



COURSE SYLLABUS
FALL 2020
PSCI 344 01W
AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

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Online Course Time Zone: U.S. Central Time

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s) Required

Schaffner, Brian F. 2012. *Politics, Parties, and Elections in America* (7th edition). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning (ISBN: 978-0-49589-916-7).

Jacobson, Gary C. and Jamie L. Carson. 2019. *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (10th edition). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (ISBN: 978-1538123416).

Textbook Readings. Given the vast amount of information available in the course, we will not have enough time to “cover” all of the readings in the assigned book—chapter by chapter. Consequently, this course will depend on you to **complete all assigned readings** and be prepared to discuss them in online class in a timely manner. Please note that all assigned readings are critically important for successfully completing exams and class activities.

Course Description

A study of the history, function and leadership of political parties and the role they play in the operation of national, state, and local governments in the United States and a study of the role of group politics and voting behavior in the American political process.

This course is designed to provide an understanding of the origins, development, and contemporary function of the major political parties in the United States as well as the continuing evolution of the American electoral process.

Therefore, this course is organized around two broad themes. The first is the place of political parties in democratic governance. Here we ask why parties exist and explore the defining characteristics of parties relative to other political organizations. We also study the history of US political parties and party eras, and the relationship between electoral rules and party systems. The second theme is parties in elections. Here we study the mechanics of American electoral processes and political behavior. Topics considered here include the relationship between parties and political participation, voter choice, and candidate and party electoral strategies.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course

1. Students will understand the origins of the American political parties and party systems.
2. Students will identify characteristics and functions of political party organizations.

3. Students will describe the electoral coalitions of the two major parties and how they appeal to a variety of groups of voters.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional / Methods / Activities Assessments

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

1. Complete all course readings for each module of the course.
2. Regularly check the course site for announcement and updates.
3. Complete assigned readings.
4. Take each of the scheduled exams.
5. Participate fully in the class discussion.
6. Complete class activities.
7. Write reflection papers.
8. Students will respect their fellow classmates and the instructor. This includes treating everyone with courtesy and respect in any and all correspondence for the course. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
9. All students will maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty. Academic dishonesty affects all individuals at the University and accordingly will not be tolerated. For this class, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. In particular, passing off work as your own that was written by someone else, without proper citation or attribution, on either exams or discussion assignments will be considered an act of plagiarism. This holds true whether material comes from the textbook, another publication, an internet source, or another student. Violations of academic integrity/honesty while carrying out academic assignments may, at the discretion of the instructor, receive a zero on the particular work in question, receive an "F" in the course and may result in significant administrative penalties.
10. Students will comply with any and all D2L technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access.
11. Failure to complete two of any discussion, assignment, or activity will be considered "excessive" absenteeism and the student will be administratively dropped from the class.

GRADING

This course occurs in a digital learning environment designed in module format. Each module runs around two weeks during which time you will be expected to read assigned material, participate in discussions, complete class activities, and take exams. Each module opens and closes on a certain date and once a module closes it will not be opened again. Therefore you need to demonstrate a level of time management that allows you to meet deadlines as posted.

Exams: 240 Points (40% of total course grade)

Exam Format

Students will take three exams that feature 33 multiple choice questions. 40 minutes are allotted for exam.

Exam Times and Dates

Exams will be taken online and are scheduled on the dates listed below. The exam will begin at **11:30 PM on Saturday** and will close 72 hours later at **11:30 PM on Tuesday**.

Exam #1

Opens 9/26

Due 9/29

Lowi. Principles of Politics

Schaffner Chs. 1, 2, 4

Exam #2

Opens 10/24

Due 10/27
Covers Schaffner Chs. 5, 6, 8, Jacobson Chs. 5, 6, 4, 3

Exam #3

Opens 11/21
Due 11/24
Covers Schaffner Chs. 7, 9, Jacobson Ch. 13

Technical Issues: Students will take exams via the course page. Students are responsible for testing the compatibility of their own computers and software prior to starting the exam and must be sure to have a high speed internet connection to eliminate the chance of technical problems. Exams are timed and can only be taken once. Once the exam has begun, the allotted time will begin counting down and students will not be able to “pause” or put the exam time on hold, even if they disconnect from the course site or exam. Students should save their answers frequently by clicking on the “Save” or “Save All Responses” button. Students should not click the “Submit Quiz” button until they have completed the exam as it will not be possible to re-enter the exam once the test has been submitted. Students who encounter technical problems as a result of failing to comply with these guidelines will not be given an opportunity to re-take or re-access an exam. Any technical problems should be immediately referred to the help desk.

