



Course Syllabus: 1333-106 American & Texas Government I

College of Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Fall 2023, Tuesday and Thursday (9:30-10:50 PM)

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Mohsen Jalali

Office: O'Donohoe Hall, Room 204

Office hours:

- Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 11:00 -12:30 PM
- Tuesday and Thursday: 1:00-1:30 PM
- and by Appointment

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Course Description

Political Science 1333 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, examining the historical context, current challenges, and evolving nature of these systems. Through engaging with the political processes that shaped the formation of the US Constitution, subsequent amendments, and contemporary issues, students will gain insights into the foundations and transformations of American political system. Similarly, the course will delve into the historical evolution of the Texas political system, analyzing its development in conjunction with and in contrast to the federal government.

By the conclusion of the course, students will have developed a good understanding of key components of American and Texas politics, including political culture, constitutional principles, federalism, civil rights and liberties, political parties, interest groups, and the role of media. 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:

- ◆ Describe federalism and its broad implications for American and state politics.
- ◆ Identify the key components of the US and Texas constitutions.
- ◆ Analyze the ideas and ideals of the Founding Fathers as they appear in various founding documents.
- ◆ Examine civil rights and liberties and engage in debates surrounding them.
- ◆ Explore the history of US political parties, including their history and interest groups.
- ◆ Evaluate the significance of public opinion, its formation, and the role of media in American and Texas politics.

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

- ◆ Critical thinking.
- ◆ Oral communication.
- ◆ Personal responsibility.
- ◆ Civic engagement.

NOTE: The syllabus is subject to change but any changes made to the syllabus will be communicated ahead of time with students and posted on D2L.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Textbooks

- ❖ Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline Tolbert, and Andrea Campbell. 2021. *We the People*. 14th Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
 - [*We the People* in Syllabus WTP]
- ❖ Anthony Champagne, Edward Harpham, and Jason Casellas. 2021. *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics*. 5th Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
 - [*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 number and title.

NOTE. POLS 1333 is included in MSU Texas Access & Affordability Program for the Fall semester. What does this mean?

- Your course material is in D2L on the first day of class, for everyone in your class. Your professors opted to have your course in the program to save you time and money.

- The money saving charge of \$104.80 + tax has been added to your student account, which is below the publisher’s website price. This amount also includes connection to Norton’s website and both WE THE PEOPLE & GOVERNING TEXAS.
- You have the choice to “opt out” of this special pricing and find your material on your own. If you prefer to “opt out”, the instructions will be in your my.msutexas.edu email on the second day of class. *The last day to “opt- out” of this program is 9/13/2023.

Students- if you have questions concerning this program, please email jenny.denning@msutexas.edu.

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

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 individuals to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

A Note on 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.

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
Response Papers (4*5)	20
Quizzes (2*5)	10

Assignments	Points
Midterm Exam	20
Final Exam	20
Class Participation	20
Total Points	100

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
F	Less than 60

Assignment Description

1. **Response Papers** (4 of them, each 5 points).
 - The topic of these papers will be responding analytically to some topics discussed some of the weeks. Some of the papers will require students to listen to some podcasts or watch some lectures and write a critical response to the content of what they have watched or listened to.
 - A good paper must evaluate the merits and weaknesses of the arguments students are responding to. Originality will be critical for your grade (similarity rate above 5% will be penalized).
2. **Short Quizzes** (2 of them, each 5 points):
 - They are assigned in some weeks testing your knowledge of the class materials of one or a few weeks.
3. **Midterm** (20 points)
 - Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions and some short answer questions. Questions will test your understanding of the key concepts of American and Texas politics that will be covered in class materials (textbooks, non-textbook readings, lectures, video and audio materials).
4. **Final Exams** (30 points).
 - Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions and some short answer questions. Questions will test your understanding of the key concepts of American

and Texas politics that will be covered in class materials (textbooks, non-textbook readings, lectures, video and audio materials).

5. **Class Participation** (20 points):

- Students must attend the lectures. In addition, being engaged during class is as important as attendance. Students are expected to participate in group discussions and class debates and demonstrate that they are fully present. Students observed using mobile phones, reading non-class materials, or otherwise not fully engaged in class, will not receive engagement credit for that class period. This syllabus serves as the notice of the above policies; students will receive no further alert if participation points are not earned during a class meeting. Over the course of the semester, 2 absences will be allowed for all students. More than 2 absences will significantly lower your final grade.

Class Policies

Absences

You should attend class. Students who do not attend class often have difficulty with the course and receive lower grades. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting and will be noted in Attendance and Engagement. ***Students missing more than 9 course periods may be dropped from the course without notice.** Excused absences will be those as follows: illness, death in the family, legal proceedings occurring during class period, university-approved absence such as travel as member of a MSU sports team, or emergency situation as determined by me. To excuse an absence, I must be notified in advance of the class meeting.

Safe Zone Statement:

This classroom 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 gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, 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 classroom a safe environment. Harassment, sexual misconduct, violence, bullying, and disruptive behavior will not be tolerated will result in removal from the classroom and reporting to the appropriate university authority. This syllabus is your warning.

