



Political Science 2305
United States Government
Fall 2026

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 three tests are worth 80 points each. The comprehensive final exam is worth 120 points.

Each test will be available for two days on D2L Brightspace. **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 proper accommodation can be provided. It is **your** responsibility to ensure 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. **Make-up exams may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.** Students who missed the exam because they “forgot” the exam date(s) or do **NOT** email the instructor **within three business days** of the missed exam will **NOT** receive a make-up exam.

The comprehensive final exam will be conducted in-class during Finals Week as scheduled by the university.

2. Chapter Quizzes: 100 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 scheduled lecture** for each chapter. Quizzes may consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and fill-in-the-blank questions. Each quiz is worth 10 points. The lowest quiz grade 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 that cover the entire length of quiz availability.

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 their federal congressman presenting an argument supporting or opposing a bill sponsored by that congressman during the current 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 that cover the entire length of assignment availability. Students may request an extension by emailing the instructor within three calendar days of the missed assignment. **Extensions may be granted at the discretion of the instructor.** Students who missed the assignment because they “forgot” the due date or do **NOT** email the instructor **within three business days** of the missed project will **NOT** receive an extension.

4. Participation: 30 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. This means if your attendance is lacking, so will be your participation grade.

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 in class
- Electronics policy violations
 - You will receive **one** warning if you are using your phone, if your headphones are over your ears or earbuds are in, etc. The first violation **after** your initial warning results in losing **all** participation points. Each additional violation will result in a **2% reduction of overall** grade. If you have a legitimate need for your phone due to emergency situations, please alert your instructor **prior** to lecture.

5. Attendance: 30 points.

Students are required to attend class. Attendance will be taken during each class session. You may miss up to **three** lectures without penalty. More than **three** absences on non-exam days will result in a reduction in your grade.

Attendance Grade Scale

1-3 absences = no penalty

4-6 absences = deduct 10 points from your grade

7-9 absences = deduct 20 points from your grade

10+ absences = deduct 30 points from your 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 Friday, August 28 on D2L Brightspace**. *If you do not complete this assignment, you will not be able to complete any coursework.*

Attendance Policy: Attendance is required. Lectures will **not** be recorded **nor** streamed online. Be aware that you cannot participate if you do not attend class.

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 or your instructor, you will receive **one** warning before losing **all** participation points and additional violations will result in a reduction in your **overall** grade.

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

Non-Discrimination Notice: East Texas A&M 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 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 course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), 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 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 [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.

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

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 ETAMU Rule 34.06.02.R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to [34.06.02.R1](#) (or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all ETAMU 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.

Counseling Center: 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.com.

COVID-19 Statement: East Texas A&M recommends the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories.

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 all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
East Texas A&M University
Velma K. Waters Library, Room 162
Phone: (903) 886-5150
Fax: (903) 468-8148
Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.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 quizzes 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@etamu.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 21
 - Chapter 1. American Political Stories
 - August 24 – August 28
 - Chapter 2. The Constitution of the United States
 - August 31 – September 9
 - **Labor Day: No Class**
 - September 7
 - Chapter 4. Civil Liberties
 - September 11 – September 18
 - Chapter 5. Civil Rights
 - September 18 – September 25
 - **Test One: Opens at 12:01 AM on 09/28. Closes at 11:45 PM on 09/29.**
- MODULE TWO:
 - Chapter 12. Congress
 - September 30 – October 5
 - Chapter 13. The American Presidency
 - October 7 – October 14
 - **Fall Break: No Class**
 - October 9
 - Chapter 15. The Federal Judiciary
 - October 16 – October 21
 - **Project due by 11:45 PM CT October 12.**
 - **Test Two: Opens at 12:01 AM on 10/22. Closes at 11:45 PM on 10/23.**
- MODULE THREE:
 - Chapter 6. Political Participation
 - October 26 – October 28
 - Chapter 8. The Media
 - October 30 – November 4
 - Chapter 10. Campaigns and Elections
 - November 6 – November 11
 - Chapter 11. Interest Groups and Social Movements
 - November 13 – November 18
 - **Test Three: Opens 12:01 AM on 11/19. Closes at 11:45 PM on 11/20.**
 - **Thanksgiving Week: No Class**
 - November 23 – November 27
 - Comprehensive Review Day
 - November 30
 - **Study Day: No Class**
 - December 2-4
 - **Comprehensive FINAL Exam: December 11 @ 10:30 AM**