



"The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist."

— **Hannah Arendt**, [*The Origins of Totalitarianism*](#)

Political Science 2305: U.S. Government and Politics

Fall 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

University Email Address: Jeffrey.Herndon@tamuc.edu

Course Information

Required texts

Margaret Atwood. *The Handmaid's Tale*. Vintage. ISBN: 978-0385490818

Benjamin Ginsberg, et.al. *We the People*, 15th Brief Essentials Edition. W.W. Norton.
ISBN: 9781324085539

George Orwell, *1984*. Signet Classics. ISBN: 978-0451524935

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. To reiterate: **these books are REQUIRED FOR THE COURSE**. It is highly recommended that you get them at the beginning of the semester. Waiting to get materials required for a course is not an effective strategy for success.

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

In addition, material and documents will be posted to D2L. You will also need access to a reliable news source (e.g. CNN, The New York Times, the Washington Post, the Dallas Morning News, and the Texas Tribune). Part of the legislative justification for this course is that it should help to create an engaged citizenry, and an ignorant citizenry is, by definition, not engaged. Finally, you will need three Scantron Forms 882 (the green one—and ONLY the green one!). On test days, you will need a number two pencil and a pen that uses either blue or black ink.

Course Requirements

Course Description

Designed to introduce the students to the principles and function of the government of the United States, this course examines 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 issues and actors that have shaped political and social life in the United States.

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. 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.

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Instructional Methods

This course is a traditional university class that will consist of lectures and interactive discussion. The degree to which students contribute to the overall discussion will determine how much lecture/presentation will be required.

Your instructor DOES NOT lecture from a book. Instead, we begin with the proposition that by the time that a student reaches the university, he or she is functionally literate. In your reading, if you have any questions or concerns, please bring them to the attention of your instructor who will address them at the beginning of the class meeting in which those questions and/or concerns are raised.

Student Responsibilities

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.

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 Personal 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 (08/20/2026). You will receive a quiz grade (10 points) for turning it 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 three exams in this course. Each exam will be worth 100 points and cover material from the readings, textbook, current events, and information delivered in class.

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. Students are required to be on time for exams. If a student is late for an exam, there is a possibility that they will not be able to take it. Arriving late for a test and therefore not being allowed to take it is not sufficient justification for a make-up exam.

Any make-up exams granted based on extreme verifiable circumstances will be given during finals week on the day and time scheduled for your final exam.

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YOUR INSTRUCTOR DOES NOT lecture from the book. A university student should be literate, or he or she should probably not be at the university. Your instructor will be happy to answer any questions/issues that students may have about the books/readings—but it is incumbent upon the student to attend class regularly and complete the assigned readings. Should a student have questions over the textbook readings, please make sure to ask during class.

In addition, there will be an indeterminant number of quizzes. These quizzes may cover current events, readings, prominent people engaged in political, social, and cultural activity, in addition to material covered in class. There is also the possibility for attendance quizzes should it become apparent that many people are not showing up to class on a regular basis. If you arrive late to class, you will not be able to take the current events/readings quiz.

Quizzes cannot be “made up” since, in most cases, they are tied to events on the day upon which they are given. With this in mind, for every 4 quizzes given, your instructor will drop 1 of your lowest quiz scores. In other words, at least twenty-five percent of quizzes given in class or online will be dropped. Quiz grades will only become a problem if you do not pay attention to the world around you, do not read the assigned readings, or are habitually absent or late. Students who arrive after a quiz has been distributed may not be allowed to take it. On days when absenteeism is greater than a third of the class, there may also be attendance quizzes that will be factored into your overall quiz grade. If you arrive late on those days, you will not receive the attendance quiz grade.

Finally, you will have two in-class writing assignments associated with the two novels that you will read for this class. Each in-class writing assignment will be worth 50 points. The books, in the only acceptable editions, are listed on the first page of this syllabus.

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

You should attend class. Attendance will be taken daily since attendance information is now required by the state and by the office of financial aid. However, as noted above, your education is yours to do with as you will. What you should know is that the first thing that needs to be done for success is to show up. You wouldn't purchase a ticket to a movie or a concert without the intention of actually going, and classes should be treated in the same way.

Current events and reading quizzes given on class days cannot be made up given the nature of what constitutes a current event. The same applies to attendance quizzes that may be given on days in which overall attendance rates are greater than a third of the class.

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As a general rule, an “excuse” is not required by your professor should you miss class. The only time that an “excuse” will be considered will be if you miss an exam, the policy for which is noted above in the section on “Grading and Assessment.”

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 earn. Should you consistently miss class and elect not to use one of the drops the university allows you, your grade will undoubtedly reflect the choices that you made. While institutionally we seek to shield students from the consequences of the decisions that they make, I do not subscribe to this approach. We are the sum of our choices, and it is incumbent on you to choose wisely.

