

Political Science 2305  
United States Government  
Spring 2024

**Instructor Information:**

Megan Todd

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Office Hours: By appointment

**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.

You will not be taught *what* to think about political issues. You will be provided the knowledge base to determine *how* to think about political issues for *yourself*.

**Learning Objectives:**

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.

**Required Text:**

ISBN: 9780393887846

Ginsberg, Benjamin, et al. *We the People, Essentials 14th Ed.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2023.

The book is on "reserve" in the library. Students may access the book for a two-hour period **in** the library.

## Assignments and Grades:

### 1. Examinations: 400 points.

There will be three tests and one comprehensive final for a total of four exams. The tests are worth 80 points each. The comprehensive final exam is worth 160 points.

Each test will be available for 48 hours on D2L Brightspace. **If you miss an exam, you will receive a 0 for that exam.** If you are participating in an activity relating to the university that requires you to be away for the duration of the exam, contact your instructor **prior** to the exam so that accommodations can be made. It is **your** responsibility to ensure that the absence is documented. Do not assume that the department/group will email your instructor. If you have a legitimate reason for not being able to complete the exam (illness that requires professional treatment, family emergency, legal obligations, etc), you may request a make-up exam by emailing your instructor within three days of the missed exam or as soon as physically possible. In your email, you must explain why the exam could not be completed and provide supporting documentation.

The tests will consist of multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions in D2L Brightspace with a strictly enforced time limit. If you experience technical issues, contact your instructor and D2L Brightspace immediately with as much information and documentation (screenshots), as possible. Refer to the Technical Support section for information on how to contact D2L Brightspace.

**The comprehensive final exam will NOT be on D2L Brightspace. It will be conducted in-class during Finals Week.** You must supply your own writing instrument.

### 2. Weekly Quizzes: 110 points.

There will be a quiz on D2L for each chapter that is covered. To ensure that students are reading the material before class, quizzes will be due **prior** to the last lecture for each chapter. Quizzes consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions. Each quiz is worth 11 points. The two lowest quiz grades will be dropped as long as there is no instance of academic dishonesty. Refer to the **Academic Dishonesty** section.

The deadline is strictly enforced. Late work is not accepted. Once the assignment has closed on D2L Brightspace, it will not be reopened. Extensions will only be granted for documented reasons. Students may request an extension by emailing the instructor within three calendar days of the missed assignment or as soon as physically possible.

### 3. Legislative Project: 80 points.

**This is NOT a group project.** Harold Lasswell defined politics as "Who Gets What, When, How." At the heart of politics is policy. You will be provided a list of policy issues on D2L Brightspace. In a PowerPoint presentation, you will offer the following regarding one key issue: why that issue was chosen, why that issue is important to the state, and how that issue is viewed from both the conservative and liberal perspective. More information regarding the assignment will be made available on D2L during the semester.

4. Participation: 35 points.

**Participation is not simply showing up to class.** Showing up to class is attendance. Participation consists of having read the material prior to class, being prepared to answer questions, and contributing to meaningful in-class discussion over the readings.

Your participation grade may be further reduced by the following improper behaviors and may lead to being asked to leave class:

- Failure to abide by the Code of Student Conduct
- Repeatedly arriving to class late, leaving class early, missing significant portions of class
- Sleeping
- Using an unapproved electronic device

The scale used in calculating final grades is as follows:

A:	562-625 points	D:	375-436 points
B:	500-561 points	F:	000-376 points
C:	437-499 points		

**Syllabus Change Policy:** As your instructor, I reserve the right to amend, modify, or adjust this syllabus as needed. Circumstances and events may make it necessary to alter the indicated schedule. Any adjustment(s) will be announced in class, on D2L Brightspace, and/or via university email.

**Student Statement of Personal Responsibility:**

You must complete an assignment on D2L Brightspace demonstrating that you have read, understand, and agree to abide by the rules of this course by **11:45 PM CT on Friday, January 26 on D2L Brightspace.**

**Attendance Policy:** Attendance is highly recommended as it can only increase your understanding and knowledge through lecture and discussion. Lectures will not be recorded nor streamed online. Attendance will be taken daily for state record keeping requirements. It will not count towards your final grade.

**Email Policy:** The first place to check for answers to any questions regarding class is this syllabus. Class policies and the calendar are clearly outlined. If you email me a question and the answer can be found in this syllabus, you will not receive a response. I attempt to respond to emails Monday through Friday within one business day. Example: if you email me at 5:00 PM on Friday, you should not expect a response email until Monday. If I do not respond to you within two *business* days, please send a follow-up email as I may not have received your initial contact. Feel free to speak with me the next class period.

