



Introduction to American Government

POLS 1333-X40

Summer 2020

Online Course

Contact Information

Dr. Jeremy F. Duff
Office: 211 O'Donohoe
Office hours: By Appointment Only
E-mail: jeremy.duff@msutexas.edu

Course Description

This is an undergraduate course on the American and Texas system of governments. This course is meant to introduce the student to how the American and Texas Governments work. In this course we will cover such topics as American and Texas political culture, the American and Texas Constitutions, the system of federalism, and the media, elections, political parties, public opinion, and interest groups for both the United States and Texas.

Textbooks

Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, and Caroline Tolbert. 2018. *We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*. **12th Texas Edition**. W. W. Norton.

Or...

We the People: An Introduction to American Politics. **12th Edition**. W. W. Norton.

And...

Governing Texas. **4th Edition**. W. W. Norton.

Course Website

The course website is in the University's D2L system. Everything for the course will happen there. You will be able to use this website to read class announcements, correspond with me, view lectures, take exams and quizzes, and to view this syllabus, among other things.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook-2018-19](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty is cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given).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](#)

Grading

The three exams will count 60% (20% each) toward your final grade. The chapter quiz grades will be averaged. The average will make up 15% of your grade. The Simulation Quiz grades will be averaged. The average will make up 10% of your grade. Discussion Question grades will be averaged. The average will make up 15% of your grade.

Table 1: Grade Scheme

Cut Off	Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
Less than 60%	F

Student Responsibilities

Lectures

For each chapter I will post lecture material on the course website. Use this to supplement your reading. You will be responsible for knowing the material in the lectures as well as the material in the textbook for each chapter.

Readings

The readings serve as a point of departure for lectures and discussions. Therefore, it is imperative that each student completes the assigned reading before a topic is taken up in class. Remember, the readings are a point of departure from class lectures. You will be held accountable not only for my discussion in lecture, but also for anything in the textbooks that may not be covered in lecture or discussion.

Participation

Students should feel free to raise questions concerning the readings, the instructor's discussion, and the comments of other students. Participation enhances course quality.

Chapter Quizzes

There will be daily quizzes covering lecture and textbook material. These quizzes will be graded and will count towards your quiz grade for the course. Each quiz should be completed by 11:59pm on the day they are assigned. This should encourage you to keep up with the reading. If you do not turn in a quiz by the due date/time and do not have a University approved excuse, you will be given a grade of ZERO on that quiz.

Discussion Questions

Each day I will post three discussion questions related to our course material and relevant current events. As part of your course requirements I expect each student to post a response to each of these questions. It is ok to post more and in fact I would encourage you to post more. But, at the very least you must fully answer each of the three questions posted. Please have something substantive to post. In other words you need more than just "I agree." Students should spend some time on these. A few sentences will NOT get full credit. These should be submitted by the end of the day (11:59 p.m.). Collectively these will count for your discussion question grade. Note: I intend for this to be largely student driven. I will post the prompt and monitor the discussions but I will provide you with a lot of leeway to decide the direction of the discussion and intentionally want to avoid influencing the direction of the conversation. If you do not turn in the answers by the due date/time and do not have a University approved excuse, you will be given a grade of ZERO on that quiz.

Simulation Quizzes

For each chapter there is a simulation posted. For each day you will participate in the simulation and complete the brief quiz associated with that simulation. The quizzes are due by 11:59pm each night. As is the case with the discussion questions and quizzes, if you do not turn in a quiz by the due date/time and do not have a University approved excuse, you will be given a grade of ZERO on that quiz.

Required Examinations

There will be three required examinations. The scheduled examination dates are as follows (these will not change):

Exam 1: July 14, 2020

Exam 2: July 23, 2020

Final Exam: August 5, 2020.

Late exams will not be accepted.

Respondus

Exams will be administered through D2L, however, you will be monitored during exams by Respondus. Respondus is a live online proctoring service that will monitor you while you take your exam through D2L. When you login to take the exam, Respondus will run you through some tests to get you set up to take the exam. The main thing is that you will need a webcam in order for Respondus to monitor your exam.

