CENTRAL TEXAS COLLEGE
GOVT 2305
Federal Government (Federal constitution & topics)
Semester Credit Hours: 3

INSTRUCTOR: _____________________________
OFFICE HOURS: _____________________________

I. INTRODUCTION

A. An introductory, survey course on various United States government topics. This course includes study of the origin and development of the U.S. Constitution; the structure and powers of the national government, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; federalism; political participation; the national election process; public policy; and civil liberties and civil rights.

B. Through this course, students will prepare for contemporary challenges by developing and demonstrating the following core objectives: critical thinking skills, communication skills, social responsibility, and personal responsibility.

- Critical Thinking Skills: to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
- Communication Skills: to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
- Personal Responsibility: to include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.
- Social Responsibility: to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

C. This course is a part of the core curriculum at Central Texas College and satisfies three semester hours of the Social/Behavioral Sciences for the Associate of Science and Associate of Arts degrees. Please check your degree plan to determine the status of this course in your program of study.
II. LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

A. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
B. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
C. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
D. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
E. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
F. Analyze the election process.
G. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens
H. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

III. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

The instructional material identified for this course is viewable from www.ctcd.edu/books

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Reading Assignment: your instructor will discuss the role of reading assignments for the course.

B. Projects, Oral Reports, Case Studies, Book Reports, Research Papers: Your instructor will assign one of these items for you to complete as a part of the requirements for this course. He/she will provide specific instructions regarding content, format, timelines, etc.

C. Class Performance: Your instructor will summarize and discuss CTC’s academic policies. You may refer to the CTC catalog for details. Your instructor will provide his/her policies on absences, make up work, etc.

D. Class Participation: Your instructor will explain how class participation affects your course grade, if applicable.
V. EXAMINATIONS

Your instructor will determine how many exams will be given during the course, their content, and when they will be administered. Make-up exams will be handled according to the policy of the individual instructor.

VI. SEMESTER GRADE COMPUTATIONS

A. It is the student’s responsibility to complete the course requirements as defined within this syllabus.

B. Your instructor will explain how to compute your semester grade based upon:

1. Examinations
2. Written work
3. Other measurable requirements (if any)

C. Grades are computed as follows:

Point/percentage-to-Grade Ratio
> 89 - 100 A
> 79 - 89 B
> 69 - 79 C
> 59 - 69 D
< 59 F

VII. NOTES AND ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE INSTRUCTOR

A. Attendance: Class attendance is an essential element to the learning experience. In addition, CTC policy (effective Spring 2017) requires that instructors certify as attending and participating all students in the class the day after the census date. Students who fail to meet this attendance and participation requirement will be marked as “Never Attended” on the Census-Certification and dropped from the class.

B. Withdrawal: The instructor cannot administratively withdraw a student from class. All students whose attendance is certified on the Census-Certification Roll will receive a letter grade of A, B, C, D, or F. [Final letter grades will depend on a student’s performance.]

Students who wish to withdraw from the class after the certification date should do so before the “last day to withdrawal.” This date is listed on the academic calendar in the schedule of classes available on the CTC website. It is the student’s responsibility to know all deadlines and procedures related to withdrawing from the class.
Appeals to the attendance and withdrawal policy must be made to the Records & Registration Department (http://www.ctcd.edu/students/current-ctc-students/registration/contact-us/), not to the instructor.

C. Incomplete Grade: An “IP” grade may be assigned by an instructor if a student has made satisfactory progress in a course but encounters extenuating circumstances beyond his/her control. The instructor makes the final decision concerning the granting of the incomplete grade.

D. The Disability Support Services Program provides services to students who have appropriate documentation of a disability. Students requiring accommodations for class are responsible for contacting the Office of Disability Support Services (DSS) located on the main campus. This service is available to all students, regardless of location. Explore the website at www.ctcd.edu/disability-support for further information. Reasonable accommodations, in accordance with federal and state laws, will be given through the DSS office.

