purchase a textbook or access code for this course. TexBook is the required content (either an eBook or online Courseware) for your course and is provided for you via the Bibliu platform from Day 1 of class.

- Cost of TexBook: this required content is provided as part of a Program called 'Inclusive Access', which means that content is provided for you at the lowest price available from the publisher. The cost for this is included in your tuition.
- How to access your digital content via Bibliu: you can access your material via the Bibliu link inside your Blackboard Course, or directly via the Bibliu app. If you have issues with this, please contact your professor, the Bookstore Manager or Bibliu Support (see below).
- The Bibliu platform: you can use the Bibliu platform to enhance your learning experience, with features including highlighting, notes, and reading text aloud. For more details and support on how to use Bibliu, please visit the [Bibliu support pages](#), or contact Bibliu support via the email: support@bibliu.com
- Opting out: you can Opt-Out of the TexBook Program, up until the Opt-Out deadline, via the banner displayed when you open the Bibliu platform. Remember that Opt-Out deadlines vary by term, and if you choose to Opt-Out you will lose access to this low-price option, and will need to purchase the content through a different method. If you opt-Out, the fee will be refunded to your account.

Useful contacts:

1. Bookstore Manager: Christian Bruno - christian.bruno@bibliu.com
2. Bookstore Text Coordinator: Trish Wells - patricia.wells@bibliu.com
3. Bibliu Support: email support@bibliu.com

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. **Quiz 1 and the Ice Breaker Discussion must be completed by January 28, 2026, the census date, or you will be automatically dropped.**

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, lectures, or assignments, please come see me or 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 2305-151; where 2305 is the course number and 151 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	20%
3 Exams	40%
Assignments	30%
Discussions (with responses)	10%

Grading: The grading scale will be as follows:

90-100 = A	80-89 = B	70-79 = C	60-69 = D	< 59 = F
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**You earn your grade; that grade is entered. Grades are updated bi-weekly (sometimes earlier depending on the reading involved). If you have questions about grades, please email.*

Quizzes: Quizzes will cover vocabulary and/or readings. Missed quizzes can only be made up with instructor approval. Each quiz may be taken up to **two** times; the **average grade** will be recorded. Taking both attempts is optional but this encourages proper preparation.

Assignments: You will have a reasonable number of assignments. Late work loses **10 points per day** and will not be accepted **after five days**. Individual assignments count more than quizzes, so complete all required work rather than trying to offset a zero. If you need any clarification on assignments, please email.

Discussion Threads: Each semester, discussion threads are created on topics related to the federal government. All students are required to participate. The initial post must be at least 400 words and reference two sources outside of class materials with proper citation ([Citation Guide](#)). Each student will also reply separately to two classmates, with each response consisting of at least 150 words. Responses must be substantive to receive credit. Late submissions will incur a penalty of **10 points per day**, and work will not be accepted **after five days**. Please note that initial posts are typically due before responses; ensure you are aware of all relevant deadlines.

Exams: Three exams are given, including a final. The first two have multiple-choice plus short answer or fill-in-the-blank; the final has only multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank for quick grading. Make-up exams require prior approval and possibly documentation, please email the instructor to schedule. There are **no make-ups for the final** due to grade deadlines. For emergencies, contact me. The semester end date will change deadlines so pay attention to due dates.

Tentative Course Schedule for Pacing

The course runs for 16 weeks, with content organized by week for clarity. You can work ahead on assignments and quizzes, but exams will occur during set windows. The schedule may be adjusted as needed.

WK	Topic	Reading	
1	Roots of American Government	Chapter 1 Declaration of Independence	Quizzes 1-5 Assignment 1 Discussion 1 Exam 1
2-3	The Constitution (Bill of Rights)	Chapter 2 Federalist 10, 51 The U.S. Constitution	
4	The Federal System	Chapter 3	
5	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4	
6	Civil Rights	Chapter 5	
7	Congress	Chapter 6 Excerpts from Fenno's, <i>Homestyle</i>	
8	The Presidency	Chapter 7 Federalist 70 Neustadt's, "Presidential Power."	Quizzes 6-9 Assignments 2-3 Discussion 2 Exam 2
9	The Bureaucracy	Chapter 8 <i>Constitutional Democracy and Bureaucratic Power</i>	
10	SPRING BREAK MARCH 16 - 20, 2026		
11	The Judiciary	Chapter 9 Federalist 78	
12	Public Opinion and Political Socialization	Chapter 10	Quizzes 10-14 Assignment 4 Discussion 3
13	Political Parties/Interest Groups	Chapter 11/Chapter 14	
14	Campaigns, Elections, and Voting	Chapter 12	
15	The News Media	Chapter 13	
16	Social and Economic Policy/Foreign Policy	Chapter 15/Chapter 16	
17	Final Exam - Week of May 4 TH		

**Watch due dates carefully. They may not follow a pattern, and missing one could mean missing your FINAL.*

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 below to learn more about how to book an appointment, view the tutoring schedule, and view tutoring locations. [SPC TUTORING](#)

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

Friday – Monday morning: 6PM - 8AM

For questions regarding tutoring, please email

tutoring@southplainscollege.edu or call 806-716-2241.