This also means that for exams, students will not be allowed to use their books, notes, or anything else. Respondus has been instructed on this policy and will notify me if a violation occurs. Students who violate this policy will receive a grade of zero on that particular exam.

If for any reason you are not comfortable with using the Respondus service, then you should drop the class. Respondus is not optional.

Basic Policies

Make-up Policy

If a student has a University-approved excuse and if the instructor is notified in writing, prior to the examination or assignment, and the student can provide official documentation to validate the excuse, arrangements for a make-up may be made. If a student fails to do any of these things, the student will receive a zero for the exam or assignment. Official documentation does not include a letter from the Dean of Students Office. You must provide me with actual documentation that validates the excuse and clearly demonstrates that you were unable to complete the assignment by the due date.

Exams, Assignments, and Grading

I will only discuss a grade with you in my office. I will not discuss a grade with you before or after class in the classroom, in the hallway, outside by my car, via e-mail or over the phone. I want you to take time to look over your exam thoroughly, outside of the classroom before you make an argument for a different grade. Any discussion of exam grades should take place within my office hours or by appointment in my office if you are not able to attend the scheduled office hours. If you feel that you and another student provided similar or equal answers to an exam question and you received a lower grade on that question, then both students must come to the assigned office hours with their exams in order for me to evaluate the answers equally and fairly. Keep in mind that in some cases I may lower the grade of the other student and not raise yours after reviewing both answers, if I feel that the situation deems it necessary.

Taking Exams Early

Only under extraordinary circumstances will a student be allowed to take an exam, including the final, early. Only university approved excuses, death in the family, illness, etc. will be considered for taking an exam early.

Wikipedia

At no time will a student be allowed to use Wikipedia as a source for any project or paper in my class. If it is determined that Wikipedia was used as a source for a project or paper, the student will be given a grade of zero automatically.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in any form is unacceptable. Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor.

In all of your assignments, including your homework or drafts of papers, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. "Proper attribution" means that you have fully identified the original source and extent of your use of the words or ideas of others that you reproduce in your work for this course, usually in the form of a footnote or parenthesis.

As a general rule, if you are citing from a published source or from a web site and the quotation is short (up to a sentence or two) place it in quotation marks; if you employ a longer passage from a publication or web site, please indent it and use single spacing. In both cases, be sure to cite the original source in a footnote or in parentheses.

This is not limited to direct quotations. Any time you use material from a published source, whether quoting directly, borrowing from it, or paraphrasing, you can only do so with proper attribution.

If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or examination, be sure to seek clarification from me.

Finally, you should keep in mind that as a member of the campus community, you are expected to demonstrate integrity in all of your academic endeavors and will be evaluated on your own merits. So be proud of your academic accomplishments and help to protect and promote academic integrity at MSU. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty – including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school – are simply not worth it.

Any paper or assignment that is found to be plagiarized will be given a grade of zero and will be reported through the proper channels according to the guidelines provided in the MSU Student Handbook.

Late Assignments

I do not accept late assignments, papers, exams, quizzes, or anything else. If it is late, it will receive a grade of zero. If you miss an assignment because you arrive to class late, you will receive a grade of zero on that assignment.

Quizzes, Discussions, and the Textbook

I cannot keep students from using their textbook and/or notes when taking quizzes and answering the discussion questions. However, you are NOT allowed to copy material straight from the textbook, notes, the internet, or any other source. Your answers need to be written in your own words. And just so there is no confusion, DO NOT QUOTE from these sources either. Again, write all answers in your own words. If I discover that you have violated this policy, FOR ANY PART of an answer, you will receive 0 points for that answer (even if you did it just a little bit).

Computer/Internet Problems

I do not have any control over computer/internet problems. This is an online course and therefore you need to be aware that these kind of things WILL happen. So, DO NOT wait until the last minute each week to complete your work. If your browser freezes, if your internet goes down, if you can't access a computer for some reason, if you forget to save your answers, or whatever else might happen, I CANNOT help you. The assignments are due when they say they are due. If you do not turn them in, I will not give you credit for them. The only thing I can look into is if the D2L system, through MSU, is down for some reason. I can verify that through our IT department and if something like that happens, I will arrange for make-ups to be made. Other than that, it's your responsibility when taking an online course to ensure that you have the proper equipment and access to complete assignments. If that means you have to go to McDonald's and use the free Wi-Fi, then do so. Computer/internet problems, on YOUR end, are not a legitimate excuse in this course. You have an entire week to complete assignments, which is plenty of time to find a computer and internet in order to do them.

