



COURSE SYLLABUS SPRING 2026

**PSCI 2305-01 E
United States Government
1/12 to 5/8, 2026
M/W/F 11-11.50am
Ferguson SS Building
Room 310**

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Barbara Laubenthal

Office Location: SS-162

Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4pm, Thursday 11-12pm and by appointment (in-person or zoom). Please send me an email if you would like to make an appointment.

Email: Barbara.Laubenthal@etamu.edu

The best way to contact me is via email.

COURSE INFORMATION

Textbook for this course:



American Government -
4e

(45 reviews)



Glen Krutz, University of Oklahoma

Sylvie Waskiewicz

Copyright Year: 2025

ISBN 13: 9781961584792

Publisher: [OpenStax.CN](https://openstax.org)

Language: English

[American Government - 4e - Open Textbook Library](https://openstax.org/books/american-government-4e)

Additional texts and/or materials will be provided either in D2L or in class.

Course Description

This course is a survey of the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in the United States. Topics considered include civil liberties and civil rights, constitutionalism, federalism, institutions, pluralism, political culture and socialization, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, and voting and electoral politics.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will be able to

- Explain the history of the U.S. Constitution.
- Identify the function and powers of the three branches of the federal government as well as those of state/local governments.
- Identify the history and evolution of civil liberties in American society.
- Analyze the roles of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties.
- Evaluate the election process and political participation.
- Interpret data and foundational documents.
- Use their analytical skills, approach a topic with an analytical mindset.
- Understand the basics and central elements of the scientific research process.
- Understand how political scientists analyze aspects of the American political system, political behavior, and events.

GRADING

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

A = 90%-100%

B = 80%-89%

C = 70%-79%

D = 60%-69%

F = 59% or Below

Assignments

Two multiple choice tests: 20%. Each test will make up 10% of your grade.

Project “Founding a Nation”: 10%.

Students will work in groups and design a fictitious nation that reflects their understanding of the major concepts in American Government — including constitutional design, political institutions, and civil rights. Your team’s goal is to apply what you have learned to create a balanced, functional governing system. The project will be presented in a 10-minute Powerpoint presentation.

‘What’s Your Problem’-assignment: 15%

Throughout the semester, we will work on identifying problems and possible solutions in American Government. To that end, each student will identify and research a pressing problem in American Government about which they feel strongly. They will then write a letter to one member of the federal government explaining the problem and proposing a solution.

Weekly reading question: 10%

Each week students will post a question about the chapter that we are addressing that week.

Take away slide: 15 %:

One Powerpoint slide with your key takeaway from the course, to be shown in class during the last week of the semester.

Meme Assignment: 10%

Working with academic content in unexpected and creative ways is shown to create deeper learning, so each student will create a meme that explains or illustrates part of American government and write a short essay (500 words) explaining their meme, which will be due on the last day of class.

Design Your Own Assignment: 10%:

Create an assignment that would further your learning. Some ideas include: a book review, a podcast episode, a photo essay, a video, a Tik-Tok, or anything else. Students must initiate discussion with me no later than March 6, 2026. Final projects are due on the last day of class.

Participation: 10%

Participation grade profiles: A (94) contributes and is always well-prepared; B (84) contribute and is often prepared; C (74) contributes and is moderately prepared; D (60) low level of contribution, generally poorly prepared; F (0) doesn’t contribute, is consistently unprepared.

Communication with class

I will regularly send **announcements** and emails through D2L. Please make sure to regularly check the email address that is connected to your D2L account.

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material or have other issues that you would like to discuss, please contact me. I am here to help!

Tips for success

- For work assignments, choose a topic that genuinely interests you.
- Ask any question in class – there are no “wrong” or “stupid” questions.
- Be conscientious about your reading assignments. You need the basic knowledge provided by the textbook to complete assignments and participate in class, which in turn will make the class more enjoyable for you.
- Take notes in class, preferably in a notebook. This will create a “journal” of the course and help you with all assignments.

- Stay up to date on our schedule, deadlines, and assignments. Important dates are listed in the work plan in this syllabus, and I will send announcements about all due dates.
- Set up a personal work plan with dates – decide when you will study for each assignment and set your own internal deadlines.
- If anything prevents you from focusing on this class — illness, personal circumstances, workload, or something else — please contact me as soon as possible, not late in the semester. We can find a solution for almost anything if you communicate with me in a timely manner.

Some rules

These rules are designed to prevent distractions for both you and me. The more we work together as a team and stay focused during the 50 minutes we share in class, the more enjoyable and productive the experience will be for everyone.

- Mobile phones are not allowed during class.
- Be punctual — everyone runs late occasionally, but that should be the exception, not the rule.
- If you know you will be late for a class meeting, please email me in advance.
- If you know you will miss a class, please email me ahead of time.
- If you arrive more than twenty minutes late without prior notice, it will count as an absence.
- If you are repeatedly late, I will deduct points from your participation grade.
- After one warning I will deduct participation points for openly not paying attention in class (for example working on something not course related, not participating in group work, sleeping, constant talking), and in extreme cases I may ask you to leave.

Attendance

Class attendance is required. You have three unexcused absences; each unexcused absence after the third will result in a two-point deduction from your participation grade. Excused absences require documentation.

Test policy

If you do not complete a test during the designated class session, you will receive 0% for that exam.

If you have a legitimate reason for not completing an exam during the designated class session (e.g. severe illness or injury requiring professional medical care, emergencies in your immediate family, participation in official university activities, legal obligations) and you have supporting documentation for your inability to take the exam, then you may request taking a make-up exam that will take place during the week after the exam.

Requests for make-up exams must be made either in advance of the exam date (for example, if missing class to participate in a university activity) or within 72 hours of missing an exam if the absence was caused by a legitimate unexpected reason.

Requests for taking the make-up exam must be submitted in writing via email and include scanned documentation explaining and substantiating why your inability to take the exam during the designated class session was legitimate. An approval to allow you to take a make-up exam will be based solely upon the instructor's evaluation of your request and any supporting documentation.

WORK PLAN AND SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignment
Week 1	Introduction		
Week 2	The Constitution and its Origins	Chapter 2	Every week: post reading question
Week 3	Federalism	Chapter 3	
Week 4	Civil liberties	Chapter 4	
Week 5	Civil rights	Chapter 5	
Week 6	Voting and elections	Chapter 7	
Week 7	The Presidency	Chapter 12	Test 1
Week 8	Congress	Chapter 11	
Week 9	"Happitopia"- Founding a nation		Founding a nation presentations
Week 10	Federal courts and the Supreme Court	Chapter 13	
Week 11	Political parties	Chapter 9	
Week 12	Political participation and Interest groups	Chapter 10	Own assignment due
Week 13	Politics, media and the internet	Chapter 8	
Week 14	Domestic policy and bureaucracy	Chapter 15, 16	
Week 15	Foreign policy	Chapter 17	Takeaway slide due
Week 16	Our takeaways		<i>"What's your problem"</i> paper due
Finals week			Test 2

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

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

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.etamu.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@etamu.edu.

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>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events 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.

<https://inside.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/documents/studentGuidebook.pdf>.

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 [Procedures 13.99.99.R0.01](#)

<http://www.etamu.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University 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.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.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

East Texas A&M University

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: [Student Disability Services](#)

<https://www.etamu.edu/student-disability-services/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University 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 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 East Texas A&M 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.etamu.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, 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.etamu.edu/counsel

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



<http://telusproduction.com/app/5108.html>

AI Policy in this course

East Texas A&M University 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.

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.

For this course, students are prohibited from using AI to complete all assignments. Any use will result in a 0 for said assignment.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty