EAST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

PSCI 2305 G2E & G3E
United States Government and Politics
COURSE SYLLABUS: SPRING 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Arthur Turner
Office Location: GPISD
Office Hours: NA
Office Phone: NA
Office Fax: NA
University Email Address: Arthur.Turner@etamu.edu
Preferred Form of Communication: Email
Communication Response Time: 24 hours or less

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook (Required):

- OpenStax, *American Government, 4e* (2025). Free online and PDF. Access for free at https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-4e. Licensed CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

Software Required:

- D2L Brightspace (myLeo Online) for all activities, quizzes, and grades.
- Reliable web browser and internet connection (mobile-friendly is OK; desktop/laptop strongly recommended).

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

Optional Materials:

- C-SPAN Classroom, Pew Research Center, and state/local election sites for applied activities.

Course Description

This course introduces the U.S. federal government's constitutional foundations, core institutions, political behavior, and policy processes. Students engage with primary texts, explore civil liberties/rights, analyze elections, public opinion, parties, media, and interest groups, and evaluate domestic and foreign policy. Emphasis is on *applied* learning with weekly low-stakes practice, interactive "Civic Labs," and mastery checks aligned to state SLOs.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:
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

Technical Skills Needed

- Log into D2L; access modules; open HTML activities; complete quizzes.
- Upload simple text responses (when prompted) and copy/paste short reflection prompts.
- Join a Zoom session if an optional review or observation is scheduled.

Instructional Methods

- **Pillar A — Spark (Preview & Check):** 5–10 minute micro-lesson (reading excerpt or short video) + a short "Prep Check."

- **Pillar B — Civic Lab (Interactive):** a short, branching scenario or simulation tied to the week's chapter(s), with in-line knowledge checks.

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- **Pillar C — Mastery Quiz:** 10–20 questions drawn from a larger item bank; shuffle on; two attempts; highest score counts.

- **Pillar D — Application (Optional Credit):** quick, auto-graded poll/mini-case (e.g., classify a news item by institution or policy domain).

Tips for Success in the Course

- **Pacing:** Modules open one week at a time; deadlines are posted in D2L.
- **Attempts:** Two attempts on Mastery Quizzes; keep the highest.
- **Late Work:** Civic Labs and Prep Checks remain open through Sunday 11:59 PM with a small automatic penalty applied by D2L if past the deadline.
- **Academic Integrity:** Use AI tools only when allowed in the prompt and document that use per the university's AI policy (see University Procedures).

GRADING

Assessments & Point Values (Auto-graded):

- **Prep Checks (15 × 5 pts)** = 75 pts
- **Civic Labs (12 × 10 pts)** = 120 pts
- **Mastery Quizzes (12 × 20 pts)** = 240 pts
- **Midterm Mastery (cumulative to Ch. 10)** = 30 pts
- **Final Mastery (cumulative to Ch. 17)** = 35 pts
  Total = 500 pts

Grade Scale: A = 90–100% (451–500), B = 80–89% (401–450), C = 70–79% (351–400), D = 60–69% (301–350), F ≤ 300.

Assessments

This course uses a **mastery-based system** designed to promote engagement and success. All assessments are completed inside D2L. Students have **two attempts** on quizzes (highest score counts) and **completion tracking** for Civic Labs.

Mastery focus: Each assessment is designed to provide immediate feedback and unlimited practice in D2L question libraries before graded attempts.
Lowest scores dropped: The two lowest Mastery Quiz scores are automatically dropped.
Late work: Prep Checks and Civic Labs remain open through Sunday at 11:59 PM. A small penalty (10%) is applied to Civic Labs submitted after the deadline. Mastery Quizzes close at the end of each week.
Release conditions: Weekly modules unlock sequentially when the prior week's Mastery Quiz is completed at 80% or higher.

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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.

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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Interaction with Instructor Statement

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

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. 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

Graduate Students Academic Integrity Policy and Form

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

https://inside.etamu.edu/aboutus/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf

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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
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.

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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 use policy [Draft 2, May 25, 2023]

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.

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

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COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Week 1 — Foundations of American Government
- Readings: Ch. 1 *American Government & Civic Engagement*; Ch. 2 *The Constitution and Its Origins*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab "Philadelphia 1787"; Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **1, 3, 7**

Week 2 — Federalism & Civil Liberties
- Readings: Ch. 3 *American Federalism*; Ch. 4 *Civil Liberties*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab on federal vs. state powers; Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **2, 7**

Week 3 — Civil Rights
- Readings: Ch. 5 *Civil Rights*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab on equal protection; Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **7, 1**

Week 4 — Public Opinion
- Readings: Ch. 6 *The Politics of Public Opinion*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab on polling literacy; Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **5**

Week 5 — Voting & Elections
- Readings: Ch. 7 *Voting and Elections* (+ Appendix D Electoral College map as needed)
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (turnout levers); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **6, 7**

Week 6 — The Media
- Readings: Ch. 8 *The Media*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (agenda-setting & verification); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **5, 7**

Week 7 — Political Parties
- Readings: Ch. 9 *Political Parties*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (party coalitions/tradeoffs); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **5, 6**

Week 8 — Interest Groups & Midterm
- Readings: Ch. 10 *Interest Groups and Lobbying*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (pathways of influence); **Midterm Mastery** (Chs. 1–10)
- SLOs: **5**

Week 9 — Congress
- Readings: Ch. 11 *Congress*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (how a bill actually moves); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **3, 4**

Week 10 — The Presidency
- Readings: Ch. 12 *The Presidency*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (formal vs. informal powers); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **3, 4**

Week 11 — The Courts
- Readings: Ch. 13 *The Courts* (+ Appendix E cases as assigned)
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (judicial decision-making); Mastery Quiz

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- SLOs: **3, 4, 7**

Week 12 — State & Local Government
- Readings: Ch. 14 *State and Local Government*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (state-federal intergovernmental relations); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **2**

Week 13 — The Bureaucracy
- Readings: Ch. 15 *The Bureaucracy*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (rulemaking & accountability); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **3, 4**

Week 14 — Domestic Policy
- Readings: Ch. 16 *Domestic Policy*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (budget levers); Mastery Quiz
- SLOs: **8**

Week 15 — Foreign Policy & Final Mastery
- Readings: Ch. 17 *Foreign Policy*
- Pillars: Spark; Civic Lab (tools & actors); **Final Mastery** (Chs. 11–17)
- SLOs: **8**

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