Course Syllabus: U.S. Federal Government (GOVT 2305 - ONLINE)

Course Title/Number: GOVT 2305 – U.S. Federal Government
Class Time/Location: Online
Credit Hours: 3
Course Format/Delivery Method: This is an online class. Other than the text, Blackboard will be used to disseminate materials, communicate course news, proctor quizzes/exams, and general course management.

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Course Description: Politics surrounds our everyday decisions—whether we recognize it or not. Thus, participating in the political world is unavoidable and politics itself is the most basic of human activities. It is for this reason that we are here (in this class) talking about, thinking about, reading about, and watching about…politics.

The amount you pay for tuition is politics. What type of mortgage you can get for your first house is politics. Wall Street banks being bailed out by the government, politics. You paying a higher rate of taxes than corporations, politics. Northrop Grumman landing a $20 billion B-2 Stealth contract, politics. Same-sex marriage, politics.

At this point, you are surely getting an idea of why politics cannot be avoided; it has a profound impact on our lives and is in turn impacted by our daily decisions. Thus, knowing more about politics helps give us more control over how we interact with it. Toward this end, the main purpose of this course is to introduce students to the basic concepts, principles, and ideas of American politics. The course achieves this purpose through the study of American political thought, institutions, culture, and history.

In order to give us direction, the course will be driven to responding to three thematic questions:

1) What is the nature of American federal government?
2) What is the relationship between common citizens and the American federal government?
3) What can common citizens do to impact the political process? (How can we engage the system?)

This course is a survey of United States Federal Government. It addresses 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. (To ensure transferability, students should plan to take both GOVT 2305 and 2306 within the DCCCD.)
**Course Pre-Requisites:** Eligibility for enrollment in GOVT courses in the Dallas County Community Colleges requires that Texas Success Initiative (TSI) minimum standards in reading and writing be met. This may include either passing the THEA exam or an equivalent (such as Accuplacer), having completed a Developmental Studies series in THEA-deficient subject areas (DREA 0093 and/or DWRI 0093), or having completed the equivalent English as a Second Language series (ESOL 0044).

**Required Texts/Materials:** There is only one textbook for this class (please see below). However, supplemental readings will be assigned in addition to the chapters in the text. These will be provided to you through Blackboard.

1) **Textbook:**  
Title: *By the People*  
Edition: 3rd (Brief)  
Authors: Morone and Kersh  
Publisher: Oxford

2) **Reliable internet connection:** Needed for regular access to course modules, materials, assignments, quizzes, and exams throughout the semester.

3) **Access to a computer:** You will need access to a Windows or Mac based computer to access materials, submit assignments, and take exams/ quizzes. Please note that a phone is not a valid option.

**Core Learning Objectives:** Through the general education core curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse global world; and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning. As a part of DCCCD’s Core Curriculum, students completing GOVT 2305 should advance the following Core Objectives:

1. Critical Thinking skills  
2. Communication skills  
3. Personal Responsibility  
4. Social Responsibility

**Student Learning Outcomes:** After successful completion of this course the student should be able to:
1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.  
2. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.  
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.  
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.  
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.  
6. Analyze the election process.  
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens  
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

**Student and Instructor Responsibilities:** Think of your syllabus as a contract between instructor and student. As such, I expect that everyone read this syllabus carefully so that they may understand the nature of this agreement. You are responsible for knowing all of the information contained here. For that reason, if any part of this syllabus is unclear please feel free to contact the instructor for clarification.

I expect that everyone in class will adhere to the following rules and obligations:

- Read all required readings. You are strongly encouraged to pose questions, make comments, and be critical of the material. There will be opportunities to do this throughout the course.
• Complete daily assignments/quizzes by the date/time specified.
• Complete exams during the previously specified day/time.
• Show respect for your colleagues—and professor—by refraining from offensive or aggressive language when participating in class discussions. I understand this is a little ironic in that I am asking you to NOT follow the bad example on display in Washington D.C. But I am: BE CIVIL.
• Give the class your best effort. Read, engage the material, and allot yourself the proper time to prepare. This course offers many interesting and relevant topics for students and you can maximize your enjoyment by giving your best effort.

