



“Never be cruel. Never be cowardly.
Remember, hate is always foolish and love is always wise.
Always try to be nice—but never fail to be kind.”

Political Science 2305.03E

U.S. Government and Politics

Fall 2024

Instructor: Dr. Jeffrey C. Herndon

Office Location: 152 or 160 Ferguson Social Science Building

University Email Address: Jeffrey.Herndon@tamuc.edu

Telephone: 903-886-5317

Course Information

Required Books

(These books in THESE editions are **required** for this course. Get them now, readings start first day of class!)

Bedenhamer, David. *The U.S. Constitution: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
(ISBN: 9780195378320)

De Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*, abridged by Richard Heffner. Harper Perennial
(ISBN: 9780451531605)

In addition, material and documents are available on D2L. It is also advisable that you acquaint yourself with a reliable news source (e.g. The Texas Tribune, CNN, KETR, etc.) as there will be current events quizzes from time to time. All current events quiz topics will come from these three sources.

Course Description

Designed to introduce the students to the principles and function of the government of the United States, this course examines the development of the U.S. Constitution, the operations of the U.S.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

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

Core

1. Critical Thinking—Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
2. Communications—Student Communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data and technology as applicable.
3. Personal Responsibility—Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
4. Social Responsibility—Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.

Content

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 course is a traditional university class that will consist of lectures and interactive discussion. The degree to which students contribute to the overall discussion will determine how much lecture/presentation will be required.

Your instructor DOES NOT lecture from a book. Instead, I believe that university students ought to be literate. I am happy to answer any questions/issues that you have with regard to your book/readings before the tests/quizzes—but it is incumbent upon you to attend class regularly and complete the assigned readings. Indeed, since we will be operating on two tracks (in class lectures and discussions/readings) it is incumbent upon you to attend class regularly.

Student Responsibilities

Students are responsible for completing assigned readings and/or homework prior to the class for which they are assigned. Students are expected to attend class and contribute to class discussions. Students are expected to demonstrate respect for each other, the instructor, and the institution.

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Students will succeed to the degree that they apply themselves to the material. Ultimately, a university education is up to the student—you own it. It is my recommendation that you review materials presented in class on the day that the material is presented as well as periodically throughout the semester. Experience has demonstrated that attempting to “cram” for tests rarely works.

Grading and Assessment

There will be four tests and one comprehensive final exam in this course. The tests will be worth 50 points each and the final exam will be worth 100 points. In addition, there will be at least 15 quizzes covering daily readings and/or current events from which the highest 10 quiz scores determine your overall quiz grade. The quizzes themselves will be worth 10 points each. You will be responsible for presenting a reading or a portion of a reading to the class. These assignments will be worth 10 points each (and you will do at least two). In addition, you will be responsible for a position paper on some issue in American politics (20 points) and presenting information on a member of congress (20 points). In order to receive any grades at all, there must be a copy of the “Statement of Personal Responsibility” form filed with the instructor. The form itself will constitute your first quiz grade.

Exams may be given on D2L during class time on the dates indicated in the course calendar or in class. It is your responsibility to log-in to D2L and take the exam during that time if the exam is given online. Only the most extreme **verifiable** circumstances justify a make-up exam. You will only have the opportunity for a make-up exam under extreme **verifiable** circumstances. Your instructor recommends that you take online exams on a computer rather than your telephone.

Another thing about tests: Let’s be honest, some of your tests may be online. It is my expectation that you will have materials available to assist you (you’d be crazy not to!). However, tests and quizzes are timed exercises—that means that you need to have your test-taking aids organized and ready. The tests and quizzes begin with the assumption that you know some of the material on the test/exam and can access the things that you do not know quickly and efficiently. Furthermore, tests may cover anything from your reading assignments or material covered in class. I DO NOT lecture from the book. Instead, I believe that university students have at least basic literacy skills. I will be happy to answer any questions/issues that you have with regard to your book/readings before the tests/quizzes—but it is incumbent upon you to attend class regularly and complete the assigned readings. Should you have questions over the textbook readings, please make sure to ask me during class, office hours, in the hall, when you see me on campus, etc. I can’t answer questions that aren’t asked!

