



Course Syllabus: 1333-102 American-Texas Government I

College of Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Fall 2025: Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 11:00-11:50

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Mohsen Jalali

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office hours:

- *Monday:* 1:00 – 3:00 pm
- *Wednesday:* 1:00 – 3:00 pm
- *Thursday:* 2:00 – 3:00 pm
- *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*. Any edition: 15th, 14th, 13th, or 12th. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
 - [*We the People* in the Syllabus **WTP**]
 - ❖ Anthony Champagne, Edward Harpham, and Jason Casellas. 2021. *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics*. Any edition: 6th, 5th, 4th, or 3rd. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
 - [*Governing Texas* in the 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.

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. You are allowed and encouraged to use AI as an assistant to your research and work but AI should not do the work that we assume is yours and you present it as yours.

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

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Response Papers (4*5)	20
In-class Presentations	10
Exam I	15
Exam II	15
Final Exam	20
Class Participation	20
Total Points	100

Assignment Description

1. **Response Papers (4*5 = 20 points):** 4 response papers, each 5 points.
 - The task is to analytically respond to some topics. 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.
2. **Exam I (15 points)**
 - The exam consists of multiple-choice questions, and students will take the exam on D2L during class. Therefore, it is necessary to bring your electronic device to access D2L.
 3. **Exam II (15 points)**
 - The exam consists of multiple-choice questions, and students will take the exam on D2L during class. Therefore, it is necessary to bring your electronic device to access D2L.
 4. **Final Exam (20 points)**
 - The exam consists of multiple-choice questions, and students will take the exam on D2L during class. Therefore, it is necessary to bring your electronic device to access D2L.
 5. **In-class Presentations (10 points)**
 - Students are required to give one in-class presentations on any political topic related to national or Texas politics. Further instructions are available on D2L.
 6. **Class Attendance and Participation (20 points)**
 - Students must attend the lectures. In addition, engagement 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 participation credit for that class period. This syllabus serves as the notice of the above policies. Over the course of the semester, 3 absences will be allowed for all students. I will automatically excuse 3 absences at the end of the semester. Save these for when you are not feeling well but unable to see a doctor or other unpredictable incidents.

Table 2: Grading Scale

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

Class Policies

Late Work

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

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

Absences

This is an in-person class and attendance is mandatory. Students who do not attend class often have difficulty with the course and receive lower grades. Attendance will be taken at each class meeting.

***Students with more than 10 unexcused absences will fail the class regardless of their performance.** Excused absences will be those as follows: illness (with doctor's note), 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 the instructor.

Safe Zone Statement:

This classroom is a place where students will be treated with respect. We will work together to 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.

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: December 5th, 2025, [Academic Calendar](#).

Deadline to file for graduation: September 22 2025. [Academic Calendar](#).

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" November 24 2025. Check the date on the [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.

Instructor Class Policies

Students are expected to be on time. They must avoid wearing earphones during class, talking to one another during the lecture, and using mobile phones for texting or purposes other than occasional course-related use. None of these behaviors will be tolerated.

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 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](#).

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 prohibit 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 as 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 the 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

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 exams and assignments due dates

Assignment	Due Dates
<i>Response Paper 1</i>	Open on August 25 th and due by September 7 th
<i>Exam I</i>	In class, on D2L, on September 19 th
	Chapters: • “American Political Culture” • “The Founding and the Constitution” • “Federalism” • “Civil Liberties”
<i>Response Paper 2</i>	Open on September 19 th and due by September 28 th
<i>Response Paper 3</i>	Open on October 1 st and due by October 12 th
<i>Exam II</i>	In class, on D2L, on Friday October 24 th
	Chapters: • “Public Opinion” • “Media” • “Groups and Interests” • “Political Parties”
<i>Response Paper 4</i>	Open on October 27 th and due by Nov 9 th
<i>Final Exam</i>	Dec 8th at 10:30 a.m., in-class exam.
	Chapters: • The Legislature in Texas • The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas” • “The Texas Constitution” • “Texas in the Federal System” • “Campaigns and Elections in Texas”

Course Schedule

Module 1: Syllabus and American Political Culture

(August 25–29)

***Discussion questions:** Why do we need government? How do Americans view their government? How has the social composition of the American population changed over time? Is the American Constitution a model for the world?

