GOVT 2305- GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES
Course Syllabus

GOVT 2305. Government of the United States

A study of the American Constitutional System and the rights, privileges, and obligations of citizenship. Prerequisite: Must be TSI complete in both Reading and English. (4510025125)

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Email: jstanglin@kilgore.edu

Course Rationale: This course is a functional study of the American Constitutional System. The focus is on the origins, developments, and present-day problems of the national government and of the rights, privileges, and obligations of citizenship. This course along with Government 2306 satisfies the Government requirement for A.A., A.A.T., and A.S. degrees at Kilgore College.

Welcome to GOVT 2305-Government of the United States! You are going to learn a lot this semester about your national government, which affects our lives in profound ways. Through this process, you will learn more about yourself, your classmates, and the world around you, and my hope is that you’ll have fun doing it. **Please read this syllabus carefully before beginning the course.**

Required Text

Exemplary Educational Objectives:
The student must be able to:
**EEO #1.** describe and analyze the environment and background of the political systems of Texas and the United States.
**EEO #2.** demonstrate a general knowledge of the history and structure of the constitutions of Texas and the United States.
**EEO #3.** distinguish the powers and responsibilities of the various branches of government within Texas and the United States.
**EEO #4.** outline and discuss the political process with emphasis on the principles of good citizenship and the impact on daily lives.
GOVT 2305 Course Outline: Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

I. What Should We Know About American Government? The student will be able to:
1. discuss the relationship between government and politics. (1)
2. identify the various forms of democracy. (1)
3. outline features of democratic elections. (1,4)
4. explain why American government is unique among other global democratic political systems in terms of both politics and policy outcomes. (1,2)
5. summarize the strengths/weaknesses connected with the presidential and parliamentary democratic systems. (1,2,3)

II. The Constitution. The student will be able to:
1. describe the political foundation of the American political system with emphasis on the English contributions. (1,2)
2. outline the events leading to American independence. (1,2)
3. list features of the government under the Articles of Confederation. (1,2,3)
4. discuss the events leading to and the ratification of the United States Constitution. (1,2)
5. describe the content and fundamental principles of the Constitution. (1,2,3)
6. outline the evolution of the United States Constitution. (1,2,3,4)

III. Federalism. The student will be able to:
1. discuss the history of the American Federal system. (1,2,3)
2. outline the Constitution distribution of powers and responsibilities in the federal system. (2,3)
3. describe the growth of the national government. (1,2,3)
4. distinguish between categorical and block grants. (3,4)
5. speculate on the future of the federal system. (1,2,3,4)

IV. Public Opinion and the Media. The student will be able to:
1. recognize the nature, formation, and impact of political opinion in America. (1,4)
2. explain the characteristics, sources, and impact of political socialization. (1,4)
3. critically examine the features of public opinion polling and political television and the impact which polls and television have upon the operation of American democracy. (1,4)
4. identify current attitudes on a variety of issues. (Social/welfare, foreign affairs, civil rights, etc.) (1,2,4)
5. evaluate current opinion groupings on the basis of ethnic/racial lines, class and economic lines, age and religion. (1,2,4)
6. demonstrate how the characteristics of the electronic media have affected the actions of public officials and candidates for national office. (3,4)
7. assess the impact of the media on politics, and explain why the executive branch probably benefits at the expense of Congress. (3,4)

V. Political Parties. The student will be able to:
1. trace the history of American political parties and identify the interest coalitions which have led to long periods of one-party dominance. (1,3,4)
2. list reasons why America has a two-party system. (1,2)
3. describe the varieties of minor parties that have prevailed in America and assess their impact upon political developments. (1,4)
4. explain how political parties organize in the United States and the significance of their organizational patterns. (1,4)
5. list factors that have contributed to the decline of the party system. (1,4)
6. identify and briefly discuss the major functions of American political parties. (1,2,4)

VI. Interest Groups. The student will be able to:
1. explain the roles of interest groups within a democratic political system. (1,4)
2. itemize the main categories of interest groups, noting prominent specific groups by name within each category. (1,4)
3. summarize the types of interest group tactics, including specific examples of each tactic in practice. (1,4)
4. assess existing laws regulating interest groups and problems associated with these laws. (1,3,4)
5. describe the public's attitude toward the power and techniques of interest groups. (1,4)