Make Up Exams

If a student misses a midterm exam, that student will receive a grade of 0 for the exam. Make-up exams will only be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Any request for a make-up exam must be made in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence was legitimate. Such a request must be received within 3 calendar days of the missed exam date, unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request during that time period. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and/or legal obligations. Technical problems with accessing the course will not be considered a valid excuse for missing an exam unless it can be shown that the problem is the fault of the D2L platform.

Make-up exams will be exclusively essay format.

Class Discussion: 120 Points (20% of total course grade)

This is the second graded component of the course and will consist of six discussions. Topics for the discussion will be posted on **starting date of each module at 9 AM**. Each discussion thread will close at **11:30 PM on closing date of each module**. Regardless of the reason, there will be no make-up opportunities for discussion assignments and students will not receive any credit for posts made after the deadline.

The instructor will create a discussion thread topic for each discussion to which students are expected to compile responses.

Students will be graded upon two criteria. First, students are expected to submit an original response to the topic posted, answering all parts of the topic (one original response requiring 200-300 words in length). Second, students are expected to respond to the posts of other students (at least two peer responses requiring at least 100 words each in length). Students should engage in conversation with their peer students in a thoughtful discussion about the topic as well as their individual responses to the topic. These posts should not be made all on the same day during the final hours of the discussion time line.

Students will receive a grade on each discussion assignment (Students who do not participate will receive a 0). Grades will be based both upon the quality of the content of a student's posts, as well as the student's engagement with other students by responding to posts. Posts that do not fully answer the questions or do not respond posted will not receive full credit. Students who wait until the end of the time frame may receive a grade penalty. **Discussion posts cannot be made up.**

- o Post your discussion answers to respond to the discussion questions
[Possible points (12 points x 6 Modules) = 72 points]
- o Respond to classmates' postings
[Possible points ((4 points x 2 responses) x 6 Modules) = 48 points]

Possible assigned points will be divided by the total number of discussion questions. For instance, if there are two discussion questions in the Module, 6 points will be assigned to original discussion for question #1 and remaining 6 points for questions #2. 4 points will be assigned to two responses for question #1 and remaining 4 points to two responses for question #2.

See the Guidelines/Rubric for Discussion Answer and Guidelines/Rubric for Responding Peer's Posting for the evaluation criteria (Will be placed in Doc Sharing under Course Document).

All content submitted for Discussion Assignments must be a student's original submission. Any material taken from another source, including the textbook, should include a proper citation. Material which is copied or pasted from any source will be considered plagiarism as discussed above in the Course Policies and Procedures section.

Class Activities: 96 points (16% of total course grade)

You will have an opportunity to do a variety of class activities which will include the best practices in American and Texas government areas. More specific information will be provided later.

o Complete class activity [Possible points (12 points x 8 Modules) = 96 points]

Reflection Paper: 120 points (20% of total course grade)

You will write short reflection papers. Reflection paper will ask you to write a specific topic and issue. These will be a good opportunity for you to explore critical issues. These papers are required to write 3-4 page, typed, with one-inch margins, in Times New Roman, 12-point, double spaced. Instructions with details on reflection papers will be distributed later.

o Write three reflection papers [Possible points (40 points x 3 papers) = 120 points]

Self-Assessment: 24 points (4% of total course grade)

You will assess your performance for each module.

o Complete self-assessment [Possible points (3 points x 8 Modules) = 24 points]