Grading

Exam One	50	Quizzes (10x10)	100
Exam Two	50	Reading Presentation (2x10)	20
Exam Three	50	Congress	20
Exam Four	50	Position paper	20
Final Exam	100		
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Total Points	460		

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Final grades are determined on the following scale:

91-100%	A	419-460
81- 90%	B	373-418
70- 80%	C	322-372
60- 69%	D	276-321
≤ 59%	F	0-275

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Attendance: You should attend class. Attendance will be taken daily since attendance information is now required by the state and by the office of financial aid. However, as noted above, your education is yours to do with as you will. Now, with that said, experience has demonstrated that regular attendance is essential to success in class. To reiterate, your instructor DOES NOT lecture from the textbook. What this means is that there will be material delivered in class that you will need to succeed in the course.

Current events and readings quizzes given on particular class days cannot be made up. Rather than make up quizzes, you will be given multiple quizzes (a minimum of 15) from which only your 10 highest scores will count toward your final grade. In other words, at least five quiz grades will be dropped—and if you've missed more than five quizzes, you have other issues that you must address. If you missed five quizzes, that means that you have missed two and half weeks of classes—the equivalent of two spring breaks.

In addition, please bring the assigned reading for any given day to class with you so that we can refer directly to them.

Electronics Policy: Experience has demonstrated that students do not really understand appropriate ways to use technology while in class. In fact, other than classes about technology, there may not be an effective way to use technology in class.

Cell phones

Numerous studies have demonstrated a strong correlation between phone use in class and poor academic performance (at least three different studies have determined that phone use in class may result in the drop of an entire letter grade for students who insist that the world will end if they aren't engaged in texting or scrolling through social media). For this reason, the following guidelines are in effect for this class.

You are not allowed to use your phone during class.

You will place your phone face down, either off or set to silent (this includes flash notifications) on the desk in front of you where the phone itself is visible. Once placed there, you should not touch it again until class is over. If you do touch it, use it, watch the screen, text, etc., you will be given a five point penalty for each infraction to be deducted from your final grade. This penalty will be assessed—there is no appeal. Please do not try to make an appeal or excuses. If

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your telephone rings, flashes, vibrates, etc. during class, you will likewise be assessed a penalty. This penalty will be three points off your final grade for each infraction.

Laptops and Tablets

The use of laptops and tablets for note-taking must be approved by the professor. Again, science indicates that taking notes by hand is more effective at helping students process, consider, analyze, and retain information appropriate to the university as a learning environment and for persons receiving a university degree. Only the most extreme, verifiable circumstances justify the use of laptops in class.

Earbuds, Media Players, and Other Electronic Devices

While it is possible to carry your entertainment options wherever you go and wherever you happen to be, this class is not such a venue. Earbuds, headphones, etc. are a distraction for both you, as a student who is supposed to be actively engaged and responsible for your own education, and your professor. Put simply, it is rude to be listening to something else when you are in class. Failure to remove such distractions will incur a penalty. For each violation you will have five points deducted from your overall grade. Rather than listening to your earbuds or headphones, you should be engaged in “active listening” and engagement with what is happening in class.

For further reading on the deleterious effects of technology:

Cell phone use in class

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2158244015573169>

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01443410.2018.1489046>

<https://www.psytopost.org/2018/05/just-cell-phone-possession-can-impair-learning-study-suggests-51228>

<http://www.longwood.edu/news/2015/college-students-test-scores-suffer/>

<https://www.mnn.com/family/family-activities/blogs/students-get-better-grades-when-phones-are-banned>

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/cellphones-classrooms-contribute-failing-grades-study/story?id=56837614>

<https://news.rutgers.edu/cellphone-distraction-classroom-can-lead-lower-grades-rutgers-study-finds/20180723#.XMju4P1Kipp>

Note-taking

<https://linguistics.ucla.edu/people/hayes/Teaching/papers/MuellerAndOppenheimer2014OnTakingNotesByHand.pdf>

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

<https://www.collegeraptor.com/find-colleges/articles/tips-tools-advice/laptop-vs-notebook-better-take-notes/>

https://www.eecs.yorku.ca/course_archive/2015-16/F/2011/laptop%20in%20classroom%20article.pdf

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/SingleStudyReviews/wwc_carter_022217.pdf

https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/03/science/whats-lost-as-handwriting-fades.html?_r=0

Active listening

<https://www.thoughtco.com/how-to-be-a-good-listener-31438>

<https://www.educationcorner.com/listening-skills.html>

<https://blog.cengage.com/tips-students-become-better-listener/>

<https://positivepsychologyprogram.com/communication-activities-adults-students/>

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty consists of any form of cheating or academic misconduct related to your role as a student. Examples of academic dishonesty may include, but is not limited to, plagiarism, copying another student's work, cheating on exams, quizzes, and/or assignments. In addition to the traditional forms of academic dishonesty, **the use of AI in the composition of written assignments is forbidden**. Writing and thinking are inextricably linked and, since the goal of the university is to train you to think, you should do your own writing.

