

## Core Course Review Documentation

### Foundational Component Area: GOVERNMENT-POLITICAL SCIENCE

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

Proposed Course: Foundations of Government and Politics: Pols 2523

Credit Hours: 3

Proposed by: Political Science Department, Midwestern State University

Date: November 29, 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 2533 Foundations of Government and Politics** will examine the following content:

- The study of Ideologies.
- States and regime types across the globe.
- The role of individual rights in various governmental regimes.
- The study of law and Courts in a democratic political system.
- The study of elections in democratic regime types.
- The role of civility in politics.
- The study of political violence.
- The study of International Relations.

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

Students enrolling in **POLS 2533 Foundations of Government and Politics** 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 global world and its implications for the future.
- Students will demonstrate a contextual understanding of one's place in the global community.

Throughout **Foundations of Government and Politics** 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 in various governmental systems around the world. During these discussions students will be required to critically evaluate contemporary global political issues with political science theories covered in the course. 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 in the global world. These discussions will take place daily in conjunction with the content delivery of the course. In addition to classroom discussions students will be required to complete a series of writing assignments designed to further develop critical thinking and written communication skills while fostering personal and social responsibility. These learning activities will occur regularly throughout the semester. In addition to these regular learning activities, students will be required to complete a final writing project. This final writing 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 final writing assignment that requires students to develop a coherent argument that addresses a contemporary global political issue. In

this final project students will be required to critically evaluate rival political explanations of contemporary political issues, evaluate the ethical dimensions of the political decision-making involved in the contemporary political issue, demonstrate a consideration of the impact of the contemporary political event for a larger, global society, and communicate this argument in a written paper. In general the final writing 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. In this examination of the political issue students will be required to research the political issue and develop an argument for which of the theories examined in class best accounts for the global political issue. This argument must then be presented in a 4-6 page double spaced written essay. In this essay 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 global society. Furthermore, students will be required to examine the social implications for a given policy on our global community. The following is an example of a final writing project used in **Foundations of Government and Politics** courses. The assessment of each of these core learning objects is described following the example.

### **Example of Final Writing Project:**

#### *Final Essay: Civility in Politics*

We have been studying the issue of civility in politics, a topical issue for our contemporary political world. In examining this understudied issue of civility, we have used as our text for this discussion the July 2012 symposium on this topic from the political science journal PS. Although published this past summer, the issues with which the authors grapple should seem timely as we reflect on the recent U.S. presidential election cycle – the political advertisements, the cable pundits, the interactions of our elected officials.

Is incivility on the rise? This is a question we've already begun to debate in our class discussion. If it is, as some of the authors suggest, what are the consequences for American democracy? Perhaps there are negative consequences for political engagement with opposing viewpoints and evidenced argumentation. However, underlying both of those are the concepts of cooperation and compromise. If this is a goal in political discourse and policy-making, then political civility may be important. However, if the goal is winning, it may not. Incivility can be advantageous at times. The goals of political interaction, both short-term and long-term, and of policy-making must be considered in thinking about civility in politics.

For this paper, you should think about the questions raised by the readings on civility in politics.

Each article in the symposium presents an argument and evidence on this topic. After reading each of the articles and reflecting upon them, you should develop a position on this topic in answer to the following question as you formulate your essay:

**To what extent, if any, is American politics and/or society exhibiting political incivility and what are the effects of political discourse?**

In other words, is incivility a problem in American politics? If so, what are the consequences? If not, why? Why is civility important? Why or why not? In which article is there the most support for your position? In which article is there the least support for your position? What about the articles argument and/or evidence is useful? What argument and/or evidence provides a counter-argument to your claims? These are questions that you should consider as you write your essay, but do not try to answer all of them.

Your essay should be a four-to-six page, double-spaced, typed essay on this topic. Each essay must have an original thesis and support for the argument. Support should be confined to evidence from the assigned readings and the chapter.

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

During the final writing 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 final writing project students will be required to develop an academic argument in response to the essay prompt. Students will then present this argument in a 4-6 page double spaced written essay. The written communication rubric attached below will be used to assess the learner's progress towards the core learning objective of communication skills.

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

During the final writing project students will be required to ethically evaluate the decisions made by global political actors. 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 final writing 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 is designed to provide students with an overview of the field of Political Science and introduce them to the conventions of the discipline. How politics is studied will be a constant theme of the course. In examining the major areas of study of political science, we will also focus our attention on contemporary issues. Throughout the course, we will emphasize the development of critical reading strategies and analytical writing which are crucial to success in college.

This course is also a writing intensive course in order to acclimatize students to genres of reading and writing in Political Science. There will be three four-to-six-page papers assigned throughout the semester. Each assigned paper will include required review of full drafts in advance of the due date. For this reason, submitting the draft(s), outlines, and pre-writing for each paper will be required and will comprise a homework grade for each assignment.