VII. Campaigns and Elections. The student will be able to:
1. trace the democratization of suffrage in the United States and the Constitutional processes by which barriers to voting were removed. (1,2,4)
2. understand the characteristics of voting behavior in the United States, the major factors which influence it, and the political consequences which result. (1,4)
3. explore the movement in electoral behavior from party to issues and the growth in ticket-splitting. (1,4)
4. distinguish between the various nominating devices used by political parties. (1,4)
5. explain the current procedures for nominating the President of the United States. (1,3,4)
6. evaluate the reforms which have been proposed for improving the present procedures for making presidential nominations. (1,3)
7. assess the changes brought by recent campaign financing legislation. (1,3)
8. identify the various rules which apply in the election of the President and the legal, constitutional, or other source of each rule. (1,3)
9. consider the various reforms which have been proposed for improving the present method of electing the President and assess the consequences of each. (1,3)

VIII. The Congress. The student will be able to:
1. understand the major functions of Congress--legislative and non-legislative. (1,3)
2. explain (without singing) the process by which a bill becomes law. (1,3)
3. list major leadership positions in House and Senate and evaluate powers of leadership positions. (1,3)
4. discuss membership of House and Senate--terms, how chosen, constitution qualifications, how seats are
allotted. (2,3) 5. evaluate the restrictions of the powers of the House and Senate. (3)

**IX. The Presidency.** The student will be able to:
1. relate the history of the Presidency by giving examples of how various presidents have added to or taken away from the powers. (1,3)
2. understand how world conditions influence the power of the Presidency. (1,3)
3. list constitution and extra constitution requirements one must meet in order to become President. (2,3)
4. evaluate our method of choosing a president and vice president and suggest recommendations for reform. (2,3)
5. evaluate the constitutional powers of a President. (2,3)
6. outline checks on a President's power. (2,3)
7. diagram the steps in impeaching AND removing a President. (2,3)
8. list and describe the major institutions that compose the Presidency. (2,3)
9. describe the role of the vice-president and the problems associated with presidential succession. (2,3)

**X. The Bureaucracy.** The student will be able to:
1. recognize the central features of the bureaucracy--job specialization, hierarchical authority, rules, etc. (3)
2. explain key problems of the bureaucracy. (3,4)
3. describe the way in which the bureaucracy is involved in politics by focusing on its relations with public opinion, interest groups, the Congress, and the executive branch. (3,4)
4. discuss the way democratic values and administrative leadership affect the bureaucracy. (3,4)
5. compare and contrast the Civil Service System to private sector employers. (3,4)

**XI. The Judiciary.** The student will be able to:
1. trace the growth of judicial power. (2,3)
2. discuss the role of the courts. (3)
3. discuss the jurisdiction of the constitutional courts and legislative courts. (3)
4. briefly outline the federal court system. (1,3)
5. discuss the establishment of judicial review and how it enables courts to exercise political power in policymaking. (1,3)
6. differentiate the operations of the U.S. Supreme Court from lower courts. (3)
7. detail the method of selection and terms of federal judges. (3)
8. discuss checks of the powers of the courts. (3)
9. describe the partisan influences on federal judicial appointments. (3,4)

**XII. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights.** The student will be able to:
1. distinguish between civil rights and civil liberties. (1,2,4)
2. understand, embrace, and protect First Amendment freedoms as they have evolved through court interpretation. (1,2,3,4)
3. describe the meaning of due process of law as it has developed. Discuss the significance of Miranda v. Arizona. (2,3,4)
4. categorize the legality of discrimination based on race, gender, age, physical disability and other factors. (1,2,4)
5. analyze the rationale for, and the connections between affirmative action and equal opportunity employment. (1,2,4)

The numbers in parentheses indicate appropriate Exemplary Educational Outcomes (EEO)

Course Information

Grading Scale
Grades will be awarded according to the following scale:
A = 90% and above
B = 80% – 89%
C = 70% – 79%
D = 60% – 69%
F = 59% and below

Final Grades will be determined according to the following percentage division:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #3</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #4</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Final</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Grading

Exams
There will be four exams, each counting as 15 percent of your final grade, and one comprehensive final exam, which counts as ten percent of your final grade. Each exam will cover approximately three to four chapters from the textbook, as well as any class handouts and topics discussed in class. All exams will follow roughly the same format—50 multiple choice questions and one essay.