There is another reason that you should do your own writing. Experience has demonstrated that AI is not a very good writer. In other words, you are more likely to receive a better grade for your own writing than that created by AI.

The penalty for academic dishonesty in this class is an immediate "0" on the graded material on which the cheating was discovered. For those assignments that might otherwise be among grades dropped in the calculation of final grades (readings quizzes for example), the "0" recorded for academic dishonesty will not be among those dropped.

In addition, 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 as well as the department head in your major department so that a record of your offense may be maintained for purposes of future disciplinary action.

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Under the policy, repeat instances of academic dishonesty may result in expulsion from the university. With this in mind, consider that any short-term gain that you hope to attain by engaging in unethical behavior is simply not worth it.

AI Statement

A&M-Commerce has adopted the following statement for inclusion on faculty syllabi:

Texas A&M University-Commerce acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism). Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructor's guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed. In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

Of course, this statement is wholly inadequate. In this class, **DO NOT USE AI**. Programs that save you all the trouble of reading, thinking, and presenting your thoughts and ideas are antithetical to university **education**. If it is apparent that you used AI in writing any assignment in this course, you will receive a 0 on that assignment with no opportunity to make it up.

Conduct

Student conduct in the university is governed by university procedure [13.02.99.R0.06 Standards of Student Conduct](#). The university requires that all syllabi include a statement from section 2.2 of that procedure. Section 2.2 of the policy deals with student "obligations and responsibilities." Under the terms of the procedure, students have the obligation "to follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior commensurate with aspiration implied by a college education."

Bear in mind that your behavior is not only a reflection upon you, but also the university. It is my expectation that you will demonstrate respect for the institution, your professors, and your fellow students, as well as your own education. If you send me a photo of a tiger by noon August 28, I will give you ten points. This is true even in the context of courses in which controversial topics and issues (such as a political science course) are discussed. (I will explain why you were taught to never discuss religion and politics in polite company on the first class day.)

Your professor will serve as the arbiter of what constitutes appropriate respect and behavior in the context of this class. Students who fail to treat the institution, class, professor, and/or other students may be reported to the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

There are a few things that are not allowed in this class. First of all, you are allowed to have drinks and snacks—but do not show up with a full meal and proceed to eat it in class. Your classmates and I do not want to watch and/or listen to you eating. Sunglasses are not to be worn

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in class. Your instructor likes to be able to see your eyes so that he can determine if you are following along or are confused. There will be no napping in this class. If you are so exhausted that you cannot sit up in your chair and pay attention in class, perhaps you should be at home in bed. Finally, and this is a big one, abusive and abrasive attitudes are not going to be tolerated. In every class there seem to be some student or students who know more than anyone else about anything—or at least they think that they do. Attitude is not an attractive feature and it is not conducive to creating an appropriate learning environment. Don't be that student. It is disrespectful to all of us and, if it becomes too distracting for the instructor, you may be dropped from the course. At the very least you will be asked to leave class on the days when your attitude overwhelms your capacity to think. Your instructor and other students in the class do not have the time or the energy to deal with this phenomenon.

Contrary to what many people seem to believe, a university education is not a right. Rather it is privilege—and it ought to be treated that way. You should remember that this course is part of YOUR education. Your education is, in turn, YOUR responsibility. Sadly, some students seek to shift responsibility to others: faculty, other students, academic departments, the university, etc. This is unfortunate and demonstrates an unwillingness to take ownership of what belongs to you. Your professors and other university staff are here to help you to succeed, but it is up to you to decide that you are going to succeed and take the steps necessary to make that happen.

Your instructor cannot force you to do your homework, read the material assigned for class, study material presented in class, etc.—that is up to you. With that said, your success (in all of your courses) is dependent upon you doing those sorts of things. If you choose not to do so, and your academic performance is less than adequate, it is not the fault of your professor or anyone else. It is yours. **You own your own success. Conversely, you own your own failure.**

The academic enterprise is performance based. Often students say that they “tried” really hard in class, so they deserve a better grade than they have earned. Usually, when most students say “I tried really hard” it is a lie. Opening your book the day before an exam is not trying at all. There is no way to measure how someone has tried, so it is not a consideration in assessment.

