

## **PSCI 2306 • U.S. and Texas Government (Fall 2017)**

**Dr. Paul Hensel**

### **Review Sheet for Exam #1**

#### **Exam Format**

- This examination will feature two sections: a 40-question multiple choice section and a 5-question short answer/identification section. Each multiple choice question is worth one point, and each short answer question is worth two points.
  - The number of questions on each topic in the exam will (approximately) reflect the relative time spent on each topic in the course. A topic that was covered over two lectures should thus have approximately (but perhaps not exactly) twice as many exam questions as a topic that only lasted for one lecture.
  - The exam will draw from both the assigned readings (including both textbook and workbook) and the lecture notes. Around 1/3 of the exam questions will be drawn from materials in the readings that were not covered at all in lecture, with the rest reflecting topics that were only covered in lecture or were covered in both lecture and the readings.
- Note that in the past, questions drawn from the readings (even on concepts or topics specifically listed on the review sheet) have produced the lowest scores of any questions on the test, so you should take special care to study these topics on the review sheet.
- The exam will not be written with the intention of fooling students with trick questions or with the goal of failing as many students as possible. The main goal of this course is to provide students with an understanding of how American (and Texas) government works and why the system was designed this way, so the exam questions will reflect this goal.
  - All needed exam materials (such as Scantron sheets) will be provided for you, except for your preferred pencil. No notes or other materials will be permitted during the exam.
  - Note that no bathroom breaks are permitted during the exam -- once you leave the room, you can't return without a five letter grade penalty. Also, be on time -- once the first person finishes and leaves the room, anybody else who enters will suffer an automatic deduction of five letter grades; be aware that students sometimes finish exams like this in as little as 5-10 minutes.

#### **Advice on Studying**

- Be sure to review both the assigned readings (textbook AND workbook!) and the lecture notes for each topic covered in this portion of the course. If you missed one or more days of class, be sure to get a copy of those notes from somebody who was there.
- The textbook offers a number of useful study aids that will help you to prepare for the exam. Each chapter concludes with a list of key terms introduced or discussed in the chapter (with the page where each was covered), as well as a "Review the Chapter" section that lists a number of key points from each section of the chapter that students should understand. These items offer a useful way to evaluate your readiness for the test -- go through every term in the list to see if you can provide a good definition of the term and a good explanation of why it is important from the perspective of this course (how does this help us understand how American government works or why?), and try to answer each of these critical thinking questions.
- The list of topics on this review sheet is not legally binding; these are just suggestions for the most important topics that are most likely to be on the test (some of which may not actually appear on the test). If you understand all of these topics you are much more likely to do well on the test.
- One strategy for using this review sheet is the "foreign student test": imagine that a friend of yours from another country (who doesn't know anything about American government or politics) asked you to explain one of the concepts on this list. Can you give a clear explanation of the concept? If not, you might want to review your notes and the assigned readings until you can.

## **Topics Covered in This Portion of the Course**

### **Introduction to American Government and Politics**

*The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is on putting American politics into context. This includes understanding the meaning of “government” and “politics” in a general sense, as well as how these terms apply to American government and politics. This also involves understanding the basic political culture of the United States, including both the general philosophical approach that underlies our political system (liberalism) and the core political values that most Americans hold (but recognizing that different Americans place different emphases on these values).*

#### Topics Covered in Lecture

- Definition and meaning of politics
- Definition and major functions of government
- Forms of government (autocracy/one, oligarchy/few, democracy/many)
- Representative/direct, constitutional, and presidential/parliamentary democracy
- Definition and meaning of political culture
- Definition and meaning of political liberalism, including social contract
- Core values of American politics (liberty, individualism, laissez-faire, populism, egalitarianism)
- Equality of outcome vs. equality of opportunity
- Conflicts and tradeoffs between the core values

#### Additional Topics from the Textbook (Edwards chapter 1)

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- Age and political apathy, knowledge, and turnout
- The policymaking system (how people shape policies and policies impact people)
- Traditional democratic theory
- Contemporary theories of American democracy (pluralism, elitism, hyperpluralism)
- Challenges to democracy (complexity, limited participation, campaign costs, diverse interests)
- Scope and activity of government in America