To help you prepare for each test, I will provide a study guide. This study guide is not the ticket to an A on the exam, but it will help focus your study as you prepare for the exam. There is no adequate substitute for reading the textbook and taking good notes.

Because all exams contain the multiple-choice format, you will need to purchase Scantron sheets before the first exam. For every exam, please make sure that you purchase the Scantron sheet with the “mini essay” portion on which to write your essay. You must also bring a No. 2 pencil to each exam.

Students who miss an exam will be allowed to make up the exam only under extraordinary circumstances, and only then upon providing supporting documentation for why the exam was missed. Make-up exams are given the day of the final. No student can take more than one
make-up exam per semester. **There are no make-ups given for the final, regardless of why the exam was missed.**

**Research Paper**- You must complete a research paper. The paper counts as 20% of your course grade. Please see the syllabus for this specific semester for paper topics and the due date.

**Class Participation and Attendance**
Because I care how well you do in this course, I have an attendance policy: studies show that students who attend classes regularly typically do better than those students who attend sporadically.

So, you are expected to attend this class on a regular basis. For a Monday-Wednesday or Tuesday-Thursday class, you are allowed four absences. For a Monday-Wednesday-Friday class, you are allowed six absences. For each absence beyond the allotted amount, I will deduct 20 points from your attendance grade, and I also reserve the right to drop you from the course. Please note that I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so choose your absences wisely!

I will take roll at the beginning of class. If you come in after this, you are tardy. Two “tardies” equal one absence.

If you must leave class early, please come and tell me first. If you leave early, I will count you as tardy unless you can show me proof of why you must leave early.

If you miss class, please arrange to copy your notes from a classmate. I do not give out my lecture notes.

Beyond simply showing up to class, you should come prepared. Being prepared means that you have read the assigned material and are ready to discuss it. Active participation is not only vital to your success in the class, but it enhances the classroom experience for everyone. Such participation provides an opportunity for the class to interact with each other and the instructor, which produces the best environment conducive to learning.

**Extra Credit**
One extra-credit project is available. Students who turn in a late project will receive no extra credit. Those who complete the project are eligible to receive up to three percentage points on their final grade. This might not seem like much, but it could mean the difference in a letter grade! The project is due on the last class day before the final exam.
Drop Policy
It is your responsibility to drop a course or withdraw from the college; failure to do so will result in receiving a performance grade, usually a grade of —F. The last day to drop/withdraw with a grade of “W” is when approximately 75% of the course is over. The exact date will be on the syllabus for that specific semester.

Civility Statement
Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Inappropriate or distracting classroom behavior is prohibited in order to assure that everyone has opportunity to gain from time spent in class. Should a disruptive classroom incident occur, the faculty member in charge may remove the student on either a temporary or permanent basis. Students have the right to appeal through the appropriate channels.

The mark of an educated mind is to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it—Aristotle.

Electronic Devices Policy
With the exception of laptops, all electronic devices must be turned off before entering the classroom. If a pending emergency mandates that you keep your cell phone on during class, clear it with me first. If I allow you to keep your phone on, you must turn it on vibrate or silent mode. All electronic devices must be turned off during exams.

Course Outline

UNIT I Foundations
Chapter 1 The Political Landscape
Chapter 2 The U.S. Constitution
Chapter 3 Federalism

UNIT II Participation
Chapter 10 Public Opinion, Socialization, and the Media
Chapter 11 Political Parties and Interest Groups
Chapter 12 Voting, Elections, and Campaigns

UNIT III Institutions
Chapter 6 Congress
Chapter 7 The Presidency
Chapter 8 The Federal Bureaucracy
Chapter 9 The Federal Judiciary
UNIT IV

Chapter 13  Social and Economic Policy
Chapter 14  Foreign and Defense Policy
Chapter 4  Civil Liberties
Chapter 5  Civil Rights

The Instructor reserves the right to make modifications in content and schedule as necessary to promote the best education possible within prevailing conditions affecting this course. Each year, students will be given an opportunity to evaluate the instructor and the course.