



PSCI 2305: United States Government

Course Syllabus: Fall 2026

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Jonathan Gray

Class Meeting: M-F

Classroom: Rm 201 - Whitehouse High School

Office Location: Rm 201

Office Hours: Daily 3:10-3:55pm

University Email Address: Jonathan.Gray@tamuc.edu

Communication Response Time: 24 hours (Up to 48 hours during weekends)

COURSE INFORMATION

Materials: Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings

Textbook(s): Required

Title: *American Government 4th ed* [Textbook](#)

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.”

(Quoted from the University Undergraduate Course Catalog)

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Critical Thinking: Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
- Communications: Student communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data, and technology as applicable.
- Personal Responsibility: Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
- Social Responsibility: Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.
- Students will be able to:
 - Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
 - Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
 - Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
 - Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
 - Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
 - Analyze the election process.
 - Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
 - Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Students will need to be familiar with the University learning management system, (myLeo Online or D2L), know how to use a personal computer, navigate the World Wide Web/Internet, and use basic word processing software such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint. Students will also be introduced to the Adobe Acrobat Suite for the purposes of completing the Public Policy Assignment.

Instructional Methods

The following methods of instruction will be utilized for this course.

- Assigned readings from the required textbook.
- Lectures and discussions during assigned meeting times.
- Weekly coursework on myLeo Online.
- Periodic outside readings

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

- All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.
- Students are expected to regularly check the course site for announcements and updates.
- Students are expected to complete all course readings for each section of the course.
- During class, students are expected to turn off and put away all electronic devices such as laptops, cell phones, tablets, iPods/iPads, audio and video recording devices, etc. The only exception is for students who have accommodation letters allowing them to use such devices.
- Students are expected to review any supplementary materials that the instructor provides, such as web links, news stories, etc. \
- Students are expected to attend class regularly. Consistent with University policies and procedures, students who miss five class meetings or more will be administratively dropped from the class. Excused absences will only be granted for documented official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.
- Students are expected to complete all course assessments.
- Students are expected to exhibit respect toward their fellow classmates and the instructor. This includes treating everyone with courtesy and esteem in all correspondence for the course. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
- Students are expected to avoid committing academic dishonesty, consistent with Texas A&M University-Commerce rules and policies. 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 other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments or taking exams), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. For this course, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. In particular, any student who passes off work as their own that was actually written by someone or something else (artificial intelligence) will be deemed to have committed plagiarism. This holds true whether material comes from the textbook, another publication, an Internet source, or another student. Any act of academic dishonesty on any assessment will result in a zero for that assignment, and the offending students may be referred to the proper campus office for potential disciplinary actions.
- Students are expected to comply with all myLeo Online/D2L technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access

GRADING

Final course grades will be computed using the following weights.

****Late work is not accepted****

Category	Percent
Discussion / Current Events	30%
Quizzes	10%
Assignments	15%
Exams	25%
Projects	10%
Final Exam	10%

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

A	89.5 - 100
B	79.5 - 89.4
C	69.5 - 79.4
D	59.5 - 69.4
F	59.4 - Below

Extra Credit opportunities will be given to the class as a whole and not on an individual basis.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universitymenu

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 coursework 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>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

Students should rely upon e-mail, office hours, and course announcements as the primary means of communication with the instructor. However, if students have a question about a grade, they will need to meet with the instructor in person. Also, please note that the system will only send e-mail to a student's official University Email address, so students will need to check that account regularly. During normal business hours on M-F, students can expect an email reply within 24 hours. On weekends, students can expect an email reply within 48 hours.

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific Procedures/Policies

- Make-up exams: If a student misses an exam, that student will receive a grade of zero for the exam. Make-up exams may be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Any request for a make-up exam must be made in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence was legitimate. Such a request must be received within three calendar days of the missed exam date unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death of an immediate family member, participation in University activities, and legal obligations. Students who miss any exam because they forgot about the exam dates/times will not receive a make-up exam. Please note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given. Make-up exams will be exclusively essay format.
- Incompletes will be granted at the discretion of the instructor and only be granted in the case of serious medical illness or other serious, unavoidable circumstances and only if the student has completed at least 70% of the coursework. Incompletes must be finished within two weeks of the end of the semester.
- Students must complete the "Personal Responsibility Statement" quiz available on the course site. Students who fail to do so by the time the first exam is graded will be administratively dropped from the course

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.

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

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 Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

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

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form

<http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.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

Texas A&M University-Commerce Velma K. Waters Library Rm 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/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

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

A&M - COMMERCE SUPPORTS STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, 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

AI USE IN COURSES

AI Technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to technology capable of generating or assisting with written work and other academic products. Students are expected to follow all East Texas A&M University policies regarding the appropriate use of AI. Unless otherwise specified by the instructor, any use of AI must be properly documented in accordance with university policy. Undocumented or unauthorized use of AI may constitute academic dishonesty and may result in a grade of zero on the assignment and/or referral for disciplinary action.

To protect both the student and the integrity of the course, **all written assignments—including discussion board responses—must first be composed and saved in a Google Doc using the student's Whitehouse ISD Google account.** Students should not type assignments directly into D2L discussion boards or other submission platforms.

If the originality of a student's work is questioned or if submitted work indicates possible unauthorized AI use, the student will be required to provide the original Google Doc, including the document's version history and timestamps, to the professor. The version history will be reviewed as part of the academic integrity process to help verify the authenticity and development of the student's work. Failure to provide the requested Google Doc and version history may result in the assignment being treated as a potential academic integrity violation.

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 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

For this course, students are prohibited from using AI to complete all assessments.

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Week Beginning	Topic	Assigned Reading
8/20		
8/24	Political Values/American Government and Civic Engagement	1
8/31	The Founding and the Constitution	2
9/7	Federalism	3
9/14	Civil Liberties	4 Exam 1: 9/17 & 9/18
9/21	Civil Rights	5
9/28	Public Opinion	6
10/5	Parties and Interest Groups	8
10/12	Campaigns and Elections	9
10/19	Congress	10 Exam 2: 10/22 & 10/23
10/26	Presidency	11
11/2	Bureaucracy	12
11/9	Federal Courts	13
11/16	Domestic Policy	14
11/23	Thanksgiving Break	
11/30	Foreign Policy	15 Exam 3: 12/3 & 12/4
12/7	Finals Week Comprehensive Final Exam	