



Course Syllabus: POLS 1433-X41 American & Texas Government II

College of Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Summer I, 2026

June 1- July 1

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Mohsen Jalali

Office: by appointment (via Zoom)

- Email me for an appointment. Send me your availability, and I can accommodate one of those times.

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Course Description

Political Science 1433 is an introductory course designed to provide students with a basic understanding of the American and Texas governments. The course aims to explore the political dynamics of both the American and Texas political systems, different branches of the government both in Texas and the United States, the ongoing challenges and evolving nature of the government system. Learning about the different branches of government that produce policies in the national and state levels as well as non-governmental actors, students will gain insights into the ways the political system produces policies that affect everyday life across the nation and the state. The study of politics is to examine who gets what when and how; in this course, students learn about who gets what when and how by gaining insights into the processes of decision-making at both national and state levels.

By the conclusion of the course, students will have developed a good understanding of key components of the national and state governing institutions, including the legislative, the executive, local governments, public policy, campaigning and elections, political participation and voting, and the United States' foreign policy. The class will utilize a variety of instructional methods, such as engaging lectures, group discussions, debates in class, student presentations, and short writing essays. These diverse components will provide students with the opportunity to cultivate essential skills that are useful to real-world situations.

Learning Objectives

By the completion of the course, students are expected to have learned and be able to critically discuss the following:

- ◆ Examine and engage in debates surrounding civil rights.
- ◆ Describe the process through which the United States and Texas legislative branches function.

- ◆ Describe the power of the President in the United States and the complexities of the executive branch in Texas government.
- ◆ Analyze how political parties campaign in the United States and who can and do participate elections.
- ◆ Identify the key players shaping the United States' foreign policies.
- ◆ Analyze the role of groups in influencing public policy for the day-to-day affairs of society at both national and state levels.
- ◆ Learning about the power and significance of local governments.

As this course is part of the MSU Core Curriculum, students are expected to demonstrate the following:

- ◆ Critical thinking
- ◆ Personal responsibility
- ◆ Civic engagement

**Notice:* Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

- ❖ Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline Tolbert, and Andrea Campbell. 2021. *We the People*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (any edition)
 - *We the People* in Syllabus WTP
 - ❖ Anthony Champagne, Edward Harpham, and Jason Casellas. 2021. *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (any edition)
 - *Governing Texas* in syllabus GT
- *Note:* The publishers issue a new edition every few years, and earlier editions will contain much of the same material. If you purchase a different edition of any of these books, just be sure to compare assignments with someone who has this edition to make sure you are reading the right pages. In the syllabus for these books, I do not use page numbers but chapter title.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [Office of Student Conduct](#)

A Note on the use of AI (Chat GPT ...)

***AI use is strictly prohibited.**

This course assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any substantive portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and using artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT. The online portal for uploading assignments detects and flags sections of writing that has been generated by AI.

Academic dishonesty on exams, quizzes and assignments will result in a *Zero* on the quiz, assignment, or exam and the student or students in question may receive an F in the course and/or be turned over to the university for sanction. ***More than one incident of academic dishonesty during the course will automatically result in a course grade of F.**

The MSU Honor Creed applies in this course, and students are expected to abide by it. Student work in this course expected to be original and produced only for this course. Students may not use the textbook, chapter summaries, notes, PowerPoints, lectures, or any online material during quizzes and exams. Students may not collaborate with each other during quizzes or exams or to create substantially similar responses to writing assignments.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Completing ALL the readings and regular attendance (online) will be required of all students. Active participation in discussions is critical for students to succeed in this course.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Exam I	15
Exam II	15
Final Exam	20
Response Papers (3*5)	15
Discussion Participation	15
Recorded Presentation	10
Watching Lectures	10
Total Points	100

Assignment Description

1. **Response Papers (3*5 = 15 points):** 3 response papers, each 5 points.

- The topic of these papers will be responding analytically to some topics discussed in one or few weeks. More specific guidelines will be given and discussed before each response paper.
 - A good paper must evaluate the merits and weaknesses of the arguments the student is writing about or the argument the student is making. Originality will be critical for your grade (similarity rate above 5% will be penalized). Having AI to write your paper leads to grade F for the course; this rule is strictly applied.
2. **Exams:** All the exam consists of multiple-choice questions, and students will take the exam on D2L. Students must only rely on their memory to respond to the questions. For the exam, I will utilize the **Respondus Lockdown Browser** and Respondus Monitor (more description below).
- **Exam I (15 points)**
 - **Exam II (15 points)**
 - **Final Exam (20 points)**
3. **Discussion and Participation (15 points):**
- This is a fully online course; however, your attendance (log into D2L) and participation are still vital to learning the material presented in this course. Recorded Lectures and assignments will be posted on D2L based on the course schedule below. Regular logins to D2L to participate online discussions will be required. I will closely monitor your participation and consider your first posting as your attendance and additional postings and replies as your class participation. In each week, the online discussion boards will become unable to write at 11:59 pm on Sunday. Over the course of the semester, 2 absences will be allowed for all students. More than 2 absences will significantly lower your final grade.
4. **Recording a Presentation (10 points)**
- All students must record one presentation about any topic in American or Texas politics. I will provide some topics, but students are free to choose their own topics. Students should research and present their topics while recording themselves. The minimum length is 15 minutes. The presentation must include proper slides and a clear presentation of ideas. You can find the list on Start Here folder on D2L.
5. **Watching Lectures (10 points)**
- I will check to make sure that students have watched the lectures posted on D2L. Each lecture not watched will result in one negative point. I will keep track of lectures that were not watched and then calculate the 10-point grade accordingly. Students who watch all lectures will receive 10 points, while students who miss 10 lectures or more will receive a 0 for this category.

