



PSCI. 2305-08W

Political Science 2305: United States Government and Politics

Fall 2020

“Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” – Robert F. Kennedy

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Ayal K. Feinberg

Office Location: 148 Ferguson Social Sciences

Office Hours: By Appointment – Available Through Zoom for All Students

University Email Address: Ayal.Feinberg@tamuc.edu

Communication Response Time: 48 Hours Maximum

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Texts:

Krutz, Glen and Sylvie Waskiewicz. 2016. American Government. OpenStax.

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government>

*** (Click “Download a PDF” link for free download) ***

Any additional course material and documents will be posted to MyLeo. All announcements related to the course, including changes to the due dates of assignments or exams, will be posted on MyLeo.

Course Description:

Designed to introduce the students to the principles and function of the government of the United States, this course examines the principles underlying the development of the U.S. Constitution, the operations of the U.S. government under the Constitution, and the opportunities and constraints imposed by and on the political system in the U.S. Topics to be covered include the philosophical preconditions of the American experiment in self-

government with justice, the documentary history of American government, the actual function and practice of government under the Constitution, and the actors engaged in the American political system.

Student Learning Outcomes

By completing this course, you will be able to:

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.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods

This is a web-based university course that requires you engage with all assigned online materials. For this class, you will be required listen to lectures, participate in interactive simulations, and engage in lively discussions through the course website on MyLeo. It is vitally important you complete all assigned reading for the course, and submit all assignments in a timely manner.

While this will be an *asynchronous* course, many lectures will be recorded live for students and will allow you the opportunity to interact with and ask questions of the instructor. Live attendance of these lectures will be optional. Furthermore, the class will be polled to determine the best time to hold these live lectures at the start of the semester. All lectures will be available through the course's YouSeeU-Virtual Classroom link and will be accessible through the course's website less than 2-hours after they are recorded.

This course is structured into two parts. Part 1 covers our country's origins, the founding documents, federalisms, and our governmental branches and institutions. Part 2 focuses primarily on subnational political structures and influencers, civil rights and civil liberties, and political behavior ranging from voting to lobbying. Each part of this course has specific due dates. Specifically, the reading quizzes and chapter discussions for each part are due before the completion of the associated exam. For more details please see the Course Outline/Calendar.

Student Responsibilities and Succeeding in this Course

First, define what success means to you. If you want to get an A, focus on doing well on every assignment and course component. If you want a B or a C for the course, there are some assignments that you may want to put more effort into than others.

Second, take good notes. Taking good notes starts when you begin your assigned reading. Don't wait to see what topics I cover during a chapter's lecture, as they will not necessarily be exhaustive. Review each chapter for key terms and concepts, and make sure you are familiar with them. Test yourself on defining these terms and concepts with a focus on being able to explain their importance to U.S. government.

Third, get together with your peers to prepare for your exams through Zoom or another online meeting program. Form study groups and review reading quizzes with each other. This will not only help you to fill in possible gaps in your course notes, but discussing class topics with peers often leads to new insights on the materials. It can also lead to lifelong friendships.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, engage with the course material. Engagement is strongly correlated with better performance on assignments and assessments as well as higher overall course grades. Simply put, do your best to participate in and complete every assignment this course. After all, you paid for it!

Grading and Assessment:

You are required to read the chapter(s) in your textbook associated with each topic being reviewed in the scheduled lecture. Course grading and assessment expectations will be discussed in greater detail below.

Major Course Assignments and Examinations:

Reading Quizzes:	20%
Chapter Discussion:	10%
Representative Letter:	20%
Exam 1:	25%
Exam 2:	25%

Reading Quizzes (20%):

During the semester, we will discuss at least twelve distinct topics, each associated with specific chapters in the textbook. To gauge whether you are completing the assigned readings as well as comprehending the concepts and ideas within them, I will assign a reading quiz for you to complete after we finish exploring each topic in class. Reading quizzes for the chapters in each exam will be due before the associated exam takes place.

