**POLS 1333: American Government I**

**Course Description:**

This course introduces students to the political system of the United States and the state of Texas. In this course we will study the role and creation of government in society; the role of democracy in government; how history has influenced the state and federal constitutions; the impact of feder- alism; elections, the media, political parties; public opinion and interest groups.

### Assessment of THECB core objectives for GOVERNMENT/POLITICAL SCIENCE

* **Critical Thinking**
  + Critical thinking skills will be assessed by applying the POLS 1333 Critical Thinking Rubric to the student’s Civic Engagement Project.
* **Communication Skills**
  + Critical thinking skills will be assessed by applying the POLS 1333 Communication Rubric to the student’s Civic Engagement Project.
* **Personal Responsibility**
  + Critical thinking skills will be assessed by applying the POLS 1333 Personal Responsibility Rubric to the student’s Civic Engagement Project.
* **Social Responsibility**
  + Critical thinking skills will be assessed by applying the POLS 1333 Social Responsibility Rubric to the student’s Civic Engagement Project.

### Texts:

Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, and Margaret Weir. 2011. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics Texas Edition* (8th edition). New York: Norton Publishing.

### Expectations, Examinations, and Grading:

Students are expected to attend class. Lectures will not reproduce the texts. During lectures, students are expected to behave in an adult fashion There will be two examinations and a final exam. The highest grading scale will be 90 (A), 80 (B), 70 (C), and 60 (D). If for any reason you should have to miss a test you must inform the instructor prior to the time of the test and proper documentation is required for any makeup test. In addition to the exams students will be graded on periodic quizzes and a civic engagement project, which will be explained in detail in class. The percentage breakdown of the course grade is as follows:

### Grading:

Exam 1: 25%

Exam 2: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

Quizzes: 10%

Civic Engagement Project: 10%

**Calendar***:*

The following course schedule represents the schedule of readings and topics for the course. Students should read the assigned readings prior to class.

**Topic Readings**

Creating Government Syllabus and Chapter 1

Declaration of Independence Chapter 2 and A1.

Constitutional Convention Chapter 2.

U.S. Constitution Chapter 2 and A8.

Federalism Chapter 3.

Exam I

Texas History and Constitution Chapters 19 and 20.

US Political Parties Chapter 9.

Texas Political Parties Chapter 21.

Exam II

Public Opinion Chapter 6.

Media Chapter 7.

U.S. Interest Groups Chapter 11.

Texas Interest Groups Chapter 22.

Local Politics Chapter 26.

Final Exam

**Civic Engagement Project**

During the civic engagement project, students will be required to work in groups to

* explore a contemporary political issue;
* critically evaluate competing political science theories and select the theory that most accurately explains the contemporary event;
* summarize and present the results of their research to the class;
* ethically evaluate the decisions made by political actors in the American political system; and
* examine the consequences of decisions made by political actors for themselves and the larger global community.

**EXAMPLE**

**Objective:** This project helps students learn about city government and the importance of citizen participation in local government.

Students will be organized into six groups.

**Preparation:** In class I will provide you with a brieﬁng on the local city government. I will take you online, and explain the city government services, how the city government public meetings take place, and brief you on the city government members present during the meetings. Students are required to print oﬀ a copy of the council agenda for the meeting in which they will watch. Each group should prepare two or three questions for the city oﬃcial that will be attending class.

City Council meetings for Wichita Falls are held on the ﬁrst and third Tuesday of each month. For purposes of this course, the Wichita Falls City Council will meet on:

April 3

The meetings are broadcast live on Time Warner Cable Channel 11 and rebroadcast the same day at at 7:00 p.m. and midnight and the following Wednesday and Thursday at 9:00 a.m., 7:00 p.m. and midnight. You will have a couple of weeks to watch the council meeting on television before the mayor visits our class. Watch this meeting on television as if you were actually there. If you do not have access to the cable channel, I can provide a DVD that contains the City Council meeting. You will check this DVD out from the instructor and return it within 24 hours. If the DVD is not returned within 24 hours, 5 points will be deducted from your project grade.

**Presentation**: Each group should observe, analyze, and take notes of the meeting while following the agenda. Each group will also be required to come up with 2 or 3 questions to ask the city council member who visits the class. All of the information gathered from the meeting, along with material obtained when the council member visits class will be put together into a Powerpoint Presentation and orally presented to the class, as a group. The purpose is to describe and analyze what went on in the meeting.

The main part of the presentation should be your group’s analyses of the City Council meeting. I WILL NOT award high grades to groups who simply describe what went on in the meeting. You must think critically about the topics the City Council covers during the meeting as well as the discussion with the mayor, then explain to the class what you thought were “good” decisions that can help the city of Wichita Falls or “bad” decisions that might hurt the city of Wichita Falls. A brief description of the meeting is ﬁne, but the majority of your presentation should focus on analysis rather than description.

**POLS 1333 Critical Thinking Rubric**

Critical Thinking, undergraduate-level work in Political Science will be evaluated through the assessment of civic engagement projects in the areas of explanation of argument, evidence, student’s position, and conclusions. A summary chart is provided to explain how work will be assessed. In addition, the areas of evaluation used are outlined below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** | **Poor** |
| **Explanation of Argument** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Evidence** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Student’s Position** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Conclusions** |  |  |  |  |  |

**Explanation of Argument:**

Does the student clearly state the contemporary political issues examined? Does the student comprehensively describe the contemporary issue examined?

Does the student deliver the relevant information necessary for a full understanding of a contemporary political issue?

**Evidence:**

Does the student use authoritative sources?

Does the evidence employed enable the student to develop a comprehensive analysis of a contemporary political issue?

