



*“In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”*  
George Orwell

Political Science 497: Literature and Politics  
Spring 2026  
Instructor: Dr. Jeffrey C. Herndon  
Office Location: 162 Ferguson Social Sciences  
Office Hours: TTH 8:00-9:30; 11:30-12:30 and by appointment  
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### **Course Information**

#### **Required texts**

- Margaret Atwood. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Vintage. ISBN: 978-0385490818.
- Ray Bradbury. *Fahrenheit 451*. Simon and Schuster. ISBN: 978-1451673319.
- David Brin. *The Postman*. Amazon. ISBN: 979-8657514285.
- Octavia Butler. *The Parable of the Sower*. Hachette. ISBN: 978-1538732182.
- Aldous Huxley. *Brave New World*. Harper. ISBN: 978-0060850524.
- Sinclair Lewis. *It Can't Happen Here*. Penguin. ISBN: 978-0451216588
- George Orwell, 1984. Signet Classics. ISBN: 978-0451524935.
- Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We*. Penguin: ISBN: 978-0140185850.

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These books in **these** editions (not ebooks, not Kindle, not editions from other publishers, etc.) are **required** for this class. No other editions are acceptable. In addition, material and documents will be posted to D2L.

## Course Requirements

### Course Description

This course is an examination of the ways in which politics and social life inform literature and the ways in which literature can deepen our understanding of human beings in their social and political lives.

### 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. Synthesize arguments from multiple authors into a coherent whole.
2. Compare and contrast the works of multiple authors.
3. Understand the social and political forces at play in the development of the literature under review.
4. Relate the works of literature to the current economic, social, and political environment.

### Instructional Methods

This course is not an undergraduate lecture. Rather it is structured as a seminar based upon our discussion of the various works that we will read this semester.

### Student Responsibilities

To make this work, students will have to critically read the materials to be discussed, develop their own interpretations and ideas about the books, create meaningful discussion questions/prompts, and contribute to the class.

Students are responsible for completing assigned readings and/or homework prior to the class to 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. Your instructor recommends that you review materials presented in class on the day that the material is presented as well as periodically throughout the semester. Attempting to “cram” for tests rarely works.

### Grading and Assessment

**To receive any grade other than a 0 in this course, there must be a signed “Student Statement of Responsibility” on file with the instructor.** The statement form is the last page of this syllabus. Please print it out, sign it, date it, and return to the instructor no later than the first class meeting (01/13/2026). You will receive a quiz grade (20 points) if your statement is turned in on time. Each class meeting afterward will still give you a quiz grade, but you will lose two points for each class meeting it was not delivered to the instructor.

There will be two exams. Each exam will be worth 100 points and cover material from the readings and class discussions.

Only the most extreme **verifiable** circumstances justify a make-up exam. The student must provide documentation if attempting to receive a make-up exam **if** he or she misses the test. In the course calendar, your test dates are the only thing that **will not change** unless there is some cataclysmic event that forces us to change the date. Students are required to be on time for exams. Arriving late for a test and therefore not being allowed to take it is not sufficient justification for a make-up exam.

There will be a participation grade worth 15 points per class meeting. This grade will be given based on the degree to which students contribute to the class discussion. Your instructor will distribute the rubric to be used in assessing individual participation.

Each class will have a student (or students) designated as discussion leader. It is the discussion leader’s responsibility to develop questions and/prompts to move our examination of the books forward. These questions/prompts will be submitted to the instructor at least one day prior to the class in which you serve as the discussion leader. Discussion leaders will be graded on a twenty point scale for the quality of their discussion prep and their overall performance in class.

In addition, there will be an indeterminate number of quizzes. In most instances, these quizzes will cover elements of the readings assigned for a particular day and be worth 20 points each. Your first quiz grade will be your statement of responsibility, available as the last page of this syllabus.

We will discuss the terms, conditions, and value of a comprehensive final exam in class.

Finally, you will have in class writing assignments that will require you to compose short responses to questions associated with the readings and class discussions. Each writing assignment will be worth 30 points.

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Your final grade will be based on the percentage points you receive on the graded material using the following scale:

A	91-100%	D	60-69%
B	81-90%	F	0-59%
C	70-80%		

### **Course Policies and Procedures**

#### **Attendance**

Attendance is **required** for this course. A seminar will not work if you do not attend. You have two absences that you may use at any time (except for exam days) and for any reason. You will start the semester with 30 attendance points. For each absence over the two allotted, you will lose five points. Exceptions to this will be considered on a case-by-case basis, but you should be aware that only the most extreme verifiable circumstances will justify a waiver.

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

Your instructor does not “drop” students for non-attendance. Instead, you will receive the grade you earned should you choose not to use one of the drops the university allows you to take.

#### **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. 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 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. The use of wearable tech, i.e. Apple Watch, etc., is likewise prohibited in class. You need to put your tech away.

#### Laptops and Tablets

The use of laptops and tablets for note-taking is prohibited. Numerous studies indicate that taking notes by hand is more effective at helping students process, consider, analyze, and retain

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information appropriate to the university as a learning environment and for people receiving a university degree. Exceptions may be granted based on justifiable circumstances.

### 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.

### 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.

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

### AI Statement

East Texas A&M University has adopted the following statement for inclusion on faculty syllabi:

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 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

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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.

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.

### 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. You will demonstrate respect for the institution, your professors, and your fellow students, as well as your own education. This is true even in the context of courses in which controversial topics and issues (such as a political science course) are discussed.

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, 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 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 are students who know more than anyone else about everything—or at least they think that they do. Such an 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. Your instructor and other students in the class do not have the time or the energy to deal with this.

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

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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 success. Conversely, you own your 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 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

### **COURSE CALENDAR**

1	01/13	Why are we here?		Discussion Leader(s)
2	01/15	Bradbury	<b>In class writing assignment</b>	
3	01/20	Bradbury		
4	01/22	Bradbury		
5	01/27	Bradbury	<b>In-class writing assignment</b>	
6	01/29	Lewis		
7	02/03	Lewis		
8	02/05	Lewis	<b>Class will not meet today. You will have an online writing assignment in D2L.</b>	
9	02/10	Lewis		
10	02/12	Lewis		

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11	02/17	Brin		
12	02/19	Brin		
13	02/24	Brin		
14	02/26	Brin		
15	03/03		<b>Test One</b>	
16	03/05	Butler		
17	03/17	Butler		
18	03/19	Butler		
19	03/24	Butler		
20	03/26	Zamyatin	<b>In-class writing assignment</b>	
21	03/31	Zamyatin		
22	04/02	Zamyatin		
23	04/07	Huxley		
24	04/09	Huxley		
25	04/14	Huxley		
26	04/16	Orwell	<b>In-class writing assignment</b>	
27	04/21	Orwell		
28	04/23	Orwell		
29	04/28	Orwell		
30	04/30		<b>Test Two</b>	

## **University Support Resources and Policies and Procedures**

### **Counseling Center Information**

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M University, 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).

### **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  
 Gee Library- Room 162  
 Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835  
 Fax (903) 468-8148

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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**

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. [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 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 University 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 East Texas A&M University campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

### **COVID-19 Statement**

East Texas A&M University recommends the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories.

### **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 the requirements for the LMS:

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

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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)

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](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>

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**Political Science 497: Literature and Politics**

Student Statement of Understanding and Responsibility

Spring 2026

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the syllabus. I understand my responsibilities as a student in this course and agree to be bound by the policies and procedures herein set forth. Furthermore, I understand that my success or failure in this course will be determined by the choices and decisions that I, as a student, make with regard to the class.

X \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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