



# PSCI 2305 81E:United States Government COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2025

## INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Jonathan Gray  
Class Meeting Times: M-F  
Classroom: Whitehouse High School  
Office Location: Rm. 201  
Office Hours: Daily 2:42-3:28 PM.  
University Email Address: [Jonathan.Gray@tamuc.edu](mailto:Jonathan.Gray@tamuc.edu)  
Preferred Form of Communication: E-mail  
Communication Response Time: 24 hours (Up to 48 hours during weekends)

## COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings  
Textbook(s) Required  
Title: We The People (Fourteenth Essentials Edition)  
Authors: [Benjamin Ginsberg](#) (Author), [Theodore J. Lowi](#) (Author), [Margaret Weir](#) (Author), [Caroline J. Tolbert](#)  
ISBN: 10- 1324034793

## 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.” (Quoted from the University Undergraduate Course Catalog)

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

- Critical Thinking: Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
- Communications: Student communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data and technology as applicable.
- Personal Responsibility: Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
- Social Responsibility: Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.
- Students will be able to:
  - Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
  - Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
  - Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
  - Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
  - Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
  - Analyze the election process.
  - Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
  - Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **Minimal Technical Skills Needed**

Students will need to be familiar with the University learning management system, (myLeo Online or D2L), know how to use a personal computer, navigate the World Wide Web/Internet, and use basic word processing software such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. Students will also be introduced to the Adobe Acrobat Suite for the purposes of completing the Public Policy Assignment.

### **Instructional Methods**

The following methods of instruction will be utilized for this course.

- Assigned readings from the required textbook.
- Lectures and discussions during assigned meeting times.
- Weekly coursework on myLeo Online.
- Periodic outside readings

## Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

- All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.
- Students are expected to regularly check the course site for announcements and updates.
- Students are expected to complete all course readings for each section of the course.
- During class, students are expected to turn off and put away all electronic devices such as laptops, cell phones, tablets, iPods/iPads, audio and video recording devices, etc. The only exception is for students who have accommodation letters allowing them to use such devices.
- Students are expected to review any supplementary materials that the instructor provides, such as web links, news stories, etc.
- Students are expected to attend class regularly. Consistent with University policies and procedures, students who miss five class meetings or more will be administratively dropped from the class. Excused absences will only be granted for documented official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.
- Students are expected to complete all course assessments.
- Students are expected to exhibit respect toward their fellow classmates and the instructor. This includes treating everyone with courtesy and esteem in all correspondence for the course. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
- Students are expected to avoid committing academic dishonesty, consistent with Texas A&M University-Commerce rules and policies. 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 or taking exams), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. For this course, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. In particular, any student who passes off work as their own that was actually written by someone or something (artificial intelligence) else, will be deemed to have committed plagiarism. This holds true whether material comes from the textbook, another publication, an Internet source, or another student. Any act of academic dishonesty on any assessment will result in a zero for that assignment and the offending students may be referred to the proper campus office for potential disciplinary actions.
- Students are expected to comply with all myLeo Online/D2L technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access.

## GRADING

Final course grades will be computed using the following weights.

**Late work is not accepted.**

Grade Breakdown	%
Weekly Modules/ Discussions	15%
Exam One	15%
Exam Two	15%
Exam Three	15%
Exam Four	15%
Final Exam	15%
Daily work/Research	10%
Final Grade	100%

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

A = 89.5%-100%

B = 79.5%-89.4%

C = 69.5%-79.4%

D = 59.5%-69.4%

F = 59.4% or Below

### Assessments

#### Weekly modules

Each week (except for the weeks of exams and Spring Break) students will complete a module that will include videos, infographic, substantive questions, and current events questions. The lowest three grades will be dropped. These modules cannot be made up.

#### Exams

Students will take four exams and one final, comprehensive exam. All exams will include material from the assigned readings, lecture, and supplementary material. All exams will include 50 questions including the possible following formats: multiple-choice, True/False, short answer, and essay. All exams will be completed online and students will be given 90 minutes to complete each one. The times and dates for the exams are listed at the end of the syllabus.

## **Extra Credit "Syllabus "Quiz"**

Students can earn up to a three bonus points toward their final averages by taking a syllabus quiz. This quiz is designed to ensure that students familiarize themselves with the requirements and expectations of the syllabus. The quiz will be available on D2L/myLeo online and it cannot be made up. The dates and times for this quiz are listed at the end of the syllabus.

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

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

[https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom\\_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu](https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu)

## **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](mailto: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>

### **Interaction with Instructor Statement**

Students should rely upon e-mail, office hours, and course announcements as the primary means of communication with the instructor. However, if students have a question about a grade, they will need to meet with the instructor in person. Also, please note that the system will only send e-mail to a student's official University Email address, so students will need to check that account regularly. During normal business hours on M-F, students can expect an email reply within 24 hours. On weekends, students can expect an email replay within 48 hours.

## **COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES**

### **Course Specific Procedures/Policies**

- Make-up exams: If a student misses an exam, that student will receive a grade of zero for the exam. Make-up exams may 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 three calendar days of the missed exam date unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death of an immediate family member, participation in University activities, and legal obligations. Students who miss any exam because they forgot about the exam dates/times will not receive a make-up exam. Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given. Make-up exams will be exclusively essay format.
- Incompletes will be granted at the discretion of the instructor and only be granted in the case of serious medical illness or other serious, unavoidable circumstances and only if the students has completed at least 70% of the course work. Incompletes must be finished within two weeks of the end of the semester.
- Students must complete the "Personal Responsibility Statement" quiz available on the course site. Students who fail to do so by the time the first exam is graded will be administratively dropped from the course

## **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.

## **University Specific Procedures**

### **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 Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

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

## **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 Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: [studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu](mailto: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.

## **A&M-Commerce Supports Students' Mental Health**

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)

### **AI Use in Courses**

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 instructors' 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.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

For this course, students are prohibited from using AI to complete all assessments.

## COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Week Beginning	Topic	Assigned Reading
1/13	Political Values	1
1/20	The Founding and the Constitution	2
1/27	Federalism	3
2/3	Civil Liberties	4
2/10	Civil Rights	5
2/17	Public Opinion	6
2/24	Parties and Interest Groups	8
3/3	Campaigns and Elections	9
3/10	Congress	10
3/24	Presidency	11
3/31	Bureaucracy	12
4/7	Federal Courts	13
4/14	Domestic Policy	14
4/21	Foreign Policy	15
4/28	Review	
5/5	Finals Week	

### Exam Schedule

Exams will be available according to the following schedule.

Exam 1: (Chapters 1-3). January 31st

Exam 2: (Chapters 4-6). February 21st

Exam 3: (Chapters 8-11). March 28th

Exam 4: (Chapters 12-15). April 25th

Final Exam: (All Chapters). week of May 5th