In teaching this class, I the instructor am bound to:
• Design a syllabus that clearly lays out your obligations and mine, and then follow it as closely as possible (with the flexibility to allow for contingencies that arise, but the structure to allow students to know exactly what is expected of them).
• Make any supplemental readings and other materials available on Blackboard or through the library.
• Present the material in a lucid manner which helps clarify concepts and issues.
• Make myself available to you through appointment (please give a 36 hour notice for appointments) and via email. I strongly encourage the use of e-mail to address procedural and administrative questions, but am very happy to address substantive questions in person or through a video chat.
• Grade assignments and exams in a timely manner. I also pledge to give you feedback when possible and to grade in a manner that shows how you might improve your work.
• Ultimately, my job is to do my best to help you learn the course material. More broadly, it is to help you learn to communicate effectively and think abstractly. I pledge to make all reasonable efforts towards this goal.

By taking this class, you agree to adhere to the rules and obligations presented on this syllabus and also acknowledge the instructor’s right to alter the syllabus as necessary. I will notify all students of any changes immediately via Blackboard.

**Evaluation Procedures:** Your course grade will be based on 3 components. They are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Reading Quizzes:</td>
<td>120 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams:</td>
<td>90 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Discover Politics” Assignments:</td>
<td>90 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points Possible:</td>
<td>300 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Daily Reading Quizzes/Assignments:**
You will have a reading quiz made available to you in Blackboard every day at 12:01 AM (just after midnight) that will close at midnight the same day, unless otherwise noted by the professor. The purpose of daily quizzes is to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading and that you are prepared to move forward with the additional materials. **You will have to use Respondus Lockdown browser to take your quizzes (exams, too). To download this, go to the “Respondus Lockdown Browser” download tab on the course menu in the course Blackboard site.**

**Quiz Format:** Quizzes consist of 5 multiple choice and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. Quizzes are timed at 5 minutes (1 minute per question). The quiz will lock up and force you to submit once the time has elapsed. Therefore, it will behoove students to be ready to take the quiz upon opening it in Blackboard (have your reading notes organized and in order)! **Questions are randomized and there is no backtracking.**

There will be a total of 12 quiz opportunities and every single one must be completed! Each day’s learning module will provide you with a reading guide. This guide is the key to success as it
covers the key concepts and topics that you should understand. Fill out the guide (in detail) and you should be fine!

Make-up quizzes: These will not be allowed except in extremely extenuating circumstances (critical family issues, major illnesses, etc.) OR college-sponsored events in which the student is participating. Proper documentation is required that excuses the student on the day that the quiz is due (or 1 day before). No exceptions will be made to this policy.

Exams: You will have an exam for each part of the course (there are 3 parts, so 3 exams total). Each exam will test you on the previous 3 to 4 days of material. In other words, there is not a cumulative final. Your exams will be timed at 60 minutes. Like the quizzes, once this time has elapsed, the exam will lock up and force you to submit. The exams will be available on Blackboard on Thursday (12:01 AM) and are due Friday at end of day (11:59 PM) as per the course schedule (see below). Again you will need to use Respondus Lockdown browser.

The reading guides will act as your study guide. Again, these reading guides are the key to your success in this class. Fill them out, including details and examples, and you should do well.

Just like in the case of quizzes, make up exams will not be allowed except in extremely extenuating circumstances (critical family issues, major illnesses, etc.) OR college-sponsored events in which the student is participating. Proper documentation is required that excuses the student on the day of the exam (or 1 day before). No exceptions will be made to this policy.

“Discover Politics” Assignments:
A great way to learn is to take a deeper look into whatever world you are trying to understand. To add some substance to your course, I will assign you an assignment of some kind that will give you an opportunity to do this. This will take many forms, but the key thread connecting all of them is that you should enjoy them and have fun with this discovery! Having said that, don’t give a half-hearted effort on these. There will be 9 “discover politics” assignments worth 10 points each. They will be assigned on the days indicated in the course schedule (see below).

Grading Scale: Final letter grades will be determined from the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Range</th>
<th>% Range</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>269-300</td>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239-268</td>
<td>80-89</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209-238</td>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179-208</td>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-178</td>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendance Policy: This being an online class there is no attendance taken. But you should be logging on to the course site DAILY to keep up with materials, quizzes, announcements, etc.

