



GOVT 2313 American & Texas Government I: Constitutions, Institutions, and Political Process

Fall 2012
Department of Government
Dr. Scott Robinson

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course focuses on state and national government, with an emphasis on the US Constitution, the three branches of government, federalism, the concept of limited government, civil rights and civil liberties. This course is required of all students.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name Scott Robinson
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Office Phone
Office Location: UAC 101
Office Hours: MWF 10-11 am, 1-2 pm

LEARNING RESOURCES

Shea et al. *Choices* 2011. HBU Edition.
The U.S. Constitution – Pocket Edition. Oakhill Publishers. 978-1-891743-00-9

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course provides an in-depth examination and analysis of the U.S. Constitution for the purpose of understanding the government that it establishes. Students are required to read the entire document and develop an understanding of the specific branches, their powers, and interaction. Considerable time is spent on the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the national government. The Texas constitution is contrasted with its national counterpart, as are its component branches.

Objectives in this course include:

- Examination and analysis of U.S. Constitution
- Analysis of American political system
- Evaluation of different branches of government
- Discussion of the ideas and philosophies advanced by the Founders
- Appreciation for the democratic process and constitutional government
- Understanding of conservatism and liberalism

By the end of the course you should have developed a solid understanding of the political institutions at the national and state level, the basic processes of government, a strong working knowledge of the United States' Constitution, and be able to differentiate liberal from conservative beliefs.

RELATION TO DEPARTMENTAL GOALS AND PURPOSES

This course is designed to enhance the student's ability to think critically about those institutions that govern our lives, protect our liberties, restrict our freedoms, and define who we are as a nation and people. The goal of this course, in accordance with the purpose of this Department, is to help students make informed decisions and sound judgments in life and work by coming to a greater understanding of human nature, the society of which we are a part, and the government under which we live.

RELATION TO COLLEGE GOALS AND PURPOSES

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an opportunity to develop a level of expertise in a particular field; improve critical-thinking skills and the ability to articulate difficult concepts, theories, and arguments; and provide a setting that fosters an appreciation for education and encourages students to learn more about the world in which they live. More importantly, as with all other courses in the College or Arts and Humanities, this course should encourage students to use the knowledge and skills they gain to improve the human condition, strengthen the bonds of society, govern wisely, and live well.

RELATION TO THE PURPOSE STATEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

This course on politics reflects the values of the University Ten Pillar Vision by building on the classics, increasing our cultural impact, renewing our community, and allowing students to see the connection between theory and application. The course, like all courses in the Department of Government, is founded on the belief that Jesus Christ is Lord and our Christian faith shapes our worldview, personal values, and desire to serve others.

ATTENDANCE

Please see the official Attendance Policy in the HBU Classroom Policy on Blackboard. Students missing more than 25% of the class will be given a failing grade.

ACADEMIC ACCOMODATIONS

Students needing learning accommodations should inform the professor immediately and consult the Academic Accommodations section of the HBU Classroom Policy posted on Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADE SCALE

Students experiencing difficulty in the course should contact the professor early in the semester, not at the end. Final grades will be assigned based on test scores, the final, and attendance for a total of 400 possible points. **There is no negotiation of final grades.**

Your final grade will be based on five requirements. Failure to complete any of the five may result in a failing grade. After the official drop date, a compelling, non-academic reason to withdraw will be required in order to withdraw.

- 1) Attendance– It has been my experience that students who do not attend class do not do well on the exams. **Each unexcused absence will deduct 3 points from your total point accumulation.** Please be aware of the University attendance policy which states that a student must attend at least 75% of a class in order to pass.
- 2) Completion of the assigned readings - Our class discussions will use the textbook as a starting point. Failure to have completed the assigned readings puts you at a disadvantage and deprives the class of your input. Furthermore, some material on the exams may be taken from the text although it was not covered in class. Failure to read always results in lower grades.
- 3) Participation in class discussions – Since our class will be centered on our conversation, I expect you to participate in the discussion. I frequently call on people in class. Failure to participate in class discussions (either through choice or absence) will result in a lower course grade. You are also required to post to our classroom discussion forum during our classroom discussions.
- 4) Three multiple-choice exams – **Each exam is 100 questions long and worth 100 points.** The exams will focus on material covered in the assigned readings and our class discussions. 50

points from exam 1 and 50 points from exam 2 will come from **two in-class debates**, to be explained further in class.

- 5) A comprehensive final exam – Information regarding the final exam will be provided later in the course. It will not be a multiple-choice format. It is usually something very painful. **This final is worth 100 points.**

A = 372 points or up	B = 320-371 points	C = 280-327 points	D = 240-279 points	
	F = 239 points or below			
A=Excellent	B=Good	C=Fair or Average	D=Poor	F=Failing

LATE WORK & TEST POLICY

Late work will be penalized. You should not miss any exams. If you are sick, you need to notify the professor in advance. The professor reserves the right to administer a different exam, deduct points for taking the exam late, and/or schedule the makeup for a later date. Missing an exam without giving prior notice will result in a zero for that test, with no makeup.

Student Signature – I have read and understand the syllabus for this class. I understand that the content of this syllabus and the topical outline are subject to change at the discretion of the professor. I have read and understand the HBU Classroom Policy posted on Black Board. **I promise to uphold the Code of Academic Integrity at Houston Baptist University and will not tolerate its violation by oth**

Schedule:

1. 8-20 Intro
2. 8-22 Constitutions (3-8)
3. 8-24 American Founding (9-17)
4. 8-27 American Constitution (18-30)
5. 8-29 Texas Founding (121-146)
6. 8-31 Texas Constitution
7. 9-5 U.S. Congress I (41-84) (Last day to drop w/o W)
8. 9-7 U.S. Congress II
9. 9-10 U.S. Congress III
10. 9-12 Texas Legislature I (149-176)
11. 9-14 Debate Team Set-up
12. 9-17 Democratic Theory and Public Policy Intro
13. 9-19 Taxing and Spending
14. 9-21 Economic Policy (253-289; 472-485) Health Care, Energy, Housing, Education, and Environment (439-452; 487-499)
15. 9-24 DEBATE
16. 9-26 DEBATE
17. 9-28 DEBATE
18. 10-1 EXAM 1
19. 10-3 Presidency I (179-213)
20. 10-5 Presidency II
21. 10-8 Presidency III
22. 10-10 Bureaucracy (215-249)
23. 10-12 Texas Governor I (291-318)
24. 10-15 Texas Governor II
25. 10-17 Foreign Policy (456-470)
26. 10-19 Foreign Policy
27. 10-22 DEBATE
28. 10-24 DEBATE
29. 10-26 DEBATE (Last day to drop w/ W)
30. 10-29 EXAM 2
31. 10-31 U.S. Courts (321-357)
32. 11-2 Texas Courts (405-438)
33. 11-5 Judicial Review (361-403)
34. 11-7 Establishment Clause
35. 11-9 Free Exercise Clause
36. 11-12 Freedom of Speech
37. 11-14 Gun Control (501-513)
38. 11-16 Right to Privacy
39. 11-19 Amendments 6-10 (516-527)
40. 11-21 Movie Day
41. 11-26 Movie Day
42. 11-28 Review
43. 11-30 EXAM 3
44. FINAL EXAM: 12-5, 8-10 AM