

PSCI 2305-201: American National Government
Spring 2013
MWF 10:30-11:20a.m.
PH 101

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**Course Description and Objectives:** This course serves as an introduction to how national governments are established and how they work. Specifically, this course will look at the United States' political system as an example of how politics is shaped by different historical and political contexts. We will also explore how the policy-making process works, identify the major actors in U.S. politics and their role in organizing elections, and draw out the structure of the three branches of government. We will conclude by looking at certain policy areas popular in the national agenda, and examine some of the problems posed in contemporary politics. The course aims to achieve the following objectives:

- **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to identify and synthesize information about the American political system; including its history, constitutional and legal foundations, political values and ideas, governing institutions, and policymaking processes.
- **Communication:** Students will be able to examine the American political system by exhibiting strong oral and written arguments and analysis.
- **Social Responsibility:** Students will confirm their knowledge of civic responsibility by identifying the rights and duties of citizens and how government and citizens' involvement can have a positive impact on American democracy.
- **Personal Responsibility:** Students will debate how political choices, actions, and consequences are linked to a range of proper and improper alternatives and identify ethically justifiable options to take.
  - Identify and discuss some of the major political principles rooted in the founding of the American experiment.
  - Describe and understand the different historical and political contexts that have shaped the American government we see today.
  - Deconstruct the political process of the United States, and identify the major actors of the policy-making process.
  - Describe and define the major institutions of government in the United States including: Congress, the presidency, and the courts.
  - To define the prevalent policy areas of United States politics and discuss some of the contemporary issues in national politics.

**Required Text and Materials:**

- *The Challenges of Democracy: American Government in Global Politics*, By Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey M. Berry, and Jerry Goldman, Boston, Massachusetts; Wadsworth, 2012. [ISBN-13: 978-0-495-90618-6; ISBN-10: 0-495-90618-2] Eleventh Edition.
- TAMIU email
- Blue Books/Scantrons for Exams (can be purchased at the TAMIU bookstore)

### **Course Format, Assignments and Grading**

Midterm Exam (35%)

Final Exam (35%)

Quizzes (20%)

Assignments (10%)

**Course Requirements:**

**Exams:** There will be 2 in class exams (worth 35% of your grade each), a midterm (schedule for **March 9**) and a final exam (scheduled for **May 15**). The final exam will be comprehensive, meaning it can cover all material discussed throughout the whole course. The exams may include a combination of true and false, matching, multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. Students will have to notify the instructor as early as possible if they are unable to take exams at the designated date. Make-up exams will be considered on an individual basis as well as the legitimacy of the reason for missing the scheduled exam (for more information please read the university attendance policy below). If it is deemed a legitimate excuse, make-up exams will be ALL ESSAY questions to prevent academic dishonesty and scheduled at my convenience, whether taken before or after the scheduled date. It will be the student's responsibility to bring appropriate materials to class (i.e. blue book/pen for essays and scantron/pencil for multiple choice questions). Assignments, quizzes, or exams not completed using the appropriate materials will not be graded.

**Quizzes:** Throughout the course, we will have a series of **announced** and **unannounced** quizzes. Quizzes will constitute 20% of your overall grade. Material covered on the quiz may include anything from previous lectures or the readings assigned for that day. Opportunity to make up quizzes will require proof of a legitimate absence.

**Grading:**

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| A      |
| 90-100 |
| B      |
| 80-89  |
| C      |
| 70-79  |
| D      |
| 60-69  |
| F      |
| 0-59   |