Reading quizzes will open immediately following the completion of the topic according to the syllabus (at least 48 hours before they are due). Each quiz will have no more than ten total multiple choice, true/false or short answer questions. There will be at least twelve reading quizzes given during the semester. You will be able to drop your two lowest quiz scores. Consequently, under no circumstances will students be awarded a

make-up reading quiz for failing to complete it before it is due. To calculate your grade, each of your top 10 quiz scores will count for 2% of your final grade. In total, your reading quizzes will make up 20% of your final grade. Be sure to notify me if you have any issues accessing the reading quizzes, which will be located on your course MyLeo page.

Chapter Discussion (10%):

In this course, we will go over 12 distinct concepts broken down by chapter in your textbook through 10 lectures. After the completion of each lecture, associated textbook reading, and assigned reading quiz, students will be asked to write a short response to a prompt related to the chapter's concepts, share a question with the class that came about as a consequence of exploring the chapter's concepts, and/or respond to another student's discussion contribution.

Each contribution must be at least four sentences. Discussions will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A satisfactory contribution meets the length and requirements and engages with the appropriate concepts for the chapter. An unsatisfactory contribution is one that does not meet the length requirement or does not engage with the relevant concepts for the chapter. Of course, failing to submit a discussion contribution is also unsatisfactory.

Representative Letter (20%):

As a way to encourage civic engagement, this writing assignment requires you to develop a functional knowledge of a political issue that you care deeply about, analyze it, and then share your thoughts with an appropriate political representative or policymaker. Your assignment can be summarized as a 2-page single-spaced formal letter to a political representative or policymaker.

Details regarding this assignment, specifically a grading rubric, will be provided in an additional handout later in the semester. This rubric can also be found through the appropriate link in MyLeo.

In general, there are five-major steps you need to follow to successfully complete the assignment:

1. Find a subject you are very interested in learning about and where your contribution will matter. You must be motivated to learn more about this subject because you are going to write your representative letter on it.
2. Based on your chosen interest, find at least three scholarly sources discussing the politics or policy of your subject. These sources should come from academic publications such as journal articles or policy briefs from reputable think tanks (in general, not newspapers, cable media, or blogs).
3. Determine what state-level politician or policymaker is most appropriate to address in your representative letter. Write your letter to them.
4. Use some of your new knowledge and develop them into arguments. Insert these positions into your formal representative letter. Make sure your letter is unsealed, appropriately addressed, and stamped.

5. Turn in your letter to the instructor before the due date. Your letter will ultimately be mailed to the addressed government official after it is graded by your instructor.

Exams 1 & 2 (50%, 25% each):

Throughout the course, you will be given two exams. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice, true-false, and/or short answer questions covering the material in your textbook readings as well as information from class presentations and discussions. Your reading quizzes should serve as an essential study guide for these tests. You will have the entire class on exam day to complete all 50 questions. These exams will be closed notes unless otherwise noted.

I will not offer any make-up exams in this course. If you are having trouble earning the exam scores you desire for the course, please take the time to meet with me during scheduled office hours to discuss approaches that will help you achieve the grade you wish to earn. Do not wait until the end of the course to address exam grade concerns. Students that meet with me through office hours regularly score higher than those students that do not.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

Access and Navigation

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Each student needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's

home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace Technical Support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Pandemic Response

A&M-Commerce requires the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories. Exceptions may be made by faculty where warranted. Faculty have management over their classrooms. Students not using face-coverings can be required to leave class. Repetitive refusal to comply can be reported to the Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. Faculty will work to support the student getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Students with Disabilities – ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library- Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status.

Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill - 11 (Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.

For a list of locations, please refer to the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#)

document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

DATE	TOPIC	READING
August 24	Course Introduction	None
August 24 – October 9	American Government & Civic Engagement	Chapter 1
August 24 – October 9	The Constitution & Its Origins	Chapter 2
August 24 – October 9	American Federalism	Chapter 3
August 24 – October 9	Congress	Chapter 11
August 24 – October 9	The Presidency	Chapter 12
August 24 – October 9	The Courts	Chapter 13
October 9	Exam 1	Review
October 10 – December 4	Political Parties	Chapter 9
October 10 – December 4	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4
October 10 – December 4	Civil Rights	Chapter 5
October 10 – December 4	Voting and Elections	Chapter 7
October 10 – December 4	The Politics of Public Opinion	Chapter 6
October 10 – December 4	The Media / Interest Groups & Lobbying	Chapters 8 & 10
December 4	Exam 2	Review

***Representative Letter due on December 4, 2020