There has NEVER been an instance in which the instructor of this section of this course has “given” a student a grade lower than the student earned—but there have been numerous instances in which he has given students more than they earned.

Finally, most classes will end with an admonition to be kind. You never know the burdens that someone else carries—and most often we don't know yours. Kindness does not cost anyone anything and it may benefit someone in ways that you cannot imagine—in addition to the benefits that you will receive from the active exercise of civility and kindness. It is good for them AND good for you.

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, weather, preemption by university functions, etc., may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in class and on D2L.

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COURSE CALENDAR

1	08/27		Introduction
2	08/29	Thinking about Politics: The Classical Perspective	The Allegory of the Cave (D2L)
3	09/03	Thinking About Politics: The Liberal Tradition	John Locke selections (D2L)
4	09/05	When is "The Beginning"?	The Mayflower Compact/Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (D2L) The Declaration of Independence/The Articles of Confederation (D2L)
5	09/10	History Lesson: The Revolution	Bodenhamer, Chapter 1; Tocqueville, Part 1, Chapter 3, 56-59
6	09/12	Writing the Constitution	Bodenhamer, Chapter 1
7	09/17	Test One	
8	09/22	The problem of self-government with justice	The Federalist Papers 9-10 (D2L)
9	09/24	The "inevitable" revolution	Tocqueville, Author's Introduction, 22-36
10	09/29	Social Character of the Americas	Tocqueville, Part one, Chapter, 37-49
11	09/31	Equality and the Danger of Majoritarianism	Tocqueville, Part one, Chapters 11-12, 111-137
12	10/01	Continued	Tocqueville, Part one, Chapters 13-14, 137-155
13	10/03	Test Two	
14	10/08	The Peculiar Circumstance of the States: Federalism	The Federalist Papers 41, 46-47 (D2L); Bodenhamer, Chapter 2
15	10/10	Continued	Tocqueville, Part one, Chapter 64-77
16	10/15	What is Represented? And the Separation of Powers	Bodenhamer, Chapter 3 The Federalist Papers 47-51(D2L)
17	10/17	The Structures of Constitutional Government: Congress	The Federalist Papers 52-54, 62-63 (D2L) Bodenhamer Chapter 5
18	10/22	The Structures of Constitutional Government: The Presidency	The Federalist Papers 67-68
19	10/24	The Structures of Constitutional Government: The Judiciary	The Federalist 78-80 Tocqueville, Part one, Chapter 6, 77-83
20	10/29	Test Three	

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

21	10/31	The Bill of Rights: The First Amendment: Religion	Bodenhamer, Chapter 11 Tocqueville, Part two, Book one, Chapters 16-17, 163-179
22	11/05	The First Amendment: Speech, Press, and Expression	Bodenhamer, Chapter 11 Tocqueville, Part one, Chapter 9, 100-104
		The Second and Third Amendments	Bodenhamer, Chapter 11
23	11/07	The Fourth through Sixth Amendments	Bodenhamer, Chapter 11
24	11/12	The Seventh through Tenth Amendments	Bodenhamer, Chapter 11
25	11/14	Test Four	
26	11/19	The Struggle For Civil Rights: Origins in the United States and Civil War	Readings TBA
27	11/21	The Struggle for Civil Rights: "Separate But Equal," MLK, Black Power	Readings TBA
28	11/26	Civil Rights: Expansion and Push Back—Trumpism and the Rise of White Christian Nationalism	Readings TBA
29	12/03	Wrapping Things Up	
30	12/05	Final Exam	8:00 am

University Support Resources and Policies and Procedures

Counseling Center Information

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.

[If you need help, get help! Your emotional and mental well-being is very important. Many of us put a lot of pressure upon ourselves and sometimes we require support. Fortunately, A&M-Commerce recognizes this and provides services to address these issues. Take advantage of them should you need to!]

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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. [Your instructor's side note: I will not tolerate ANY bigotry in this class on the basis of any of the categories listed in the university non-discrimination notice.]

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.

COVID-19 Statement

A&M-Commerce recommends the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research

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classrooms/laboratories.

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

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>

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