E. Instructor Discretion: The instructor reserves the right of final decision in course requirements.

F. Civility: Individuals are expected to be cognizant of what a constructive educational experience is and respectful of those participating in a learning environment. Failure to do so can result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion.

VIII. COURSE OUTLINE

Material from the following units will be covered during the semester. The ordering of the units and the specific material from assigned from each chapter will be at the instructor’s discretion.

A. Unit 1: Politics, Citizenship and the Founding

Unit Objectives:
1. Define key concepts, such as politics, government, and economics.
2. Explain the varieties of political and economic systems and how they help the understanding of the differences among nations, including the United States.
3. Provide an understanding of the creation of the U.S. Constitution
4. Discuss the basic constitutional principles: separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism.

Learning Objectives:
1. Identify the ideas that underlie the U.S. political system.
2. Identify the ideas that divide Americans despite being bound by a common culture.
3. Provide an understanding of the Declaration of Independence, including the philosophy that was influential in its writing.
4. Explain the first constitution that followed independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the reasons it failed.
5. Analyze the arguments, debates, and compromises at the Constitutional Convention that led to the new U.S. Constitution.
6. Describe the process of ratifying, or adopting, the new constitution.
7. Explain the evolution of federalism from the founding to today.
8. Explain the process of amending the Constitution.

B. Unit 2: The Legislative Branch, the Executive Branch and Public Policy

Unit Objectives:
1. Describe Congress as a bicameral legislature, and identify the structures and powers of the institution.
2. Describe the roles and powers of the American president.
3. Analyze the role of the bureaucracy, and its role in the implementation of laws.
4. Define public policy and provide an overview of the policymaking process.
5. Explain the difference between social, economic and foreign policy

Learning Objectives:
1. Describe the congressional role in checks and balances.
2. Identify the leadership positions in the House and Senate.
3. Analyze the committee system in Congress.
4. Describe the steps necessary for a bill to become a law.
5. Describe the congressional election process
6. Explain the way the president works with Congress and the Courts.
7. Identify the way the expectations and roles of the president have changed over time.
8. Explain how the federal bureaucracy is organized and assess how and why it has grown over time.
9. Compare the different social programs administered by the federal government.
10. Explain the difference between fiscal, monetary, tax and regulatory policy.
11. Describe the various foreign policy actors and the types of foreign policy.

C. Unit 3: The Judicial Branch and Civil Liberties and Rights

Unit Objectives:
1. Analyze the meaning of rights in a democracy
2. Recognize the structure of the judicial system in the United States.

Learning Objectives:
1. Explain the value (and cost) of having a Bill of Rights.
2. Identify the civil liberties that restrict government action.
3. Recognize when groups have the right to be treated equally by the law and when they do not.
4. Describe how different groups have battled for rights to equal treatment.
5. Compare the different categories of law.
6. Describe what happens when someone gets involved in the legal system.
7. Explain how the Constitution arranged the court system and the role it left for Congress to fill in the details.
8. Assess the political nature of the highest court in the land (the Supreme Court) and explain how that court works.

D. Unit 4: Parties, Interest Groups, Public Opinion, Elections and the Media

Unit Objectives:

1. Explain what political parties and interest groups are, how they are similar, and how they differ.
2. Explain the role interest groups play in our political system.
3. Discuss the quality of public opinion and the role it plays in the political process.
4. Identify where Americans get their information and how it impacts their knowledge of the political system.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify what role parties play in a democracy.
2. Describe the organization and operation of political parties.
3. Identify the organization and influence of interest groups.
4. Identify the ways to measure public opinion through polling.
5. Explain how opinions are formed and passed from generation to generation to keep regimes stable.
6. Discuss the act of voting and why people chose not to vote.
7. Discuss the primary process in presidential elections in the United States.
8. Describe how the Electoral College works.
9. Discuss how media ownership and government regulation impact the information Americans receive every day.
10. Recognize how the media shape and perpetuate narratives and how politicians try to control the narratives.
11. Discuss what citizens can do to identify “real news,” build narratives, and be critical consumers of the media.