



Purpose: It is the intention of this Administrative-Master Syllabus to provide a general description of the course, outline the required elements of the course and to lay the foundation for course assessment for the improvement of student learning, as specified by the faculty of Wharton County Junior College, regardless of who teaches the course, the timeframe by which it is instructed, or the instructional method by which the course is delivered. It is not intended to restrict the manner by which an individual faculty member teaches the course but to be an administrative tool to aid in the improvement of instruction.

Course Title – Federal Government (Federal Constitution & Topics)
Course Prefix and Number –Government 2305
Department – History, Geography, Government, and Economics **Division** – Social and Behavioral Sci.
Course Type: (check one)
 Academic General Education Course (from ACGM – but not in WCJC Core)
 Academic WCJC Core Course
 WECM course (This course is a Special Topics or Unique Needs Course: Y or N)

Semester Credit Hours # : Lecture hours# : Lab/other hours # **3:3:0**

Equated Pay hours for course - 3

Course Catalog Description - 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.

List Lab/ Other Hours
Lab Hours
Clinical Hours
Practicum Hours
Other (list)

Prerequisites/Co requisites – TSI reading and writing requirements met.

Prepared by Amanda Shelton/Government Department

Date August 2012

Reviewed by department head Amanda Shelton

Date 09/07/12

Accuracy verified by Division Chair Amanda Shelton

Date 2/26/13

Approved by Dean of Vocational Instruction or Vice President of Instruction

Date 2-26-13



I. Topical Outline – Each offering of this course must include the following topics (be sure to include information regarding lab, practicum, clinical or other non-lecture instruction):

This course will cover the following areas:

- Area One - Constitutional Foundations/Political Structure:
 - Define the concept of democracy and apply it as a standard for evaluating American government and politics.
 - Identify the key components of the U.S. Constitution and analyze its strengths and weaknesses.
 - Define federalism and trace the evolution of federalism in the United States.
 - Identify the strengths and weaknesses of federalism and examine the conflict over the meaning of federalism.
 - Explain how federalism differs from other systems of government and how federalism supports/enhances democracy.
 - Identify and explain the concepts of political ideology and political culture. Analyze the factors that impact ideology and culture.

- Area Two – Political Linkages (Public Opinion, Media, Interest Groups, Party Voting and Elections):
 - Define public opinion, identify the problems in measuring public opinion and assess the degree to which American policy makers are responsive to public opinion.
 - Identify and analyze the role of the media in democracy, how “news” is gathered and disseminated, and how the media impacts public opinion and public policy.
 - Identify and evaluate the limits of the media and the concept of media bias.
 - Identify and evaluate the reasons for interest group proliferation and interest group bias.
 - Identify the tactics employed by interest groups to influence the political process. Evaluate the success of each tactic.
 - Explain the structure of American political parties. Describe the functions of a party within the political system including the role of third parties.
 - Identify and explain the types of elections in the American political system. Analyze electoral participation.

- Area Three – Three Branches of Government
 - Identify and evaluate how members of Congress represent their constituents.
 - Identify and evaluate the functions of Congress.
 - Describe and analyze the role of leaders, committees, political parties and interest groups within the legislative branch.
 - Identify the basic structure/model of U.S. bureaucracy and identify the types of bureaucratic agencies.
 - Identify and evaluate how the federal court system is organized and how it operates.
 - Describe the operational procedures and behavioral characteristics of the U.S. Supreme Court

- Define and analyze the concept of judicial review, judicial interpretation, and the role of the Supreme Court in a democratic society.
 - Identify and evaluate the evolution of presidential powers. Analyze the relationship between the Executive and Congress. Assess the ability of either institution to set policy independently of the other.
 - Distinguish between judicial activism and restraint. Discuss how they relate to the proper role of the court.
- Area Four – Governmental Functions
 - Explain the difference between civil rights and liberties. Explain the concept of incorporation and how the Supreme Court’s interpretation of liberties has changed.
 - Analyze the importance of civil rights in a democratic system, trace the expansion of civil rights protection and examine the present status of civil rights protections in today’s society.
 - Identify and explain the role of government in the economy, evaluate the tools government uses to manage the economy.
 - Describe how foreign and defense policies are made. Evaluate the importance of national security and identify new problems/issues for foreign and defense policy.
 - Examine social welfare as a partisan issue. Differentiate between social insurance and public assistance programs.
 - Discuss/explain how the rights of the accused have been protected through Supreme Court rulings.
 - Discuss the significance of the establishment and free exercise clauses in relation to freedom of religion.
 - Distinguish between procedural and substantive due process. Examine the federal judiciary’s application of due process protections.

II. Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will:

Course Learning Outcome	Method of Assessment
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.	Exams consisting of objective and/or essay questions. Instructors may also assign outside writing projects and/or oral presentations to measure student learning.

III. Required Text(s), Optional Text(s) and/or Materials to be Supplied by Student.

Textbook is determined by the department. See syllabus or bookstore for details.

IV. Suggested Course Maximum - 35

V. List any specific spatial or physical requirements beyond a typical classroom required to teach the course.

No special requirements for face-to-face course. Instructor must have access to working computer and all appropriate technology for WWW courses as well as courses taught by ITV.

VI. Course Requirements/Grading System – Describe any course specific requirements such as research papers or reading assignments and the generalized grading format for the course

Government courses require significant written effort. The written component may include any or a combination of the following: research paper; oral presentation; special projects dealing with interest groups, bills in Congress, or political parties; and/or essay examinations. Reading assignments come primarily from the assigned text, but are not limited to the text. These may include articles from newspapers, academic journals, or web-assigned readings. The grading scale for the course is the traditional college grading scale: A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D= 60-69; F=59 and below.

VII. Curriculum Checklist

- **Academic General Education Course** (from ACGM – but not in WCJC Core)
No additional documentation needed

- **Academic WCJC Core Course**
Attach the Core Curriculum Checklist, including the following:

- Basic Intellectual Competencies
- Perspectives
- Exemplary Educational Objectives

- **WECM Courses**
If needed, revise the Program SCANS Matrix & Competencies Checklist.



Page 1: Core Objectives

Course Prefix & Number: GOVT 2305	
Core Objective	Method of Assessment
Critical Thinking	Completion of independently researched papers pertaining to the various institutions of government, including student analysis, offering their own opinion supported by competent research from academically acceptable sources at collegiate level. Competency may also be assessed through essay questions on tests which require students to demonstrate critical thinking.
Communication	NA
Social Responsibility	NA
Personal Responsibility	NA



Page 2: Perspectives

Course Prefix & Number: GOVT 2305	
Perspective	Method of Assessment
1. Establish broad and multiple perspectives of the individual in relationship to the larger society and world in which he or she lives, and help the student to understand the responsibilities of living in a culturally- and ethically-diversified world;	
2. Stimulate a capacity to discuss and reflect upon individual, political, economic, and social aspects of life to understand ways to be a responsible member of society;	Independent research projects, voting and civic participation, in class positions on various aspects of government and its institutions and how it directly or indirectly affects individual students on a daily basis.
3. Recognize the importance of maintaining health and wellness;	
4. Develop a capacity to use knowledge of how technology and science affect lives;	
5. Develop personal values for ethical behavior;	
6. Develop the ability to make aesthetic judgments;	
7. Use logical reasoning in problem solving;	Quizzes and test questions. Students will analyze voting and other graphical and tabular data to explain different results and outcomes.
8. Integrate knowledge and understanding of the interrelationships of the scholarly disciplines	



Page 3: Exemplary Educational Objectives

Course Prefix & Number: GOVT 2305	
Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences	
Exemplary Educational Objective	Method of Assessment
1. Employ the appropriate methods, technologies, and data that social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition.	
2. Examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods, social structures, and cultures.	
3. Use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.	Questions on quizzes and exams plus class discussion regarding the various competing theories and forms of government and approaches to public policy.
4. Develop and communicate alternative explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues.	
5. Analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural, and global forces on the area under study.	Questions on quizzes and exams plus class discussion regarding the various domestic forces such as interest groups and political parties that have impact on the American polity.
6. Comprehend the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, the constitutions of the U.S. and Texas, federalism, civil liberties, and civil and human rights.	Questions on quizzes and exams plus class discussion regarding the various competing theories and forms of government and approaches to public policy.
7. Understand the evolution and current role of the U.S. in the world.	
8. Differentiate and analyze historical evidence (documentary and statistical) and differing viewpoints.	
9. Recognize and apply reasonable criteria for the acceptability of historical evidence and social research.	
10. Analyze, critically assess, and develop creative solutions to public policy issues.	
11. Recognize and assume one's responsibility as a citizen in a democratic society by learning to think for oneself, by engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media and other appropriate information sources about politics and public policy.	
12. Identify and understand differences and commonalities within diverse cultures.	