Late Work

***No late work accepted,** except unforeseen, limited circumstances such as a medical emergency requiring hospitalization for which documentation is provided. All other assignments not submitted by the due date will receive the mark of zero.

Make Up Work/Tests

There is no make-up exam/tests if you miss any of the assignments, except for unforeseen circumstances such as medical emergencies.

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.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

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 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](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUReady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled “*Run. Hide. Fight.*” which may be electronically accessed via the University police department’s webpage: [“Run. Hide. Fight.”](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

Course Schedule

(week 1) Aug 28th – Sep 1st (Intro & American Political Culture)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ no reading (introduction and reviewing the syllabus)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ WT → Chapter 1 (American Political Culture)

(2) Sep 4th – Sep 8th (Texas Political Culture)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ GT→ chapter 1 (“The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas”)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Podcast*—— “[A Chicken for a Pluck at the Chicken Ranch](#)” (37 minutes)

(3) Sep 11th – Sep 15th (A Constitution of Compromises)

- ◆ **Tuesday**
 - ◆ WTP → Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution
 - ◆ Read The Constitution of the United States (at the end of the Textbook WTP)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Podcast*—— “[Principles of the US Constitution](#)” (a lecture by Grove City College president, Paul McNulty)

Quiz 1.

This quiz covers the first three weeks materials. It is done during the class on Thursday Sep 14th.

(4) Sep 18th – Sep 22nd (Texas Foundation and Constitution)

- ◆ **Tuesday**
 - ◆ GT → Chapter 2: The Texas Constitution
- ◆ **Thursday**

- ◆ *Podcast*—A New History of Texas, “[The Republic of Cotton](#)” by Brandon Seale (30 minutes)
- ◆ *Podcast*— A New History of Texas, “[Peacemaker](#)” by Brandon Seale (24 minutes)

(5) Sep 25th - Sep 29 (Federalism)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ WTP → Chapter 3: Federalism
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Lecture Video*. “Slavery and State Rights, Economies and Ways of Life: [What Caused the Civil War?](#)” (first 40 minutes)

***Reflection Paper 1 (deadline: Sep 30th)**

*Write a four- to five-hundred-word essay where you discuss which one of the reasons causing the Civil War presented in the lecture “Slavery and State Rights ...” is more valid and why.

(6) Oct 2nd - Oct 6th Texas in Federal System

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ GT → Chapter 3 (Texas in the Federal System)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Podcast*— *The Realignment*. “Stephen Marche: [Is the U.S. on the Path to Dissolution?](#)” (60 Minutes)

***Reflection Paper 2 (deadline: Oct 7th)**

*React to the podcast about The Next Civil War. In a five-hundred-word essay take a position, is the United States headed towards another civil war and secession or if you find Stephen Marche’s argument unconvincing.

(7) Oct 9th - Oct 13th (Liberties and Rights)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ WTP → Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Podcast*— “[Civil Liberties vs. Civil Rights](#)” (American Politics and the US Constitution) (25 minutes)

(8) Oct 16th - Oct 20th - Midterm

**Midterm Exam to be taken in classroom on Thursday Oct 19th*

(9) Oct 23rd – Oct 27th (Public Opinion)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ WTP → Chapter 6 (Public Opinion).
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Watch.* “Wag the Dog” (a movie by Barry Levinson)

**Reflection Paper 3 (deadline: Oct 28th)*

*Write a response paper to the movie Wag the Dog. In a four- to five-hundred-word essay discuss what the major message of the movie is and why.

(10) Oct 30th – Nov 3rd (The Media and Political Information)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ WTP → Chapter 7 (Media and)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Podcast*— “[Public Opinion, Radio, & Entry into World War II](#)”
 - Wofford College professor Mark Byrnes teaches a class about U.S. public opinion, the rise of radio, and the debate about whether to enter World War II.

Quiz 2

This quiz covers the materials in the last two weeks. It is done during the class on Thursday Nov 2nd.

(11) Nov 6th – Nov 10th (Interest Groups)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ WTP → Chapter 11 (Groups and Interests)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Podcast*— “[Conspiracy Culture in American History.](#)” (Indiana University Bloomington by Stephen Andrews)

**Reflection Paper 4. (deadline: Nov 11th)*

*React to the *podcast* about “Conspiracy Culture in American History.” In a five-hundred-word essay take a position, regarding the content of the podcast; pick a point of agreement or disagreement and critically engage that point.

(12) Nov 13th - Nov 17th (Parties in the US)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ WTP → Chapter 9 (Political Parties)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ *Podcast*— “[Political Parties](#).” (American Politics and the US Constitution)

(13) Thanksgiving Nov 20th - Nov 24th

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ Review Session
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ No class

(14) Nov 27th - Dec 1st (Parties in TX)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ GT → Chapter 4 (Political Parties)
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ Watch the talk, “Texas Politics Speaker Series Presents. “[Will Texas Become a Two-Party State Again?](#)”

(15) Dec 4th - Dec 8th (Interest Groups in TX)

- **Tuesday**
 - ◆ GT → Chapter 6: Interest Groups and Lobbying
- **Thursday**
 - ◆ Wrap up session

**Final Exam to be taken on December 11th*

Dec 9th Final Examination Begins

Dec 16th Commencement