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 (at least three different studies have determined that phone use in class may result in the drop of an entire letter grade for students who insist that the world will end if they aren’t engaged in texting, posting, or scrolling through social media). 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. There are no excuses or exceptions to this rule unless specifically granted by the professor. If your telephone rings, flashes, vibrates, etc. during class, you will likewise receive a five-point penalty. 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 notetaking is prohibited. Numerous studies indicate that taking notes by hand is more effective at helping students process, consider, analyze, and retain 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

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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. Put simply, it is rude to be listening to something else when you are in class. Failure to remove such distractions will incur a percentage point deduction from your overall grade. Rather than listening to your earbuds or headphones, you should be engaged in “active listening” and engagement with what is happening in class.

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 one of the goals of a university education 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

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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.

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 any assignment in this course, you will receive a 0 on that assignment with no opportunity to make it up. Indeed, studies have shown that the use of AI is strongly correlated with a substantial decline in cognitive capacity (see: Gerlich M. AI Tools in Society: Impacts on Cognitive Offloading and the Future of Critical Thinking. *Societies*. 2025; 15(1):6. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc15010006>). To put it another way, the habitual use of AI will make you stupid.

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.” Students have the obligation “to follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior commensurate with aspiration implied by a college education.”

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) may be 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 appropriately may be reported to the Vice President for Student Affairs for disciplinary action up to, and including, possible expulsion from the university.

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 professor 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, 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 professor, you may be dropped from the course. At the very least you will be asked to leave class on the days when your attitude overwhelms your

The syllabus/schedule are subject to change.

capacity to think—and you will leave. Your instructor and other students in the class do not have the time or the energy to deal with this phenomenon. **Your professor reserves the right to have disruptive and rude students removed from the classroom.**

Contrary to what many people seem to believe, students do not have a **right** to a university education. Rather it is a privilege, and it ought to be treated that way. You should remember that this course is part of YOUR education. Your education is 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 you. Your professors and 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 professors 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 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 professor 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.

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	08/20	Why are we here?	Introduction to the Course
2	08/25	Thinking about Politics: The Classical Perspective	The Allegory of the Cave (D2L)
3	08/27	Thinking About Politics: The Liberal Tradition	John Locke selections (D2L)
4	09/01	When is “The Beginning”?	The Mayflower Compact/Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (D2L)

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5	09/03	The Disunited States	The Declaration of Independence/The Articles of Confederation
6	09/08	Social Conditions and Popular Sovereignty: Framing the Constitution	
7	09/10	Popular Sovereignty and the Problem of Self Government	The Federalist, Numbers 9-10
8	09/15	Constitutional Structure, Purpose and Representation	Burke, "Speech to the Bristol Electors" (D2L)
9	09/17	The Peculiar Circumstances of the States: Federalism	
10	09/22	Exam One	Ginsberg Chapters 1 and 2
11	09/24	What is Represented? And the Separation of Powers	
12	09/29	The Structures of Constitutional Government: Congress	
13	10/01	The Structures of Constitutional Government: The Presidency	
14	10/06	The Structures of Constitutional Government: The Judiciary	The Federalist, Numbers 78-80 (D2L)
15	10/13	The Bill of Rights: The First Amendment	
16	10/15	The Bill of Rights: Amendments Two through Four	
17	10/20	The Bill of Rights: Amendments Five through Ten	
18	10/22	Orwell Writing Assignment	
19	10/27	The Problem of Majoritarianism	De Tocqueville (D2L)
20	10/29	Exam Two	Ginsberg, Chapters 3, 10, and 11; Orwell <i>1984</i>
21	11/03	Civil Rights: Origins in the United States-Civil War	Readings TBA
22	11/05	Civil Rights: Civil War and "Separate But Equal"	Readings TBA
23	11/10	Civil Rights: Expansion and Push Back—Trumpism and the Rise of White Christian Nationalism	Readings TBA
24	11/12	Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Media	
25	11/17	Public Policy	
26	11/19	Foreign and Defense Policy	
27	11/24	Foreign and Defense Policy, cont.	
28	12/01	Atwood Writing Assignment	

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29	12/03	Exam Three	Ginsberg, Chapters 4, 5, 7, and 13
30	12/08 & 12/10	Make-up Exams	

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.

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

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/)

<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

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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>

LMS Browser Support:

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.

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.

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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>

Political Science 2305.05E
Dr. Jeffrey Herndon
Student Statement of Responsibility
Fall 2026

I _____ have read the syllabus carefully. I understand that I am responsible for the information therein and that I am bound by the policies and procedures in the syllabus. Furthermore, I understand that my education is MY responsibility—no one else's. My grade in this class will be determined by the choices, decisions, and actions that I, as a student, take, since each of these bring with it consequences. I understand that a copy of this statement is required for a grade other than F in this course. Finally, I know that I can be removed from and/or dropped from this course if I am disruptive, rude, etc. This includes, but is not limited to, failure to follow the policies and procedures established by the university and this syllabus or demonstrating disrespect towards my fellow students, the professor, etc.

X _____

Date: _____

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