### **Texas Political Culture**

*The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is on the distinctive nature of Texas government and politics. While Texans share many of the same core assumptions and values as the American public more generally, as discussed in the previous topic, we in Texas also have some important differences. This includes the different history of what became the state of Texas (which was very different from the history of the first thirteen states) as well as different needs and interests.*

#### Topics Covered in Lecture

- Overview of Texas geography, population, and economy
- Historical path to today's Texas culture
- Major elements of Texas political culture: traditionalistic and individualistic, not moralistic
- Major demographic and political issues in contemporary Texas: "minority majority," aging population, urbanization, uneven distribution of wealth & education

#### Additional Topics from the Textbook (Gibson chapter 1)

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- More details on Texas political myths and political culture
- The people of Texas (Native Americans, Hispanics, African Americans Anglos, Asian Americans,

general issues in Politics, Race, and Ethnicity)

- Economic regions of Texas

### **The U.S. Constitution**

*The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is on the development and general content of the U.S. Constitution. This includes the early development of American political thought, reflecting influences such as the Magna Carta and liberalism, and being demonstrated in the series of congresses and conventions that led the move from British colonies to an independent country under the Articles of Confederation and (eventually) the Constitution. We also discussed the many debates or compromises that shaped the Constitution, recognizing that nobody got everything they wanted out of the new document, but that everybody got enough of their wishes that the document was eventually ratified.*

#### Topics Covered in Lecture

- Historical precursor to today's constitutions: Magna Carta
- Origins of Colonial revolt against British rule: political background before revolution, Currency Act / Stamp Act (and Stamp Act Congress), Tea Act (and Boston Tea Party / Intolerable Acts)
- The 1st and 2nd Continental Congresses (purposes/goals, results)
- Declaration of Independence: emphasis on natural rights, social contract/consent of the governed
- Articles of Confederation (origins, role/strength of central government, weaknesses)
- Annapolis Convention, Constitutional Convention (who & why, major goals, major results)
- Major debates/compromises in Constitution:
  - Virginia Plan, New Jersey Plan, Connecticut Plan/Great Compromise
  - Legality of slavery, 3/5 compromise
  - Separation of powers, checks and balances in the Constitution
  - Congress: grants of power/denials of power, necessary & proper clause
  - Executive: limits on power, advice & consent
  - Judiciary: role of Supreme Court, judicial review, supremacy clause
- Electoral College (what it does and why)
- Amending the Constitution: difficulty, process, number of successful amendments
- Other elements of Constitution: "full faith & credit clause," "equal privileges & immunities clause"
- Ratification: procedure, Federalists vs. Anti-Federalists (main arguments of each), result
- The Bill of Rights: reason for existence, central elements
- Current status of the Constitution, overall assessment

#### Additional Topics from the Textbook (Edwards chapter 2)

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- More details on liberalism (in "The English Heritage" and "The American Creed" sections)
- More details on philosophical debates and critical issues at the convention
- More details on the tyranny of the majority (nature of the problem, solutions to it)
- Informal processes of Constitutional change and flexibility
- Growing role of the people in government: Jeffersonian democracy, Jacksonian democracy, the Progressives

#### Additional Topics from the Workbook (Chapter 1)

- Locke and individual rights
- More details on Federalist vs. Anti-federalist debate
- More details on Texas Constitution

- Examples of negative vs. positive rights: "welfare state," Civil Rights Act, health care

### **The Texas Constitution**

*The main focus of this topic (including both lecture notes and the assigned reading) is on the state constitution of Texas. As with political culture, discussed above, Texas has a very distinctive constitution that is quite different from the U.S. Constitution in its primary purpose, its length, and the ease with which it can be amended.*

#### Topics Covered in Lecture

- Basic goals of the Texas Constitution
- Similarities with U.S. Constitution: social contract, limited government, checks & balances
- Liberal vs. statutory constitutions: purpose, length, ease of amendment
- Differences from U.S. Constitution: guarantees of rights/liberties, limits on legislature / governor / judiciary, ease of amendment
- Overall assessment of the Texas Constitution: relatively weak, decentralized government, very detailed

#### Additional Topics from the Textbook (Gibson chapter 2)

- *More details on topics covered in lecture*
- More details on the history of the 7 historical constitutions of Texas (what they contained, how this was influenced by their political context, what has changed since then)
- Weaknesses and criticisms of the current Constitution
- More details on Constitutional change, adaptation, and reform