



POLS 1433 American & Texas Government
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CRN 12517 Section X10-ONLINE

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Course Description

In this course, we will survey the key institutions of US and Texas government, including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. This course is designed to give students a basic understanding of the inner workings of US political institutions and how these institutions impact your daily life through policy-making and implementation of previously passed laws and policies. During this course, we will look at how each of these branches of government are responsible for various aspects of governance, and how they interact with one another and with American society at large. In addition, we will examine the twin areas of civil rights and civil liberties provided within the US Constitution. Finally, we examine Texas government institutions, civil liberties, and civil rights as a complement and contrast to those at the national level. We will use political science to learn and reflect on which aspects of the system are functional and which are in need of improvement to better reflect modern society. **The syllabus provides a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary. Any changes made will be posted to D2L.**

Learning Objectives

- Identify the key structural features of the federal government including the Legislative (Congress), Executive (the President), and Judicial (the Courts) branches.
- Identify the key structural features of the three main branches of government in Texas (legislative, executive, and judicial)
- Discuss the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments and their implications as well as how they relate to civil rights.
- Learn the differences between civil liberties and civil rights, and give examples of each in the US and Texas constitutions
- Describe the policy-making process within both the US and Texas governmental systems

Required Textbook & Instructional Materials

- Governing Texas, by Champagne, Harpham, and Casellas; W.W. Norton, 4th edition, ISBN: 978-0-393-680119

- American Government – Power and Purpose, by Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere; W.W. North, 15th edition: ISBN: 978-0-393-76500-0
- Additional readings, which may be posted to D2L in PDF form
- The film, *Gideon's Trumpet*, which can be viewed on YouTube, or rented for \$0.99 on Amazon Prime
- Students are expected to follow national and state news through such sources as [The Washington Post](#), [The New York Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), the [Dallas Morning News](#), [Houston Chronicle](#) etc.. You may use this material for class discussions

Student Handbook

Refer to: [2019-2020 MSU 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 individuals to whom credit is given). Copying your own work from another class is also considered cheating because it is self-plagiarism. All work submitted for this course must be **your own original work**, any **outside sources used must be cited appropriately** using a major citation style, such as Chicago, APA, MLA, Turabian, etc. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Electronic Devices:

Other than the use of your computer to complete D2L assignments, **use of cellphones, and other internet-based technology are not allowed during quizzes and exams except when indicated by the instructions for online assignments**

Office Hours:

My office hours are virtual office hours for online courses such as this. You can make a Skype appointment or Zoom, which can be arranged via email. I may occasionally schedule “open” virtual office hours, during which you can login to the link provided to talk with me about your work in this course.

Contacting Me:

The best way to reach is by email **I will make all attempts to answer emails within 48 business hours unless it is over a holiday break**. I DO NOT ANSWER EMAILS ON THE WEEKENDS OR ON HOLIDAYS. You must check the email account listed as your preferred account on Banner, as this is the primary account I will use to communicate with you about class.

Attendance/Participation Policy:

Attendance in an online class is comprised of logging into the course on D2L multiple times a week, and completing assignments on time. Excused “virtual 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 absences such as travel as member of an MSU sports team, or emergency situation as determined by the instructor. **You are also responsible for checking your MSU email each weekday. Failure to login and complete D2L assigned work regularly will result in a low or failing attendance score.**

Disability Accommodations:

Any student having an education disability plan on file with the university needs to inform me within the first week of the class so I can make the appropriate arrangements to accommodate your situation, as it applies to online course delivery. 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](#).

Clery Act Notification:

Sexual misconduct includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any other nonconsensual behavior of a sexual nature; sex or gender discrimination violate University policies. Any person experiencing such behavior may receive confidential support from the Counseling Center. Counseling Center staff will hold what you share in strict confidence. If you disclose sexual misconduct, domestic violence, dating violence, or sex or gender discrimination occurring on campus, in a University-sponsored program, or involving a campus visitor or University student or employee (whether current or former) to me, I as the instructor of this course am required to forward such information to the MSU Title IX office. This should not prevent you from speaking to me should you wish to do so, but know that what you tell me in this area cannot be held confidential, but must be shared with the Title IX office.

Grading

Assignments	Points per Category
Watching lectures, answer discussion boards (attendance)	20
Reading Quizzes	20
Exam 1	20
Exam 2	20
Exam 3	20
Total	100

Grading Scale:

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

Watching Lectures and Discussion posts (Attendance):

I have provided a series of short (10-20 minutes) video lectures for you to watch regarding each of the topics in this course. You should take notes while watching the videos, because the exams will include

material from the lectures that is NOT found within the textbook alone. D2L provides a link to these lectures, and I will be able to see your lecture viewing history.

