

**Political Science 2305-181**  
**American Government**  
**Fall II 2025 Semester: South Plains College**  
**Online**

**Professor:** Dr. Dannielle—**Danie**—Vaughn

**Office:** Administration #121

**Office Hours:** *M/W:* 1:00pm – 3pm

*Tuesday:* 11:00am – 1:00pm

*Friday:* 10am – 12:00pm; ***also available via Zoom and by appointment***

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**This course partially satisfies a core curriculum requirement:** Government/Political Science Foundational Component Area (070)

**Available Formats:** Fully Online

**Campus:** Levelland

**Course Specific Instructions & Evaluation:** Please see the *grading system, description of assignments, and course schedule below.*

**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>.

## **SECTION I: Course Description & Objective**

This course explores the 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.

**In terms of the Objectives of the Course, and Student Learning Outcomes, students should be able to do the following upon completion of this course:**

1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.  
**Method of Assessment:** Exam 1, Quiz 1
2. Demonstrate knowledge of our federal system.  
**Method of Assessment:** Exam 1, Homework 3, Quiz 3
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.  
**Method of Assessment:** Exam 3, Quiz x 2
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.  
**Method of Assessment:** Final Exam, Quiz 5
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.  
**Method of Assessment:** Exam 2, Homework 2, Quiz x (2)
6. Analyze the election process.  
**Method of Assessment:** Final Exam, Homework 3
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.  
**Method of Assessment:** Quiz 3
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. Politics.  
**Method of Assessment:** Quiz 6, Homework 3

## **SECTION II: Course Materials / Textbook**

I utilize two textbooks in this course, one is open-source and free and the second is a published book that you are not required to buy. I strongly recommended purchasing the published text as it has a wealth of useful information. You are more than welcome to purchase an older version than the current 12<sup>th</sup> edition. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me.

1. **\*\*Logic of American Politics 12<sup>th</sup> Edition;** Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck: **ISBN: 978-1071929537**
2. **\*\*American Government 3e OpenStax;** LibreTexts Open Education Resource (OER)  
[https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Political\\_Science\\_and\\_Civics/American\\_Government\\_3e\\_\(OpenStax\)](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Political_Science_and_Civics/American_Government_3e_(OpenStax))

## **SECTION III: Grading System**

Grading is based on a 750-point system for this course. Please see assignment details below.

### **Grading Formula**

<b>-Midterm Exam:</b>	<u>120 points</u>	16% (Overall Grade)
<b>-Final Exam:</b>	<u>120 points</u>	16% (Overall Grade)
<b>-Homework #1:</b>	<u>100 points</u>	13.3% (Overall Grade)
<b>-Homework #2:</b>	<u>100 points</u>	13.3% (Overall Grade)
<b>-Homework #3:</b>	<u>100 points</u>	13.3% (Overall Grade)
<b>-Quizzes (6):</b>	<u>210 points</u>	28% (Overall Grade)

**\*\*All weekly assignments are due by Friday at 5pm. No deadline extensions.**

**\*\*These assignments are in addition to the weekly recorded lectures, weekly readings, and any other content I deem appropriate to reinforce the topics of the week.**

### **Grading Scale**

**A** = 675 – 750 points (90 – 100%)

**B** = 600 – 674 points (80 – 89%)

**C** = 525 – 599 points (70 – 79%)

**D** = 450 – 524 points (60 – 69%)

**F** = Fewer than 450 points (less than 59%)

## **SECTION IV: Description of Assignments**

### **1. (2) Exams: 240 points total (120 points per exam)**

There is *one* midterm exam in this course and *one* final exam. Tests will be cumulative in format. **Please see the grading criteria/scale for breakdown of exam scoring and course schedule for exam dates.** Exam format will range between a mix of true/false and multiple-choice type questions, as well as the possibility for fill-in-the blank and/or short essay answers. Each exam will be no longer than 60 questions and taken largely from lectures and any additional readings required for potential material on each exam. **Study guides will be made available for tests.**

### **2. (3) Homework Assignments: 300 points total (100 points per assignment)**

There are 3 homework assignments for this course will be online via Blackboard and each is meant to challenge you into critically thinking about current events within the political arena and the role of government and political parties in shaping this—including assessing current political dynamics. These are not meant to be time consuming but are meant to be challenging. **See the course schedule below for specific due dates and times.**