 Does the student thoroughly evaluate the viewpoints/positions of the authoritative sources?

**Student’s Position:**

 Does the student’s position take into account the complexity of the contemporary political issues?

Does the student acknowledge the limits of their position?

Does the student synthesize other’s points of view within their position?

**Conclusions:**

Are the student’s conclusions logical?

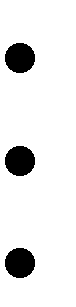
Do the student’s conclusions reflect an informed evaluation?

Do the student’s conclusions demonstrate an ability to place evidence and perspectives in priority order?

**POLS 1333 Oral Communication Rubric**

Oral Communication, undergraduate-level work in Political Science will be evaluated through the assessment of oral presentations in the areas of argument, organization, language, and delivery. A summary chart is provided to explain how work will be assessed. In addition, the areas of evaluation used are outlined below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** | **Poor** |
| **Argument** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Organization** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Language** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Delivery** |  |  |  |  |  |

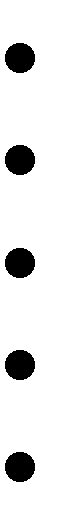
**Argument:**

Does the presentation have a clear and easily identifiable central message? Does the supporting evidence enhance the principle ideas of the presentation?

Is the supporting evidence presented derived from credible sources in the field of political science?

Does the argument presented meet the assignment criteria?

Is the argument appropriate for the assignment and does the presentation stay on-topic?

**Organization:**

Does the presentation contain a clear introduction?

Does the presentation contain clearly identifiable sections throughout the presentation? Does the presentation contain a clear conclusion?

Does the organizational pattern enhance the effectiveness of the presentation?

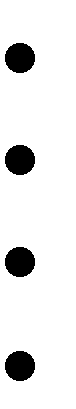
Is the presentation organized in a manner consistent with the conventions of political science?

**Language:**

Is the language used in the presentation free of grammatical and sentence structure errors? Is the language used in the presentation appropriate for a college-level presentation in Political Science?

Is the language used in the presentation free of bias?

Does the language used in the presentation enhance the effectiveness of the presentation?

**Delivery:**

Does the presenter make eye contact with audience?

Does the presenter display appropriate posture during the presentation?

Does the presenter avoid the use of vocal fillers (such as “umm” and “I don’t know”)? Is the presentation delivery appropriate for a college-level course in Political Science?

**POLS 1333 Personal Responsibility Rubric**

Personal Responsibility (*to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making*) undergraduate-level work in Political Science will be evaluated through the assessment of civic engagement projects in the areas of ethical self awareness, understanding different ethical perspectives, ethical issue recognition, and application of ethical perspectives. A summary chart is provided to explain how work will be assessed. In addition, the areas of evaluation used are outlined below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** | **Poor** |
| **Ethical Self- Awareness** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Understanding different Ethical Perspectives** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Ethical Issue Recognition** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Application of Ethical Perspectives** |  |  |  |  |  |

**Ethical Self-Awareness:**

Did the student discuss core ethical beliefs?

Did the student discuss the origins of core ethical beliefs?

Did the student connect core ethical beliefs with the origins of core ethical beliefs when examining a contemporary political issue?

**Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives:**

Did the student identify political science theory relevant to the contemporary political issue? Did the student accurately apply political science theory to a contemporary political issue? Did the student accurately identify and apply political science theory to a contemporary political issue?

**Ethical Issue Recognition:**

Did the student recognize an ethical issue when presented with a complex political issue? Did the student recognize cross relationships among multiple political issues?

Did the student identify an ethical issue and link this issue with broader political implications?

**Application of Ethical Perspectives:**

Did the student independently apply ethical principles to contemporary political issue? Did the student correctly apply ethical principles to a contemporary political issue?

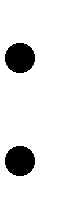
Did the student consider the full implications of the application of ethical principles to a contemporary political issue?

**POLS 1333 Social Responsibility Rubric**

Social Responsibility (*to include cultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities*) undergraduate-level work in Political Science will be evaluated through the assessment of civic engagement projects in the areas of diversity of communities and cultures, ethical issue recognition, application of ethical perspectives, and civic context. A summary chart is provided to explain how work will be assessed. In addition, the areas of evaluation used are outlined below.

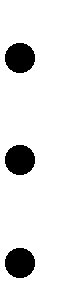
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Skill** | **Excellent** | **Good** | **Satisfactory** | **Unsatisfactory** | **Poor** |
| **Diversity of Communities and Cultures** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Analysis of Knowledge** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Civic Identity** |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Civic Contexts** |  |  |  |  |  |

**Ethical Issue Recognition:**

 Did the student demonstrate an adjustment in their attitudes and beliefs based on learning from diversity of communities and cultures?

Did the student promote others engagement with diversity?

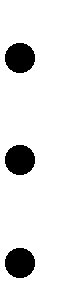
Did the student demonstrate adjustments in their own attitudes and promote engagement with diversity based on their learning from diversity of communities and cultures?

**Analysis of Knowledge:**

Did the student connect political science theory to civic engagement?

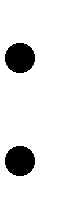
Did the student connect political science theory to their own participation in civic life?

Did the student display an understanding of the connection between civic engagement and contemporary public policy?

**Civic Identity:**

Did the student identify lessons learned from civic engagement experiences? Did the civic engagement experience shape the student’s civic identity?

Did the civic engagement experience strength the student’s commitment to public action?

**Civic Context:**

Did the student demonstrate an ability to identify a civic aim for a community?

Did the student demonstrate a commitment to work within community contexts to achieve a civic aim?

 Did the student identify a civic aim and demonstrate a commitment to work within a civic context to achieve this aim?