

## **Federal Government (GOVT 2305) Online**



**Credit:** 3 semester credit hours (3 hours lecture)

**Prerequisite/Co-requisite:** Pass the reading portion of COMPASS or other accepted testing instrument. Complete the Online Orientation and answer yes to 7+ questions on the Online Learner Self-Assessment:  
<http://www.lit.edu/depts/DistanceEd/OnlineOrientation/OOStep2.aspx>

### **Course 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.

### **Required Textbook and Materials**

1. *Politics in America, 2014 Election Editions and Updates Edition* (10<sup>th</sup> Edition) by Thomas Dye and Ronald Keith Gaddie. Pearson.
  - a. ISBN: 978-0-13-401892-8
2. A package of #882 Scantrons and a #2 pencil.

### **Course Objectives**

Upon completion of this course, students will:

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.

### **Core Objectives**

1. **Critical Thinking Skills:** To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
2. **Communication Skills:** To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
3. **Personal Responsibility:** To include the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

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4. **Social Responsibility:** To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.

### **Course Outline**

- A. Introduction
  1. Introduction of faculty and students
  2. Review Syllabus
  3. Review Class Policies
  4. Review Assignments
  5. Pre-Test
- B. Politics and Political Culture
  1. Compare and contrast government policies
  2. Compare and contrast representational government and direct government
  3. Show how elitism and pluralism reach different conclusions about who governs
  4. Evaluate the implications of the elitist conclusions about who governs
  5. Define the concept of political culture
  6. Characterize the trends affecting current distribution of wealth and income
  7. Analyze the relationships among social mobility, inequality and class conflict
  8. Differentiate various political ideologies that depart from conservatism and liberalism
- C. The Constitution and Federalism
  1. Outline the principles on which the Founders were in agreement
  2. Characterize the areas of conflict
  3. Explain how the Constitution structured the new government
  4. Analyze separation of powers and checks and balances established in the Constitution
  5. Assess the protections provided by the Bill of Rights
  6. Determine the various means through which the Constitution may be changed
- D. Public Opinion and Political Participation
  1. Explain how the agents of socialization influence the development of political opinions
  2. Determine the role of ideology in shaping opinion
  3. Describe the relationship between gender, race and opinion
  4. Assess how and to what extent public opinion influences public policy making
  5. Identify various ways citizen may participate in politics
  6. Trace the expansion of the right to vote
  7. Analyze political and demographic factors that influence voter participation
  8. Characterize protest as a form of political participation
- E. The Mass Media
  1. Identify functions and components of the mass media
  2. Describe the business of the media
  2. Assess the politics of media and how it is shaped by economic interests, environment, and ideology
  3. Analyze the role of media in shaping campaigns and elections
  4. Distinguish between freedom of the press and fairness of the press
  5. Assess the effects of media on public opinion and political behavior
- F. Political Parties
  7. Distinguish the federal form of government from confederal and unity forms and evaluate
  8. Trace the evolution of American federalism
  9. Explain federal grants, the impact and distribution of power between federal and state governments

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1. Show how the relationship between organizations and political power explains political parties and interest groups
  2. Trace changes in political parties over history
  3. Outline functions and perception of the two American parties, how they are financed and their changing roles
  4. Differentiate the three political arenas in which parties battle
  5. Evaluate the role of third parties in the electoral system
  6. Determine why the two-party system has persisted
- G. Campaigns and Elections
1. Evaluate the role of elections in American democracy
  2. Characterize factors that motivate people to pursue a career in politics
  3. Explain the advantages of incumbency
  4. Identify the main components of campaign strategies
  5. Analyze the role of money in campaigns, the sources of funding, the motivation to contribute and evaluate the efforts to regulate campaign finances
  6. Outline strategies in primary races, the general election, and assess influence on voters' choices
- H. Interest Groups
1. Explain the origins, functions, strengths and weaknesses of the interest group
  2. Characterize the interests represented, and lobbying in Washington
  3. Explain how interest group leaders create and build organizations
  4. Identify main activities of lobbyists and describe the environment of lobbying in Washington
  5. Outline the development, role and structure of political action committees
  6. Assess the relationships between bureaucratic agencies and interest groups and their influence in federal court system
7. Evaluate positions and consequences of interest groups for American democracy
- I. The Congress
1. Explain the sources of power in Congress
  2. Explain the processes of congressional apportionment and redistricting
  3. Describe congressional elections, the organization, and characteristics of the working life of a Congressional member
  4. Evaluate successes and failures of the two parties in Congress
  5. Assess the repercussions of committees and the distribution of power
  6. Characterize legislative work of committees
  7. Outline the process of a bill and identify obstacles to passage
  8. Assess the influences on congressional decision making
- J. The Executive Branch
1. Identify the powers and responsibilities of the president
  2. Assess presidential political power and analyze how personality and policy positions impact ratings
  3. Characterize the roles and responsibilities of the vice president
  4. Assess the extent of bureaucratic power
  5. Describe the types of agencies in the federal bureaucracy and their purpose
  6. Trace changes over time in the size and composition of the bureaucracy
  7. Assess the repercussions for democracy concerning bureaucracy
  8. Summarize the constraints that Congress can place on the bureaucracy
- K. The Courts
1. Assess the basis for and use of judicial power