Summary of Assignments and Grading

Assignments	How Many	Point Value	Total Possible	Percent of Total
Exam	3	80	240 points	40%
Discussion	6	20	120 points	20%
Class Activity	8	12	96 points	16%
Reflection Paper	3	40	120 points	20%
Self-Assessment	8	3	24points	3%
Total			600 points	100%

Grading Scale

Points	Grade	Standard
540-600	A	Superior
480-539	B	Above Average
420-479	C	Average Performance
360-419	D	Below Average
359 and Below	F	Unsatisfactory

Late Work

No late work accepted and work cannot be made up. Technical difficulties of the student's equipment or internet provider are not excused. When such difficulties occur, students are expected to locate an alternative source for submitting assignments, e.g., neighbor, workplace, public library, etc. Technical difficulties caused by the University or D2L can be excused provided the student obtains documentation from technical support. Students should always have a back-up in mind for unexpected glitches in technology.

However, if you cannot submit your work on time due to the pandemic, contact the instructor as soon as you can. The acceptance of late work is at the discretion of the instructor and a student must include verifiable justification.

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.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Student Support

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

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>

System Maintenance

Please note that on the 4th Sunday of each month there will be System Maintenance which means the system will not be available 12 pm-6 am CST.

It is very important to go to this online course 4-5 times each week to:

1. Read new announcements
2. Check your university email
3. Review activities and assignments
4. Check the schedule of activities and assignments
5. Communicate as needed with your instructor and class members.

Submitting Assignments

You are responsible for attaching the correct assignment to the correct submission folder. When you submit your assignment, you should always click on the submitted file(s) to make sure the assignment is there. You can tell if it is attached by clicking on the submitted file(s) and actually open and view the document. Submitting an incorrect document, a blank document, or no document is counted as failure to complete the assignment on time.

Each assignment or work should be done in MS-Word, including your name in the content. Also make your computer file name, when adding your file(s) in the submission folder, using your last name and a specific assignment (i.e., Choi Activity1.docx).

Announcements

Announcements are posted often in the course. When you go to the course, you should first read any announcements that have been posted since you were last in the class.

Email Correspondence

Email from me is sent to your University email account. It is important to go to MyLeo mail regularly to check for messages.

If you need to contact me, email is the best way to reach me. Please send your message with your first and last name so I know who you are. Unless otherwise announced, I will do my best to respond within 48 hours except weekends.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Code of Student Conduct: All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. *Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.* Failure to comply with the Code of Student Conduct and commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class, being immediately dropped from the class, and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

Student Conduct

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<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](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf>

ADA Statement

Students with Disabilities

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.

University's 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.”

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module 1 (August 24 – September 1)

Course Introduction
1. Lowi. Principles of Politics

Class Activity #1

Module 2 (September 2 – 15)

American Party System
1. Schaffner Ch. 1
2. Schaffner Ch. 2

Class Activity #2
Discussion #1
Reflection Paper #1

Module 3 (September 16 – 29)

Party Organization
1. Schaffner Ch. 4

Exam #1
Class Activity #3
Discussion #2

Module 4 (September 30 – October 13)

Nomination and Election
1. Schaffner Ch. 5
2. Schaffner Ch. 6
3. Schaffner Ch. 8
4. Jacobson Ch. 5
4. Jacobson Ch. 6

Class Activity #4
Discussion #3
Reflection Paper #2

Module 5 (October 14 – 27)

Campaign

1. Jacobson Ch. 4
2. Jacobson Ch. 3

Exam #2
Class Activity #5
Discussion #4

Module 6 (October 28 – November 10)

Political Participation
1. Schaffner Ch. 7

Class Activity #6
Discussion #5
Reflection Paper #3

Module 7 (November 11 – 24)

Ideology and Legislative Party
1. Jacobson Ch. 13
2. Schaffner Ch. 9

Exam #3
Class Activity #7
Discussion #6

Module 8 (November 25 – December 8)

Class Activity #8

√ Many class activities, discussions, exams, and reflection papers are due at **11:30 PM on Tuesday**.

√ Please note that the instructor reserves the right to change any part of this syllabus as needed over the course of the semester. Any and all changes will be announced.