

POLS 1333-L13: American and Texas Government I: Politics, Media, and Elections

Midwestern State University
Fall 2019
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 PM—1:50 PM
PY 209

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Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays: 10:00 —11:45 AM

Course Description and Learning Objectives:

Political Science 1433 is an introductory course in American and Texas government and politics that focuses on how the U.S. government and Texas government work and why they work the way they do. The purpose of this course is to assist you in developing a better understanding of the government institutions and the political processes that you will interact with as citizens. This course is also designed to provide you with analytical tools so that you can understand and meaningfully participate in American and Texas politics throughout your life. This course will be challenging and critical thinking about Texas and American government will be part of everything that we do. The syllabus provides a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary.

Learning Community:

This course is part of a learning community with ENGL 1143 –L13. Throughout the semester, students in this learning community will come together for events connected to our courses and overlapping material and assignments. Students enrolled in this course are also enrolled in the following course:

ENGL 1143—L13: Academic Research and Writing with Cody Parish.

Required Texts:

Theodore J Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2019. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. 15th Edition. New York: WW Norton.

Anthony Champagne and Edward J. Harpham. 2019. *Governing Texas*, 4nd Edition. New York: WW Norton.

Grades:

Breakdown of Grades:

Grade Category	Grade Percentage
Exam 1	12%
Exam 2	18%
Exam 3	18%
Reading Logs	12%
Debate, Quizzes and Ancillary Work	10%
Attendance and Engagement	10%
Final Exam	20%

Grading:

On each exam and for the final grade, points will be assigned according to the following scale:

Letter Grade	Numerical Grade
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	0-59

Course Engagement Grading:

Unexcused Absences/ Course Non-Engagement	Engagement Grade
0	100
1	95
2	85
3	80
4	75
5	65
6	55
7+	0

Course Grade Formula:

$(\text{Exam 1 Grade} \times .12) + (\text{Exam 2} \times .18) + (\text{Exam 3} \times .18) + (\text{Engagement Grade} \times .1) + (\text{Reading Log Total Points Earned} / \text{Total Reading Log Points Available}) \times 1.2 + ((\text{Classwork Points Earned} / \text{Number of Classwork Points available}) \times 1) + (\text{Final Exam Grade} \times .20) = \text{Final Grade}$

Class Policies:

Attendance and Engagement:

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 6 course periods may be dropped from the course without notice.** The only excused absences will be those as follows: illness with a doctor's note covering the date(s) absent from class, 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.

Engagement:

Engagement during class is as important as physical attendance and engagement, as well as non-engagement will be noted daily. Students are expected to 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. Distracting behavior will also constitute non-engagement for the class period. Talking, passing notes, etc. during lecture or while other students are asking or answering questions. In other words, you are expected to behave like responsible adults in class. Behaviors such as the above will be taken as evidence of non-engagement during the class period. Students will not receive credit for engagement during the class period when behaviors such as the above are observed. This syllabus serves as the notice of the above policies; students will receive no further alert if engagement points are not earned during a class meeting.

Lateness:

I will take attendance at each class meeting. Students arriving after the role has been called will not be counted as on-time and will be marked as tardy. **Two tardies will be the equivalent to one absence.** Students arriving more than 10 minutes late to class will be counted as absent for that class meeting. Students who leave early without an excuse that meets the excused absence criteria for this course may be marked tardy or absent, depending upon how much time remains in the course meeting.

Leaving Class/Disruptions:

Students are expected to be present for the entire class period. Excessively leaving the classroom during the class period is defined in this syllabus as more than 2 times during one class period or leaving 1 time for more than 10 minutes in one class period. **Excessive trips outside of the classroom during a class period will be the equivalent to 1 absence.** This is a form of disruptive behavior. If a student requires an accommodation to this rule (e.g. due to illness or medical condition), this matter must be approved by the professor in advance.

Disruptive Behavior:

Furthermore, disruptive behavior, including but not limited to raising one's voice to the instructor or classmates, threatening the instructor or classmates, recording the instructor or classmates without permission, excessive noise, slurs and insults directed at the instructor or classmates, or behavior that disrupts the class will not be tolerated. **This syllabus serves as the warning** that disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students committing disruptive behavior will be removed from the class.

Classwork and Homework:

Classwork and Notes:

If you do miss class, you are responsible for all material missed. Students are responsible for obtaining notes from a classmate for any missed material. In-class activities may be graded. **Classwork cannot be made up.**

Reading Logs:

Reading logs are due at the start of the class period. Reading logs will not be accepted late. If a student is absent for any reason, reading logs are expected to be submitted by the due date. Reading logs may be submitted early.

Homework and Late Work:

Homework assignments other than reading logs will have a due date and points deducted for late work for each day the homework is late. The count begins immediately after assignments are collected. No work will be accepted more than **one week** past the original due date. No work may be submitted after the last class period of the course.

Quizzes and Exams:

Quizzes:

From time to time, there may be a quiz given in class covering recent lecture and textbook material. These help make sure people are keeping up with reading and lecture material. If you are absent for a quiz and do not provide a course-approved excuse, you will be given a ZERO on the quiz. Students arriving late to class without a course-approved excuse will not be given extra time on the quiz. No cell phones or electronic devices may be used during quizzes or exams. Students observed looking at mobile phones or other similar electronic devices during quizzes or exams will receive an automatic zero on that exam or quiz.