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2. Compare and contrast the philosophies of judicial activism and judicial restraint
  3. Characterize the “special rules’ of the judicial decision making process
  4. Assess the role of politics and ideology in the judicial selection process and in Supreme Court decision making
  5. Evaluate checks of Supreme Court power
- L. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
1. Outline the founders’ views on individual liberty and the Bill of Rights
  2. Identify constitutional rights and their implementation
  3. Assess the role that politics has played over time in America’s quest for equality
  4. Analyze how the Constitution was interpreted to first justify and then attach slavery and segregation
5. Differentiate the meanings of equal protection of the laws
  6. Outline major civil rights legislation
  7. Determine how the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment has been interpreted regarding gender equality and policy issues concerning sexual orientation
- M. Public Policy
1. Compare politics and economics as decision making systems
  2. Outline major social welfare programs in the United States
  3. Analyze the role of politics in welfare reform
  4. Compare the United States with other nations on health care and health care programs
  5. Describe ways that nations have attempted to bring order to international policies
  6. Describe the nature of terrorism and U. S. response to terrorism

### **Grade Scale**

90 – 100	A
80 – 89	B
70 – 79	C
60 – 69	D
0 – 59	F

### **Course Evaluation**

Final grades will be calculated according to the following criteria:

- |                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| 1. Tests          | 60% |
| 2. Response Topic | 25% |
| 3. Quizzes        | 15% |

### **Course Policies**

1. Cheating of any kind will not be tolerated.
2. If you wish to drop a course, the student is responsible for initiating and dropping the course. Students who stop coming to class and fail to drop the course will earn an ‘F’ in the course.
3. No late assignments will be accepted.
4. A make up exam may be considered in the case of a documentable emergency beyond the student’s control and are given only at the instructor’s discretion.
5. Amending and supplementing syllabus: The instructor reserves the right to change course requirements and/or dates that material will be covered and exam

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- dates. Any such changes will be announced at least one class in advance and it is the responsibility of the student to check for any changes.
6. Respect other students, faculty and staff of LIT.
  7. Belligerent, abusive, profane, threatening, and/or inappropriate behavior on the part of students is a violation of the LIT Student Conduct Regulations. Students who are found guilty of such misconduct may be subject to immediate dismissal from the institution.
  8. You must log onto Blackboard and access this course a minimum of three times per week.

### **Technical Requirements (for courses using Blackboard)**

The latest technical requirements, including hardware, compatible browsers, operating systems, software, Java, etc. can be found online at: [https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1\\_2014\\_04/Student/015\\_Browser\\_Support/015\\_Browser\\_Support\\_Policy](https://help.blackboard.com/en-us/Learn/9.1_2014_04/Student/015_Browser_Support/015_Browser_Support_Policy)  
A functional broadband internet connection, such as DSL, cable, or WiFi is necessary to maximize the use of the online technology and resources.

### **Disabilities Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are federal anti-discrimination statutes that provide comprehensive civil rights for persons with disabilities. Among other things, these statutes require that all students with documented disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodations for their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Special Populations Coordinator at (409) 880-1737 or visit the office in Cecil Beeson-Student Services. You may also visit the online resource at <http://www.lit.edu/depts/stuserv/special/defaults.aspx>

### **Student Code of Conduct Statement**

It is the responsibility of all registered Lamar Institute of Technology students to access, read, understand and abide by all published policies, regulations, and procedures listed in the *LIT Catalog and Student Handbook*. The *LIT Catalog and Student Handbook* may be accessed at [www.lit.edu](http://www.lit.edu) or obtained in print upon request at the Student Services Office. Please note that the online version of the *LIT Catalog and Student Handbook* supersedes all other versions of the same document.