Student Honor Creed

As an MSU Student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else do so. As students at MSU, we recognize that any great society must be composed of empowered, responsible citizens. We also recognize universities play an important role in helping mold these responsible citizens. We believe students themselves play an important part in developing responsible citizenship by maintaining a community where integrity and honorable character are the norm, not the exception. Thus, we, the Students of Midwestern State University, resolve to uphold the honor of the University by affirming our commitment to complete academic honesty. We resolve not only to be honest but also to hold our peers accountable for complete honesty in all university matters. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any unauthorized material in examinations, or to present, as one's own, work or ideas which are not entirely one's own. We recognize that any instructor has the right to expect that all student work is honest, original work. We accept and acknowledge that responsibility for lying, cheating, stealing, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty fundamentally rests within each individual student. We expect of ourselves academic integrity, personal professionalism,

and ethical character. We appreciate steps taken by University officials to protect the honor of the University against any who would disgrace the MSU student body by violating the spirit of this creed.

Written and adopted by the 2002-2003 MSU Student Senate.

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 that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Services in Room 168 of the Clark Student Center, 397-4140.

Course Schedule

Date	Readings/Activities
July 6	Read the syllabus and all other relevant material so you are prepared to begin the course
July 7	American Political Culture: Chapter 1 Chapter 1 Quiz Chapter 1 Discussion Questions Chapter 1 Simulation Quiz
July 8	The Founding and the Constitution: Chapter 2 Chapter 2 Quiz Chapter 2 Discussion Questions Chapter 2 Simulation Quiz
July 9	Federalism: Chapter 3 Chapter 3 Quiz Chapter 3 Discussion Questions Chapter 3 Simulation Quiz
July 13	American Public Opinion: Chapter 6 Chapter 6 Quiz Chapter 6 Discussion Questions Chapter 6 Simulation Quiz
July 14	Exam I

Date	Readings/Activities
July 15	The Media: Chapter 7 Chapter 7 Quiz Chapter 7 Discussion Questions Chapter 7 Simulation Quiz
July 16	Political Participation and Voting: Chapter 8 Chapter 8 Quiz Chapter 8 Discussion Questions Chapter 8 Simulation Quiz
July 20	American Political Parties: Chapter 9 Chapter 9 Quiz Chapter 9 Discussion Questions Chapter 9 Simulation Quiz
July 21	American Campaigns and Elections: Chapter 10 Chapter 10 Quiz Chapter 10 Discussion Questions Chapter 10 Simulation Quiz
July 22	Interest Groups in American Politics: Chapter 11 Chapter 11 Quiz Chapter 11 Discussion Questions Chapter 11 Simulation Quiz
July 23	Exam II
July 27	Texas Local Politics: Texas Chapter 10 Texas Chapter 10 Quiz Texas Chapter 10 Discussion Questions Texas Chapter 10 Simulation Quiz
July 28	Texas Political Culture: Texas Chapter 1 Texas Chapter 1 Quiz Texas Chapter 1 Discussion Questions Texas Chapter 1 Simulation Quiz
July 29	The Texas Constitution: Texas Chapter 2 Texas Chapter 2 Quiz Texas Chapter 2 Discussion Questions Texas Chapter 2 Simulation Quiz

Date	Readings/Activities
July 30	Texas in the Federal System: Texas Chapter 3 Texas Chapter 3 Quiz Texas Chapter 3 Discussion Questions Texas Chapter 3 Simulation Quiz
August 3	Texas Political Parties: Texas Chapter 4 Texas Chapter 4 Quiz Texas Chapter 4 Discussion Questions Texas Chapter 4 Simulation Quiz
August 4	Texas Elections: Texas Chapter 5 Texas Chapter 5 Quiz Texas Chapter 5 Discussion Questions Texas Chapter 5 Simulation Quiz
August 5	Final Exam