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	90 to 100
B	80 to 89
C	70 to 79
D	60 to 69

Grade	Points
F	Less than 60

Safe Zone Statement

The discussion forum is a place where students will be treated with respect. We will work together to be create an inclusive space that respects equality and diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, political beliefs, culture, age, or ability.

All students are free to express their ideas even the ones that might sound controversial so long as they are presented as an argument which can be defended and countered with another argument. Diversity of thought is appreciated, encouraged, and it is all what the class is about provided you can agree to disagree.

It is the expectation that ALL students consider the online discussion forum a safe environment. Harassment, sexual misconduct, violence, and bullying will not be tolerated and will result in removal from the classroom and reporting to the appropriate university authority. This syllabus is your warning.

Late Work

***Late work is accepted** with grade deduction. So, I encourage students to submit their assignments even if it is late. However, instructor reserve the right not to accept late submissions.

In case of unforeseen circumstances such as a medical emergency requiring hospitalization for which documentation is provided, late submission is graded for full grade. All other assignments not submitted by the due date will receive the mark of zero.

Make Up Work/Tests

There are NO make-up exam/tests if you miss any of the assignments, except for insinuating circumstances.

Important Dates

Last day for term schedule changes: Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).

Deadline to file for graduation: Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Web Browser for D2L: The preferred web browser for D2L is Google Chrome. While it works in Safari for many functions, Chrome is a more reliable browser for D2L. If you do not have Chrome or a similar web browser installed on your computer, I suggest that you do so before working through the course material.

*For your midterm and final exams, I will utilize the **Respondus Lockdown Browser** and Respondus Monitor. In order to install these programs, you will need the following:

- **A desktop computer or laptop** other than a Chromebook. Chromebooks are NOT compatible with the Respondus Lockdown Browser and Monitor. Mobile phones and similar devices are not compatible with the required programs.
- **A working webcam on the computing device** used for the exam.
- **Microsoft Office or a compatible program** for written assignments. Access to Microsoft Office
- 365 is available through the Office 365 for Students on the Microsoft website.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees, and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. However, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans, and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make an application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)
**Notice:* Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Table 3 Course Schedule Table (subject to change)

Assignment	Opening Date	Due Dates
<i>Response Paper 1</i>	June 1 st	June 7th at 11:00 p.m.
<i>Response Paper 2</i>	June 8 th	June 21st at 11:00 p.m.
<i>Response Paper 3</i>	June 21 st	June 28th at 11:00 p.m.
<i>Exam I (on D2L)</i> - <i>Chapters:</i> 1) Civil Rights 2) Political Participation and Voting 3) Campaigns and Elections 4) Congress	June 15 th	June 17th at 11:00 p.m.
<i>Exam II (on D2L)</i> - <i>Chapters:</i> 1) Presidency 2) Social Policy 3) Foreign Policy 4) Economic Policy	June 20 th	June 21st at 11:00 p.m.
<i>Final Exam (on D2L)</i> - <i>Chapters:</i> 1) Legislature in TX 2) Executive Branch in TX 3) Interest Groups and Lobbying in TX 4) Economic Policy in TX 5) Local Governments in TX 6) Public Policy in TX	June 30 th	July 1st at 4 p.m.
<i>Recorded Presentation</i>	June 15 th	June 30th at 11:59 p.m.

Course Schedule

Week 1: June 1st - 5th

Module 0 Syllabus

Module 1: Civil Rights

Discussion Topics: *What were the consequences of “separate but equal” policy for southern society and for blacks’ civil rights? Should there be public efforts to encourage more female students to enter will-paid fields such as science and technology, or is that mainly a matter of individual choice? How much does each of these factors—education, political office, and income—say about gender equality in the United States?*

- ◆ Syllabus
- ◆ Chapter: Civil Rights (WTP)
- ◆ Podcast (Optional)—“[Federal Surveillance and Civil Rights](#)” (American Politics and the US Constitution) (50 minutes)

Module 2: Political Participation and Voting

Discussion Topics: *Why did the US government denied participation to so many for so long? What forces influenced the expansion of voting rights? Why are upper-income Americans more likely to be voters than lower-income Americans?*

- ◆ Chapter: Political Participation and Voting (WTP)
- ◆ Podcast (optional)—[1960s African American Voter Registration](#)
Emory University professor Carol Anderson taught a class about efforts in the early 1960s to register African American voters in Mississippi. She described some of the leaders of the movement, their tactics, and the opposition they faced from segregationists.