**Non-Discrimination Notice:** A&M–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.

**Electronics Policy:** Cellular telephones, tablets, laptops, and any other gadgets must be turned off and put away during class. Man lived without electronic devices for thousands of years. You will survive one class period. If you are caught using any electronic device that is not authorized by the Students with Disabilities office, including earbuds, you will receive **one** warning. If you are caught using an unauthorized device after that initial warning, you will be asked to leave class and lose points towards your participation grade.

\*\*\*You will need a writing instrument and paper to take notes for this course.\*\*\*

**Academic Dishonesty:** Any student who is caught committing any kind of academic dishonesty will receive an "F" in this course and will be reported to the University administration. "Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), signing the attendance sheet for a student who is absent (or asking another student to sign you in when you are absent), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material" (Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12). If you have any doubt as to what may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me *prior* to submitting any assignments.

The immediate consequence for any form of academic dishonesty in this class is an immediate 0 on assignment. In the event that the lowest grade(s) are dropped for assignments, any 0 recorded due to academic dishonesty will **NOT** be dropped. Additionally, in accordance with university procedure [13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty](#), you will be reported to the academic dean of the college in which your major department is housed and the department head in your major department so that a record of your offense may be maintained for purposes of future disciplinary action should it be required. Repeated occurrences of academic dishonesty may result in your expulsion from the university.

**Campus Carry:** 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 <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeeAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf> (and/or consult your event organizer). 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.

**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." (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct) 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.

**COVID-19 Statement:** A&M-Commerce recommends the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories.

**Counseling Center:** The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit [www.tamuc.edu/counsel](http://www.tamuc.edu/counsel).

**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](mailto:studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu)

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### ***Student Responsibilities***

- Students are expected to attend class regularly.
- Students are expected to complete the assigned readings **prior** to class.
- Students are expected to engage in class discussions.
- Students are expected to complete all assignments including discussions and exams in a timely fashion.
- Students are expected to regularly check the course site for announcements and updates.
- Students are expected to respect their fellow classmates and instructor.
- Students will comply with any and all D2L Brightspace technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, and internet access.

### *Access and Navigation*

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course via MyLeo. 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](mailto:helpdesk@tamuc.edu).

### *Minimal Technical Skills Needed*

Students will need to be familiar with the University learning management system (eCollege), know how to use a personal computer, navigate the internet, and use basic word processing software such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

### *Technology Requirements*

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

### *Technical Support*

If you are having technical difficulties 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>

### *Browser Information*

Google Chrome or Firefox are the best browsers to use for D2L Brightspace. There have been noted issues when using this platform on Microsoft Explorer and Edge.

## Course Calendar

(All dates and content are subject to change.)

- MODULE ONE:
  - Syllabus
    - January 10
  - Chapter 1. Americans and Their Political Values
    - January 12 – January 17
    - **Martin Luther King Jr. Day: No Class**
    - January 15
  - Chapter 2. The Founding and the Constitution
    - January 19 – January 24
  - Chapter 4. Civil Liberties
    - January 26 – January 31
  - Chapter 5. Civil Rights
    - February 2 – February 7
  - **Test One opens at 12:00 AM CT February 8. Closes at 11:45 PM CT February 9.**
- MODULE TWO:
  - Chapter 6. Public Opinion
    - February 12 – February 16
  - Chapter 7. The Media and Political Information
    - February 19 – February 23
  - Chapter 8. Political Parties and Interest Groups
    - February 26 – March 4
  - Chapter 9. Participation, Campaigns, and Elections
    - March 6 – March 20
    - **Spring Break: No Class**
    - March 11 – March 15
  - **Test Two opens at 12:00 AM CT March 21. Closes at 11:45 PM CT March 22.**
- MODULE THREE:
  - Chapter 10. Congress
    - March 25 – April 3
    - **Good Friday: No Class**
    - March 29
  - Chapter 11. The Presidency
    - April 5 – April 10
  - Chapter 13. The Federal Courts
    - April 12 – April 17
  - Chapter 14. Domestic Policy
    - April 19 – April 26
  - **Test Three opens at 12:00 AM CT April 29. Closes at 11:45 PM CT April 30.**
  - **Legislative Project due by 11:45 PM CT April 5.**
  - Review Preparation Day: No Class
    - May 1
  - Comprehensive Review Day
    - May 3
  - **Comprehensive Final Exam: refer to the university's Final Exam schedule**