### **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:**

Roskin, Michael, Robert Cord, James Medeiros, and Walter Jones. 2012. *Political Science: An Introduction*. (12th Edition), Prentice Hall.

Garrison, Deborah. 2009. *Writing in Political Science: A Practical Guide*. 4th. Edition Pearson.

Additional Readings available on Blackboard.

### **Expectations, Examinations, and Grading:**

We will have discussion throughout the course, sometimes of controversial topics. A classroom, including a virtual classroom, thrives on mutual respect. I expect considerate behavior from each of you, as well as for you to be respectful of your classmates, in order to make the most of your time in class. 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 a midterm 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, homework, and participation. Students will also be required to complete three writing assignments which will be explained in detail in class. The percentage breakdown of the course grade is as follows:

### **Grading:**

Paper 1: 15%  
Paper 2: 15%  
Midterm: 20%  
Paper 3: 15%  
Quizzes, Homework, and Classwork: 10%  
Attendance and engagement: 5%  
Final Exam: 20%

*Calendar* The following course schedule represents the schedule of readings and topics for the course. The readings are located below each topic. Student's should read the assigned readings prior to class.

- Lesson One: What is Political Science  
Chapter 1.

- Lesson Two: Theory and Ideology  
Chapter 2.
  - John Locke. The Second Treatise of Civil Government in Isaac Kramnick, ed., *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 395-404.
  - Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Social Contract in Isaac Kramnick, ed., *The Portable Enlightenment Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 430-441.
  - Thomas Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (1651), ed. Richard E. Flathman and David Johnston (New York: WW Norton, 1997), 72-79, 96-102.
  
- Lesson Three: States  
Chapter 4.  
Paper I thesis statement and outline due.
  
- Lesson Four: Rights  
Chapter 5.  
Paper I rough draft due
  
- Lesson Five: Regimes  
Chapter 6.  
Paper I due
  
- Midterm Exam
  
- Lesson Six: The Study of Laws and Courts  
Chapter 13.
  - Alexander Hamilton, The Federalist No. 78.
  - David OBrien. The Court and American Life from Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics. In David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, and Kenneth R. Mayer (Eds). *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*. 5th Edition. New York: WW Norton, 2008.

- Robert A. Dahl. Decision-Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court As A National Policy-Maker, *Journal of Public Law* 6 (1957): 279-295.
- Casper, Jonathan. The Supreme Court and National Policy Making, *American Political Science Review* 70, no. 1 (1976): 50-63.

- Lesson Seven: Elections  
Chapter 12.  
Paper II rough draft due

- Lesson Eight: Civility in Politics

- J. Cheri Strachan and Michael Wolf (eds). Symposium: Political Civility, Political Science and Politics 45, no. 3 (2012): 401-434.

Paper II due.

- Lesson Nine: Political Violence  
Chapter 17.  
Final Writing Project rough draft due.

- Lesson Ten: International Relations  
Chapter 18.  
Final Writing Project due.

- 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 a final written project 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 Written Communication Rubric

Written, undergraduate-level work in Political Science will be evaluated through the assessment of a final written project in the areas of argumentation and analysis, evidence and documentation, structure and style, and grammar and mechanics. 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
<b>Argument and Analysis</b>					
<b>Evidence and Documentation</b>					
<b>Structure and Style</b>					
<b>Grammar and Mechanics</b>					

### **Argument and Analysis:**

- Does the paper contain a clear thesis statement or research question?
- Does the paper have a clear hypothesis and argument, appropriate for college-level work?
- Does the main argument of the paper match or answer the research question or thesis statement?
- Are the main argument and key points clear?
- Does the paper clearly address the research question and hypothesis or thesis statement throughout?
- Does the paper develop its main points well?
- Does the paper address other research in the field to place its argument in conversation with other work?
- Does the paper address counterarguments and possible limitations of the research presented in the paper?

### **Evidence and Documentation:**

- To what extent does the paper support its claims?
- What types of support are utilized and are they appropriate for college-level work?
- Are source materials clearly documented in accordance with citation guidelines given in the course or in college-level writing courses at Midwestern State University?
- Is there analysis of the sources or is evidence used too descriptively?
- Does the evidence offered in the paper help to further the overall argument?

### **Structure and Style:**

- Is the paper clearly organized?
- Does the paper include required elements of the assignment?
- Is the style of the paper appropriate for a college-level course in Political Science?
- Is the tone of the paper appropriate for a college-level course in Political Science?

### **Grammar and Mechanics:**

- Does the paper employ appropriate grammar?
- Does the paper make use of punctuation and mechanics?

## 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 a final written project 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
<b>Ethical Self-Awareness</b>					
<b>Understanding different Ethical Perspectives</b>					
<b>Ethical Issue Recognition</b>					
<b>Application of Ethical Perspectives</b>					

### **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 a final written project 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?