Each module also includes one discussion post. In addition to providing your answer/response, feel free to comment on the responses of others. You can respond with a typed answer, voice recording, or a 1-2-minute video, whichever you prefer. This is the opportunity to make the online course more interactive by asking each other questions, posting comments, and/or reacting to the ideas of others. Just make sure all responses to other students are done in a respectful manner, it's okay to disagree with the ideas or views of other students, but do so respectfully. Your grade for "attendance" is based on the fact that you watch all the lectures, and provide thoughtful original posts and responses to the discussion posts of others.

Reading Quizzes:

These are to insure you are understanding the assigned readings each week. Read thoroughly, take notes, jot down questions, complete the quizzes BEFORE the deadline posted on the syllabus. The reading quizzes are posted in D2L, under the Assessments tab. They are open book, with 10 questions each, and you have 20 minutes to complete each quiz, so you need to read and take notes before attempting the quizzes. You can take these quizzes an unlimited amount of times. All quizzes are open from day one of the course, but will not be reopened after the due date has passed. The lowest of the 8 quiz grades will be dropped.

Exams:

These are a mix of multiple choice and essay style questions, based on lecture content and readings (the textbook readings and any additional readings posted on iCollege). Each exam will feature material introduced since the last exam only. Anything I say in in the lectures, along with anything in the assigned readings could be used for the exams. All exams are open from day one of the course, and will not be reopened after the due date has passed. To take each exam you will need to download the Respondus Lockdown browser (available in the Assessments section) and have a working webcam. **THE EXAMS CANNOT BE TAKEN WITH A CHROMEBOOK**, because the testing software in D2L will not work with these computers.

Exam	Due Date
1	Thursday, September 24, 11:59PM
2	Thursday, October 29, 11:59PM
3	Tuesday, December 8, 11:59PM

Policy on Missed Work:

There is not makeup work offered, because you have access to all of the course material from day 1 of the class. That means you can work ahead as much as you wish, but once a due date has passed, the assignment is gone forever.

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:"

Please note, the semester's midpoint is **December 4, 2020, at 4pm**. **This is the last Day for "W"**. Students can **withdraw from the class up to this point and** receive a W for the class. However, there is a limited number of W's a student can receive over their academic career. **Drops after this date will receive grades of "F."** If you intend to withdraw from a course, you must do so yourself. If you are still on the roll when I have to assign grades and you haven't done any passing work, then you will fail. So, if you intend to drop, please make sure you do so in time. Also note, after the first few days of

the semester, I have to report to the university whether students have participated at least once. If you have never attended this class when I have to submit my report to the university, it is possible that the university will drop you from the course, potentially impacting your academic record and financial assistance.

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

Desire-to-Learn (D2L):

The entire course is presented through D2L. 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.

Class Behavior Policies:

In order to make this a successful class, it is important that we create an environment where everyone has an opportunity to learn. **This includes in-person and online classes.** To this end, you should know that the university policy on disruptive behavior in class applies. Disruptive class behavior for this purpose is defined by the instructor. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical threats, repeated obscenities, unreasonable interference with class discussion, making/receiving personal phone calls or pages (text messaging) during class, wearing of headphones/earbuds in class, leaving and entering class frequently in the absence of notice to instructor of illness or other extenuating circumstances, and persisting in disruptive personal conversations with other class members. For purposes of this policy, it may also be considered disruptive behavior for a student to exhibit threatening, intimidating, or other inappropriate behavior toward the instructor or classmates outside of class. If your behavior is disruptive to other students or the instructor, this will violate University guidelines, and you will be reported to administrative authorities.

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).

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.

Grade Appeal Process:

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

Course Schedule

Dates	Reading Assignments/Exams	Reading Quiz Due Date
Mon, Aug. 24	Introduction; download and read syllabus; complete the Intro video discussion post; Perform your technology checklist.	
Tue., Aug. 25	Module 1: U.S. Congress <i>Power & Purpose</i> Ch 6, pgs. 188-210 Watch Video Lecture, Congress Pt. I	
Thu., Aug. 27	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 6, pgs. 211-228 Watch Video Lecture, Congress Pt. II Complete discussion post: Congress in News	
Tue., Sep. 1	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 6, pgs. 229-242 Watch Video Lecture, Congress Pt. III	Quiz 1 – 11:59pm on Tues Sept 1; Discussion post due, 11:59PM on Wed, Sept 2
Thu., Sep. 3	Module 2: The Presidency <i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 7, pgs. 248-267 Watch Video Lecture, Presidency Pt. I	
Tue., Sep. 8	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 7, pgs. 268-mid of 284 Watch Video Lecture, Presidency Pt. II	
Thu., Sep. 10	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 7, pgs. 284-296 Complete discussion post: President vs. Congress	Quiz 2 – 11:59pm on Sept 10; Discussion post due Sept. 14, 11:59PM
Tue., Sep. 15	Module 3: The U.S. Judicial System (Federal Courts) <i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 9, pgs. 336-346 Watch Video Lecture, The Courts Pt. I	
Thu., Sep. 17	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 9, pgs. 347-368 Watch Video Lecture, The Courts Pt. II Complete discussion post: Balance on SCOTUS	
Tue., Sep. 22	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 9, pgs. 368-382 Watch Video Lecture, The Courts Pt. III	Quiz 3 and discussion post 3 both due on 11:59pm on Sept 23
Thu., Sep. 24	EXAM I	Ends on Friday, October 2
Tue., Sep. 29	Module 4: Civil Liberties <i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 4, pgs. 104-115 Watch Video Lecture, Civil Liberties, Pt. I	
Thu., Oct. 1	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 4, pgs. 116-125 Watch Video Lecture, Civil Liberties, Pt. II	
Monday, October 5	Last day to register to vote in general/presidential election in Texas. Go here: https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/ Click here if you want to request a mail-in ballot: https://www.sos.texas.gov/elections/voter/reqabbm.shtml	
Tue., Oct. 6	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 4, pgs. 125-134 Watch Video Lecture, Civil Liberties, Pt. III	
Thu., Oct. 8	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 4, pgs. 125-146 Watch Video Lecture, Civil Liberties, Pt. IV	

Dates	Reading Assignments/Exams	Reading Quiz Due Date
	Mail your request to vote by mail, if desired	
Tue., Oct. 13	Watch Gideon's Trumpet film, and Complete Discussion post: Criminal Justice Rights Note: First day of early voting in Texas	Quiz 4 and Discussion post due by 11:59PM on October 14.
Thu., Oct. 15	Module 5: Civil Rights <i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 5, pgs. 148-162 Watch Video Lecture, Civil Rights, Pt. I	
Tue., Oct. 20	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 5, pgs. 162-170 Watch Video Lecture, Civil Rights, Pt. II	
Thu., Oct. 22	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 5, pgs. 170-186 Watch Video Lecture, Civil Rights, Pt. III	
Friday, October 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last day to apply for ballot by mail – must be RECEIVED, not mailed by this date • Mail your vote by mail so it's received in time if already completed 	
Tue., Oct. 27	Watch the documentary, <i>Separate but Equal</i> in this link: https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/separate-and-unequal/ And then answer the discussion post: Equal Schooling	Quiz 5 and Discussion post due by 11:59PM on October 28.
Thu., Oct. 29	EXAM 2 Note: Friday, October 30= last day of early voting in person	Ends on Friday, November 6
Tue., Nov. 3	Presidential Election Special Content Watch Frontline Video – “Trump’s Road to Whitehouse” Watch video synoptic on Joe Biden on YouTube	
Thu., Nov. 5	EXTRA CREDIT: Discuss the presidential election campaigns of 2020 opens on Nov. 1	Deadline for Extra Credit discussion is Friday, Nov. 6
Tue., Nov. 10	Module 6: Texas Legislature Read <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 7: The Texas Legislature, pgs. 213-223; Watch Video Lecture, Texas Legislature, Pt. I	
Thu., Nov. 12	Read <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 7: The Texas Legislature, pgs. 223-230; Watch Video Lecture, Texas Legislature, Pt. II	
Tue., Nov. 17	Read <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 7: The Texas Legislature, pgs. 231-240; Complete Discussion post: Texas Political Craziness/Dallas Morning News	Quiz 6, and Discussion post due by 11:59PM on Weds., Nov 18.
Thu., Nov. 19	Module 7: Texas Executive (Governor) Read <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 8: The Texas Executive Branch, pgs. 251-middle 268; Watch Video Lecture, Texas Executive, Parts I and II No discussion post for this module.	Quiz 7 due 11:59PM by Friday, Nov 20.
Tues, Nov. 24- Nov. 29	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	
Tue., Dec. 1	Module 8: Texas Judicial System (State Courts)	

Dates	Reading Assignments/Exams	Reading Quiz Due Date
	Read <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 9: The Texas Judiciary, pgs. 289-302; Watch Video Lecture, Texas Courts, Pt. I	
Thu., Dec. 3	Read <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 9: The Texas Judiciary, pgs. 302-318; Watch Video Lecture, Texas Courts, Pt. II; Complete discussion post: What have I learned?	Quiz 8 and Discussion post due by 11:59 pm on Friday, Dec. 4.
Tue., Dec 8	EXAM 3	Exam is open from Dec 4 and closes on Dec. 9 at 11:59pm. NO EXTENSIONS.