Make-up Exams:

Students are expected to be present for all exams on the dates which the class will take them. A make-up exam will only be given if the following criteria are met: If a student has a course-approved excuse and the instructor is notified **in writing, prior** to the examination, and the instructor approves the excuse and make up exam, arrangements for a make-up exam will be made. If a student fails to notify the instructor, the student will receive a zero for the exam. **Unless arrangements have already been made in accordance with this policy, no exam may be administered after the graded exam is returned to the class.**

Missing the Final Exam:

If the final exam is missed and arrangements for a make up exam have not been made in advance, the final exam cannot be made up.

Taking Exams Early:

Only under extraordinary circumstances can a student take an exam early. Only university-approved excuses, death in the family, or illness with a doctor's note be considered for taking an exam early. The request for an early exam must be made **in writing**. For any reason, no request will be approved to schedule the final exam earlier than one week before its scheduled date.

Arriving Late to Exams:

Students arriving late to an exam, including the final exam, will not be allowed to take the exam if any student in the course has already completed the exam.

Leaving During Exams:

Students are expected to be present for the entire exam. Once a student has received the exam, the student may not leave the classroom until the exam has been submitted. If a student requires an accommodation to this rule (e.g. due to illness or medical condition), this matter must be approved by the professor in advance of the exam.

Academic Dishonesty:

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.

Accommodations:

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary arrangements. Students must present appropriate verification from the University's Disability Support Services (DSS) during the instructor's office hours. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from DSS has been provided.

MSU Campus Carry Statement:

Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84th Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective August 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University's webpage at <http://mwsu.edu/campus-carry/rules-policies>

Class Outline:

The following is a tentative outline of the semester. Students will be notified of any changes.

Weeks 1-2: Understanding Politics

Tuesday, August 27: Introduction to Course

Thursday, August 29: Thinking about how to study American and Texas Government

Tuesday, September 3:

American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 1: Five Principles of Politics, pp. 2-22

First Reading Log Due

Weeks 2-3: The Founding and the Constitution

Thursday, September 5:

American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 2: Constructing Government: The Founding and the Constitution, pp. 30-57

“Shay’s Rebellion”

Quiz: Chapter 1

Tuesday, September 10:

American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 2: Constructing Government: The Founding and the Constitution, pp. 57-70

Thursday, September 12

Chapter 2 continued.

Understanding a Debate: Debate Watch Opportunity:

Legacy Multipurpose Room, 7 PM

Weeks 4-5: Federalism

Tuesday, September 17: Exam 1

Thursday, September 19:

American Government, Power and Purpose, Chapter 3: Federalism and the Separation of Powers, pp. 72-92

Tuesday, September 24:

American Government, Power and Purpose, Chapter 3: Federalism and the Separation of Powers, pp. 93-102

Thursday, September 26:
Peter Sagal. "Federalism." A More Perfect Union. *Constitution USA with Peter Sagal*. PBS.

Quiz: Chapter 3: Federalism

Week 6: Public Opinion

Tuesday, October 1:
American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 10: Public Opinion, pp. 384-411

Thursday, October 3:
American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 10: Public Opinion, pp. 411-434

Weeks 7-8: Elections

Tuesday, October 8:
American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 11: Elections, pp. 436-464

Thursday, October 10: Exam 2

Tuesday, October 15:
American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 11: Elections, pp. 464-499

Thursday, October 17:
Quiz: Elections

Week 9: Political Parties

Tuesday, October 22
American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 12: Political Parties, pp. 500-527

Thursday, October 24
American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 12: Political Parties, pp. 527-551

Film" "Dark Money: The Influence of Corporate Money in our Elections." Frontline. PBS 2018.

Week 10: Interest Groups

Monday, October 28: Last Day to Withdraw a Class with a W

Tuesday, October 29:
American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 13: Groups and Interests, pp. 552-570

Quiz: Political Parties

Thursday, October 31:

American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 13: Groups and Interests, pp. 570-593

Film: "Gunned Down: The Power of the NRA," Frontline. PBS 2015.

Weeks 11-12: The Media

Tuesday, November 5: Exam 3

Thursday, November 7:

American Government: Power and Purpose, Chapter 14: The Media

Tuesday, November 12:

Chapter 14 continued.

Week 12-13: The Texas Constitution

Thursday, November 14:

Governing Texas, Chapter 1, pp. 3-7

Governing Texas, Chapter 2: The Texas Constitution, pp. 39-54

Tuesday, November 19

Governing Texas, Chapter 2 continued, pp. 54-74

Thursday, November 21: Debate Day

Week 14: Political Parties in Texas

Tuesday, November 26:

Governing Texas, Chapter 4: Political Parties in Texas, pp. 105-133

Thursday, November 28: Thanksgiving Day – No Class

Week 15: Elections in Texas

Tuesday, December 3:

Governing Texas, Chapter 5: Elections in Texas, pp. 137-167

Quiz: Chapter 2: The Texas Constitution

Thursday, December 5:

Chapter 5 continued

Final Exam

Thursday, December 12, 10:30 AM – 12:30 PM