### **3. (6) Quizzes: 210 points total (35 points per quiz)**

There will be six quizzes for this course and these will be given on a week of my choosing, but you will have ample notice. Quizzes will be a mix of essay and multiple-choice type questions. Your quizzes will be administered via Blackboard, will be open book and note, and will be due by **5p.m. on Friday** the week it is assigned. I will make an announcement in class on the week of and send an announcement via Blackboard. **See the course schedule below for specific due dates and times.**

### **\*Extra Credit**

I do not offer extra credit to individuals. When I do offer extra credit, the opportunity is offered to all class members equally, provided they have attended the class where the credit is offered, or have engaged in proper due diligence to find out what extra credit was offered (assuming the extra credit is not already past due). There are no make-ups offered for extra credit.

## SECTION V: Course Policies

- A. CIVILITY & CRITICAL THINKING.** In this course, civility and critical thinking are both required and go hand in hand. **I will not tolerate instances of incivility;** nor will I tolerate uninformed opinions masked as critical thinking and facts. We are living in an unprecedented political time where civility in public discourse is eroding, so it is understandable that as individuals our emotions and passions are elevated as a result. ***Even still, I expect civility among my students.*** All discussions in class must be polite and professional. In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking in politics, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. I strongly encourage debate in this course because it helps facilitate learning. You should not hesitate to raise your hand and challenge the arguments or concepts presented by the instructor or other students. However, as you know, shouting, irrationality, and even apathy are characteristics that are not conducive to effective learning. Students who disrupt this classroom mission by rude, sarcastic, threatening, abusive or obscene language and/or behavior will be subject to appropriate sanctions according to university policy. Likewise, faculty members are expected to maintain the highest standards of professionalism in all interactions with all constituents of the university.
- B. I encourage you to utilize my available office hours.** I am here to help you understand government and politics, and I strongly encourage you to take advantage of my office hours. If designated office hours are inconvenient, please feel free to arrange a meeting with me at another time at your discretion.
- C. Please read the syllabus thoroughly.** You will hear this often, and it will get old, but do it. If you email me a question that can be *clearly* answered by simply reading the syllabus (such as, “I was sick. Can I take a make-up?”), you will get an email from me stating “see syllabus”. If you don’t understand the syllabus, please ask me after class or try during available office hours, or call me on the phone, and I will be happy to answer your questions.
- D. Email policies. CHECK IT!** That I didn’t see your email, will not be an excuse in this course. We are all busy, but I will always put forth my best effort to make myself available. Although I try to check my email at least once a day, I do not always check emails at frequent intervals during the day. Nevertheless, I make every effort to respond to an email within 24 hours during weekdays. If you send me an email over the weekend, I will respond over the weekend if I am able to. However, please be advised that depending on my access to the internet over the weekend, I may not be able to respond until the next business day (or slightly longer during holidays). If you email me at 5:00 PM on Friday, I may be unable to respond until Monday. *I will only accept emails from South Plains College email accounts.*
- E. Blackboard.** Blackboard is an integral part of this class for accessing the syllabus, course announcements, homework assignments, study guides, additional readings and grades. The URL for Blackboard is <https://southplainscollege.blackboard.com> and you will need your South Plains username and password to access our class site. Do not attempt to message me on Blackboard as I do not regularly check these. If you need to get into touch me, use the email address listed at the top of the syllabus. If you have any problems with Blackboard, please contact the IT Help Desk at (806) 716-2180. You can also email [blackboard@southplainscollege.edu](mailto:blackboard@southplainscollege.edu).

**F. FERPA Disclosure and Procedures.** I am prohibited from discussing grades with students via e-mail or by telephone by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). If you need to discuss your grade, visit during office hours or make an appointment. Please note that the FERPA prohibits me from discussing grades with your parents without appropriate documentation and prior approval from the student (this includes both well-meaning parents and the helicopter variety). A parent must fill out a FERPA form and I must see it before I can discuss your performance, attendance, and/or syllabus policies. ***Note that I can only discuss your performance, your attendance, and/or the syllabus policies.***

## **SECTION VI: University Policies**

### **A. Disability Statement**

Any student who, because of a disability may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. For additional information, you may contact the Student Disability Services office (806) 716-2577.