Module 3: Campaigns and Elections

Discussion Topics: *How do district boundaries affect elections for the U.S. House and state legislatures? Is it fair that relatively small states, such as Iowa and New Hampshire have outsize influence in picking presidents? Do American political campaigns help voters make a decision?*

- ◆ Chapter: Campaigns and Elections (WTP)
- ◆ Podcast (Optional)—[Presidents and Campaign Communications since 1900](#)
 - Rider University professor Myra Gutin teaches a class on presidents and communications in both their campaigns and while in office, starting with Teddy Roosevelt in the early 20th century and continuing to the present day.
- ◆ Podcast (Optional)—[Dwight Eisenhower and 1950s Political Advertising](#)
 - Purdue University professor Kathryn Brownell teaches a class about political advertising in the 1950s, highlighting Dwight Eisenhower's presidential campaigns.

Week 2: June 8th - 12th

Module 4 Congress

Discussion Topics: *(Why) is sociological representation important? Does it matter if the backgrounds of members of Congress reflect the population as a whole? Can members still represent their constituents effectively if they do not come from similar backgrounds? Would Congress work more effectively if it brought back earmarks? Why are earmarks so difficult to eliminate?*

- ◆ Chapter: Congress (WTP)

Module 5 Presidency

Discussion Topics: *What is the president's role in the legislative process? How might the anticipation of a veto affect the behavior of Congress? Why do you think all presidents have been men and all but one have been white? Why do you think so many presidents have come from the South and the East?*

- ◆ Chapter: Presidency (WTP)
- ◆ Podcast — “[Presidential Powers and the Constitution](#)” (We the People Channel) (50 minutes)

Module 6 Social Policy

- ◆ Chapter: Social Policy (WTP)
- ◆ Podcast (Optional) — “[Affirmative Action Returns to the Court](#)” (We the People channel) (58 minutes)

Week 3: June 15th – 19th

Module 7 Foreign Policy

Discussion Topics: *Should the United States pay more attention to the human rights records of its trading partners, like China, or allies, like Saudi Arabia? What factors might help to determine the effectiveness of economic sanctions on North Korea? In what ways do US ideals affect the nation's foreign policies? Should foreign policies be guided by ideals or determined by national interests?*

- ◆ Chapter: Foreign Policy (WTP)

Module 8 Economic Policy

Discussion Topics: *Why does the unemployment rate matter for the economic health of the country? What other policies could the government implement? What does the American government do to ensure that the products American buy are safe? How does government spending hurt/help the economy? Why is the Federal Reserve so important to economic policy? What are some of the policies that can be used to address climate change?*

- ◆ Chapter: Economic Policy (WTP)

Module 9 The Legislature in Texas

Discussion Topics: *What are the basic rules of the legislature in Texas? What are the advantages and disadvantages of a part-time or a full-time legislature? Are there issues in Texas that you think the legislature should address? How would you go about getting attention for those issues?*

- ◆ Chapter: The Legislature in Texas (*Governing Texas* (GT))

Week 4: June 22 - 26

Module 10 The Executive Branch in Texas

Discussion Topics: *Compared with other large-population states, are the institutional powers of the Texas governor high or low? Would Texas government be more efficient and more responsive to public needs if it had a stronger governor? What enhancements in the powers of Texas governors would be most beneficial to the management of state government?*

- ◆ Chapter: The Executive Branch in Texas (GT)

Module 11 Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas

What are the major types of interest groups in Texas and how do they influence Texas government? How do ordinary individuals influence Texas government?

- ◆ Chapter: Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas (GT)

Module 12 Economic Policy in Texas

Discussion Topics: *Which states have the highest income tax rates? What are the advantages and disadvantages to having no state income tax in Texas? Which group pays the highest percentage of its income in taxes in Texas?*

- ◆ Chapter: Economic Policy in Texas (GT)

Week 5: June 29- July 1st

Module 13 Local Governments in Texas

Discussion Topics: *Of these major Texas cities, which city council best reflects the racial/ethnic composition of its population? What are some of the characteristics of states with large numbers of local governments? Does the picture change when we factor in population? Which states have larger numbers of local governments per capita?*

- ◆ Chapter: Local Governments in Texas (GT)
 - Part of the chapter

Module 14 Public Policy in Texas

Discussion Topics: *Are public schools in Texas still segregated? What should policy makers do? What are the stereotypes about people on welfare? Are these stereotypes accurate? What appears to be the relationship between state taxes and insurance rates in a state?*

- ◆ Chapter: Public Policy in Texas (GT)
 - Part of the chapter