

Core Course Review Documentation

Foundational Component Area: GOVERNMENT-POLITICAL SCIENCE

Component Area Option? No
No Cultural and Global Understanding
No Undergraduate Inquiry and Creativity

Proposed Course: Political Science 1333: American Government I
Credit Hours: 3
Proposed by: Political Science Department, Midwestern State University
Date: September 17, 2012

Please document how the proposed course meets each of the following requirements. (You may provide a written explanation or copy and paste the appropriate information from the syllabus.)

Content: *Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas.*

Students enrolling in **POLS 1333 American Government I** will examine the following content:

- The study of institutional design.
- The study of democratic governments within human society.
- The study of democratic institutionalism with special attention to federalism and local government.
- Examination of the historical processes that produced the U.S. and Texas Constitutions.
- The study of electoral behavior and its application to American and Texas politics.
- The study of the media and its application to American politics.
- The study of political parties and its application to American and Texas politics.
- The study of public opinion and its application to American policymaking.
- The study of interest groups and its application to American and Texas politics.

- The application of empirical political science research to contemporary American and Texas political issues.

SKILLS: *Courses involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.*

Students enrolling in **POLS 1333 American Government I** develop the following skills:

- Students will display effective communication skills.
- Students will critically evaluate the appropriateness of rival political explanations of contemporary political issues.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the importance of ethical decision making and participation in a democracy and its implications for the future.
- Students will demonstrate a contextual understanding of one's place in the global community.

Throughout **American Government I** students will engage in a series of learning activities designed to foster communication skills, critical thinking, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. These activities include classroom discussions that are focused on contemporary political issues and require students to critically evaluate rival political explanations of contemporary political issues such as educational policy. During these discussions students will practice their oral communication skills while developing an appreciation of their place in a larger global community as well as the importance of ethical decision making and participation in a functioning democracy. These discussions will take place daily in conjunction with the content delivery of the course. These learning activities will occur regularly throughout the semester. In addition to these regular discussions, students will be required to complete a civic engagement project. This civic engagement project will be used to assess student progress towards these four learning objectives: critical thinking skills, communication skills, personal responsibility and social responsibility.

ASSESSMENT OF CORE OBJECTIVES: *Assessments should be authentic, intentional and direct. The following four Core Objectives must be addressed in each course approved to fulfill this category requirement:*

Assessment of the state core objectives will be conducted in a civic engagement project that requires students to critically evaluate rival political explanations of contemporary political issues,

effectively communicate these issues with the class, evaluate the ethical dimensions of the political decision-making involved in a contemporary political issue, and demonstrate a consideration of the impact of a contemporary political event for a larger, global society. In general civic engagement projects will require students to complete the following tasks. Students will be required to explore a contemporary political issue and critically evaluate existing political science theories to identify explanations that best address the contemporary political issue under consideration. During the civic engagement projects students will then be required to orally communicate their conclusions to the instructor and their peers. During this project students will be required to examine the ethical considerations for each contemporary political issue in order to develop a sense of the importance of personal responsibility in a functioning democracy. Lastly, during this project students will then be required to apply these lessons toward the future of our society by proposing solutions to the contemporary political issue examined. Civic engagement projects will consist of one of the following: classroom election project, city council project, or current event research project. The following is an example of a city council civic engagement project used in American Government Courses. The assessment of each of these core learning objects is described following the example.

Example of Civic Engagement Project:

American/Texas Government City Council Project Guidelines

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 Mayor Barham 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 Mayor Barham, 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 analyses rather than description.

Critical Thinking Skills - *to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information*

During the civic engagement project students will be required to explore a contemporary political issue and critically evaluate competing political science theories and select the theory that most accurately explains the contemporary event. Students ability to achieve this learning objective will be assessed with the critical thinking rubric attached below. This and all of the attached rubrics were adapted from the Association of American Colleges and Universities templates to fit the political science discipline.

Communication Skills - *to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication*

During the civic engagement project students will be required to summarize and present the results of their research to the class. The Oral communication rubric attached below will be used to assess the learners progress towards the core learning objective of oral communication skills.

Personal Responsibility - *to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making*

During the civic engagement project students will be required to ethically evaluate the decisions made by political actors in the American political system. Progress towards the development of

personal responsibility will be assessed with the attached personal responsibility rubric.

Social Responsibility - *to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities*

During the civic engagement project students will be required to examine the consequences of decisions made by political actors for themselves and the larger global community. Student progress towards the development of social responsibility will be assessed with the attached social responsibility rubric.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: *Provide any additional information supporting course inclusion in the core (optional).*

PLEASE ATTACH THE FOLLOWING

1 Syllabus

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 federalism; elections, the media, political parties; public opinion and interest groups.

Texas Core Objectives:

This course will support the development of the following state mandated core learning objectives: Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.

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. Student's 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	

2 Assessment for Critical Thinking Skills

Undergraduate-Level 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?

3 Assessment for Communication Skills

Undergraduate-Level 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?

4 Assessment for Personal Responsibility

Undergraduate-Level 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?

5 Assessment for Social Responsibility

Undergraduate-Level 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?