### **B. Academic Misconduct & Scholastic Dishonesty**

Students who engage in cheating, plagiarism, or the use of generative AI tools will receive a 0 on the assignment that they were caught engaging in academic misconduct. While the student will receive a 0 on that particular assignment, it does not rule out the possibility of further sanctions.

**\*\*According to the Code of Student Conduct, cheating and plagiarism are defined as follows:**

**Cheating:** Including, but not limited to: (1) use of unauthorized aid, sources, and assistance or assisting others in taking a course, quiz, test, or examination, writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out assignments; (2) The acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the University community; (3) alteration of grade records; (4) bribing or attempting to bribe a member of the University community or any other individual to alter a grade.

**Plagiarism:** Including, but not limited to: (1) The use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; (2) The unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

**AI Tools:** The use of generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT) is not permitted in this course; therefore, any use of AI tools for work in this class may be considered a violation of South Plains College's academic integrity policy and the student Code of Conduct since the work is not your own. The use of unauthorized AI tools will result in referral to the Dean of Students Office.

### **C. Observance of a Religious Holy Day**

Texas House Bill 256 requires institutions of higher education to excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day. The student shall also be excused for time necessary to travel. An institution may not penalize the student for the absence and allows the student to take an exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused. No prior notification of the instructor is required.

### **D. 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.

<http://www.southplainscollege.edu/exploreprograms/artsandsciences/teacheredtutoring.php>

### **E. 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: 8 pm-8 am 6pm Friday – 8am Monday morning **For questions regarding tutoring, please email [tutoring@southplainscollege.edu](mailto:tutoring@southplainscollege.edu) or call 806-716-2241.**

### **G. Title IX Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy\*\*\***

The University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. South Plains College prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation and gender identity, and other types of sexual misconduct. sexual misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. Discriminatory behavior is prohibited regardless of the manner in which it is exhibited, whether verbally, in writing, by actions, or electronically displayed or conveyed. The college expects all members of the campus community to comply with the law. Members of the South Plains community who violate this regulation and related laws may be subject to disciplinary action or sanctions.

## **SECTION VII: Course Schedule**

I reserve the right to make reasonable alterations and/or adjustments to the schedule of readings, quizzes, and exams in accordance with the policies set forth by South Plains College and this syllabus. Should I decide that reasonable deviations are necessary, I will make announcements in class and post notices on Blackboard. Please note that not all Blackboard readings that I will post over the course of the semester are listed in the syllabus.

**See below for the full course schedule**

## **Fall II 2025 American Government: Course Schedule & Required Readings**

### **Week #1: 10/20 – 10/24; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 10/24**

#### **Lectures**

- Course Introduction
- The Logic of American Politics

#### **Assignments**

- Quiz #1

### **Week #2: 10/27 – 10/31; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 10/31**

#### **Lectures**

- The Constitution
- Federalism

#### **Assignments**

- Quiz #2
- Homework #1

### **Week #3: 11/03 – 11/07; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 11/07**

#### **Lectures**

- Civil Rights
- Civil Liberties

#### **Assignments**

- Quiz #3

### **Week #4: 11/10 – 11/14; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 11/14**

#### **Lectures**

- Political Parties

#### **Assignments**

- Homework #2
- Exam #1

**Week #5: 11/17 – 11/21; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 11/21**

**Lectures**

- Public Opinion
- Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

**Assignments**

- Quiz #4

**Week #6: 11/24 – 11/28; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 11/28**

**Lectures**

- The Media
- U.S. Congress

**Assignments**

- Homework #3
- Quiz #5

**Week #7: 12/01 – 12/05; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 12/05**

**Lectures**

- The Presidency
- Federal Judiciary

**Assignments**

- Quiz #6

**Week #8: 12/08 – 12/12; Assignments due by 5pm Friday 12/12**

**Lectures**

- The Bureaucracy
- The Logic Underlying American Policy

**Assignments**

- Exam #2