Late Assignments and Exam Make-Up Policy: Late submission/make-ups of quizzes and exams is allowed only in cases of a documented medical or family emergency OR a college sponsored event. By “documented”, I mean that you must have a doctor’s note or other official documentation that specifies the date/time of the exam (or one day prior). Late submission of other work may be allowed at the discretion of the professor if the student emails one day prior to the date/time that the assignment is due. If the professor is not given notification the assignment cannot be turned in for credit, unless otherwise stated by the professor.
The last day/time to turn in late work for credit is *** by midnight. This is due to the fact that grades are due that week and I must allow myself sufficient time to complete grading. Please note that late submissions are only allowed with prior permission from the professor.

Technology Statement: This course is a distance learning course. As such, access to technology is critical to success. This is due to the use of Blackboard for the following course tools:

- The proctoring of daily quizzes and exams.
- The submission of any other written assignments or course requirements.
- The grading of all course submissions and requirements and issuing of assignment feedback.
- The calculation of final grades (after calculation they will be posted through eConnect).

Because technology usage is so critical to success in this course, you must ensure that you have a reliable internet connection and access to a Windows or Mac based computer (a phone will not suffice). You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with Blackboard and for obtaining technical help from the DCCCDD Technical Support Center if necessary. You can visit http://bbcrm.edusupportcenter.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=8023 or call 972-669-6402 or 1-866-374-7169 to get help with Blackboard. If you are not comfortable using Blackboard you need to obtain help Blackboard Support.

Please note: You will not be granted extensions because of an inability to use Blackboard or any other technology necessary for this course. This means that technology is never an acceptable excuse for not completing quizzes and exams, requesting extensions, or needing exams/quizzes cleared and reopened for you. I say again, technological issues experienced during an exam or quiz are the responsibility of the student. For this reason, students should make sure that they have a reliable internet connection. If at all possible, I highly suggest performing exams on campus using an MVC computer to avoid any complications. Go to https://www.mountainviewcollege.edu/Academics/InstructionalSupport/Pages/default.aspx for a list of labs that are available to you. Also, if you need a quiet place to take an exam, contact the testing center (https://www.mountainviewcollege.edu/studservices/enrollment/testing/Pages/default.aspx). The purpose of this policy is to ensure a fair and consistent standard of grading and performance for each student throughout the course.

Withdrawal Deadline: The withdraw date for this class is ***

Academic Dishonesty: Students caught plagiarizing an assignment will be subject to an “F” in the course and possible expulsion from the college.

Academic honesty is expected, and integrity is valued in the Dallas County Community Colleges. Scholastic dishonesty is a violation of the Code of Student Conduct. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, and collusion. As a college student, you are considered a responsible adult. Your enrollment indicates acceptance of the DCCCD Code of Student Conduct published in the DCCCD Catalog. More information is available at https://www1.dcccd.edu/catalog/ss/code.cfm.

Institutional Policies: Please visit http://www.mountainviewcollege.edu/Academics/Documents/Institutional%20Policies.pdf for a complete list of institutional policies (Stop Before You Drop; Withdrawal Policy; Repeating a Course; Financial Aid; Academic Dishonesty; Americans with Disabilities Act Statement; Religious Holidays; and Campus Emergency Operation Plan and Contingency Plan.).

Students with Disabilities: If you are a student with a disability and/or special needs, or if you think you may have a disability, please contact the college Disability Services Office (DSO). Please note that all communication with DSO is confidential. If you are eligible for accommodations, please request that the DSO send your accommodation letter to me as soon as possible (students are encouraged to contact DSO at the beginning of the semester). For more information regarding the College Disability Services Office, please visit
the Student Services website: dcccd.edu/DSOffices or contact DCCCD Office of Institutional Equity at (214) 378-1633.

**A Note on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct:** We are committed to assure all community members learn and work in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Title VII, Title IX and DCCCD policy prohibit harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct. If you encounter harassment, sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, relationship violence, stalking), retaliation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression, please contact your College Title IX Coordinator or the Office of Institutional Equity. We treat this information with the greatest degree of confidentiality possible while also ensuring student welfare and college safety.

We are concerned about the well-being and development of our students, and are available to discuss any concerns. There are both confidential and non-confidential resources and reporting options available to you. If students wish to keep the information confidential, please contact the college Counseling or Student Health Services. As required by DCCCD policy, incidents of discrimination and/or sexual misconduct shared with faculty will be reported to the College Title IX Coordinator or District Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will contact the student and determine if further investigation is needed. For more information about policies, resources or reporting options, please contact your college Title IX Coordinator or visit [www.dcccd.edu/titleIX](http://www.dcccd.edu/titleIX).