

Political Science 2305
United States Government
Fall 2025

Instructor Information:

Megan Todd
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Office Hours: Monday 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences Building 147

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: 9781071875650
Abernathy, Scott F. *American Government: Stories of a Nation*. 4TH ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2024.

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: 360 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 120 points.

Each test conducted **in-class** during the regularly scheduled lecture time. You must bring a **green** scantron and number two pencil. These items will **not** be provided to you. **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 the proper accommodation 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 business 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 comprehensive final exam will be conducted in-class during Finals Week as scheduled by the university.

2. Chapter Quizzes: 110 points.

There will be a quiz on D2L for each chapter that is covered. To ensure that students are reading the material **prior** to class, quizzes will be due **prior** to the last lecture for each chapter. Quizzes consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank 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.

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.

Once the quiz 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. 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. Each student will write a letter to a U.S. congressman representing the state of Texas (or their home state) presenting an argument supporting or opposing a bill sponsored by the U.S. congressman during the 2025 session. A detailed guideline for this project will be outlined in D2L. **The use of AI is expressly prohibited.** Refer to the **Academic Dishonesty** section.

The deadline is strictly enforced. Late work is **NOT** accepted. Once the project 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.

4. Participation: 50 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. Be aware that you **cannot** participate if you do **not** attend.

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
- Electronics policy violations
 - **Each** occurrence of violating the electronics policy will result in **4 points** deducted from your **overall** grade

The scale used in calculating final grades is as follows:

A:	540-600 points	D:	360-419 points
B:	480-539 points	F:	000-359 points
C:	420-479 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 Monday, September 8 on D2L Brightspace.** *If you do not complete this assignment, you will not be able to complete any coursework.*

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. Be aware that you cannot participate if you do not attend class. For anyone that does **not** attend class on a regular basis, expect a significant deduction from your final grade. This is an equivalent to attending class with improper behavior.

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 4:00 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 before or after class.

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, each occurrence of violating the electronics policy will result in 4 points being deducted from your overall grade.** Example: your final average was an 82, but you are caught using your phone *one* time **after** your warning, your final grade would be an 78.

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

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.

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" (East Texas A&M University 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 use of AI is expressly prohibited.**

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 East Texas A&M University 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/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/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.

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

East Texas A&M University

Gee Library, Room 162

Phone: (903) 886-5150

Fax: (903) 468-8148

Email: 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.

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 East Texas A&M University 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

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
 - August 25
 - Chapter 1. American Political Stories
 - August 27 – September 3
 - **Labor Day: No Class**
 - **September 1**
 - Chapter 2. The Constitution of the United States
 - September 5 – September 10
 - Chapter 4. Civil Liberties
 - September 12 – September 19
 - Chapter 5. Civil Rights
 - September 19 – September 26
 - **Test One: September 29**
- MODULE TWO:
 - Chapter 3. Federalism
 - October 1 – October 6
 - Chapter 12. Congress
 - October 8 – October 13
 - Chapter 13. The American Presidency
 - October 15 – October 20
 - Chapter 15. The Federal Judiciary
 - October 22 – October 27
 - **Project due by 11:45 PM CT October 17** .
 - **Test Two: October 29**
- MODULE THREE:
 - Chapter 6. Political Participation
 - October 31 – November 3
 - Chapter 8. The Media
 - November 5 – November 7
 - Chapter 10. Campaigns and Elections
 - November 10 – November 14
 - Chapter 11. Interest Groups and Social Movements
 - November 17 – November 21
 - **Thanksgiving Week: No Class**
 - **November 24 – November 28**
 - **Test Three: December 1**
 - **Study Day: No Class**
 - **December 3**
 - Comprehensive Review Day: December 5
 - **Comprehensive Final Exam: December 12**