Do you agree with the point that the United States is a flawed democracy? If so, what makes the US democracy flawed.

- ♦ Introduction and reviewing the syllabus
- ♦ *We the People* (WTP) → Chapter 1 “American Political Culture”

Module 2: A Constitution of Compromises

(Sep 2-5)

***Discussion questions:** What does government do and why does it matter? Why are taxes always controversial? Why has the Constitution changed over time?

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

***Response Paper 1 (Next Civil War!?):** The assignment will open on August 30th and due by September 7th at 11:00 p.m.

Module 3 Federalism

(Sep 8-12)

***Discussion questions:** Which level of government has had the most influence over citizens’ lives? How have Supreme Court decisions affected the balance of power between the federal government and the states? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of a unitary system?

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

Module 4: Liberties

(Sep 15 - 19)

***Discussion Topics:** The United States still uses the motto “In God We Trust” and calls itself “one nation, under God.” Do you think its reference to God is a violation of the separation of church and state? How do we determine what speech should be protected? Do you think hate speech should be

prohibited? Do you feel that the Federal Government is currently breaching civil liberties? If so, how?

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

Exam I. In class, on D2L, on September 19th

Module 5: Public Opinion

(Sep 22 –26)

**Discussion Questions:* Why does the media focus on issues on which public opinion is sharply divided while there are in fact many issues on which Americans largely agree? Recent data shows that liberals live in areas with other liberals and conservatives live in areas with other conservatives; what are the political consequences of this geographic sorting?

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

Response Paper 2 (Gaza War): The assignment will open on September 19th and is due by September 28th at 11:00 p.m.

Module 6: The Media and Political Information

(Sep 29 – Oct 3)

**Discussion Questions:* In recent years, a number of major media corporations have acquired numerous newspapers, television stations, and radio properties. Is media concentration a serious problem? Are there differences between how younger adults and older adults get their news?

- ◆ WTP → Chapter 7: “Media”
- ◆ *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.

Module 7: Interest Groups

(Oct 6 - 10)

**Discussion Questions:* What are the major types of interest groups and whom do they represent? How do interest groups and social groups organize? Do you find interest groups activities in the U.S. to be anti-democratic and harming the democracy?

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

***Response Paper 3** (Jefferey Epstein: a conspiracy or a cover up!?): The assignment will open on October 1st and due by October 12th at 11:00 p.m.

Module 8: Parties in the United States

(Oct 13 - 17)

***Discussion Questions:** What rules governing the American electoral process promote a two-party system? How do parties attract the popular support they need to win elections? Should Texas make it easier for minor parties to gain political power? Would people be more or less inclined to participate in politics if politicians did not identify with particular parties?

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

Module 9 (Review Week)

(Oct 20 - 24)

- ♦ Review Sessions
- ♦ Friday (Exam II – in class – on D2L)

***Exam II:** In class, on D2L, on Friday October 24th, at 12:00 p.m.

***The exam will cover all the chapters to this point.**

Module 10: Texas Political Culture

(Oct 27 - 31)

***Discussion Questions:** Why does Texas’ political culture matter? What are some of the major elements in Texas political culture and how they are different from American political culture? Do you think Texas is different from all other states in the United States?

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

Module 11: Texas Foundations and Constitutions

(Nov 3 – 7)

***Discussion questions:** Why does the Texas Constitution matter? What are the main functions of state constitutions? What are the major provisions of the Texas Constitution? (Why) do we need to change it?

- ♦ GT → Chapter 2: “The Texas Constitution”
- ♦ *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)

Module 12 Texas and Federalism

(Nov 10 – 14)

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

Module 13: Parties in Texas

(Nov 17 – 21)

**Discussion Questions:* What is particular about the party politics in Texas? Do you think the dominance of the Republican Party over Texas politics is a good thing for the state’s politics?

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

Module 14 Review Week

(Nov 24 – 28) *Thanksgiving Week*

- ♦ Review Session

(Module 15): Elections and Campaigning

(Dec 1 – 5)

- ♦ GT → Chapter 4: “Campaigns and Elections in Texas”

Final Exam. Dec 8th at 10:30 a.m., in-class exam.