



POLS 1433 American & Texas Government
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CRN 20647 Section 201
Spring 2020 TR, 12:30-1:50PM, PY 200

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Course Description

In this course, we will survey the key institutions of US 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 will also 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 announced in class and 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
- 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: [Student Handbook 2019-2020](#)

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). This is strictly forbidden and a violation of university policy. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Electronic Devices:

Laptop computers and other technology are not allowed in this classroom. Cellphones, tablets, and other electronic devices should be **stored away from sight**. Cell phones should be placed on silent (not vibrate) and only emergency calls should be answered. Text messaging is also a serious violation. Earphones/earbuds are to be off and stored away at all times. Students that are caught using any of these devices during class will be asked to leave the class for the remaining time period. Students will also be marked absent for the class if an in-class activity or quiz has been completed.

Office Hours:

I encourage you to attend my office hours as they are a useful forum for additional interaction with the material as well as the instructor. While not required, it is recommended for both students that are struggling or successfully engaging with the material. For those that are lacking in full comprehension of the materials, I am here for you to engage and bring better understanding. For those that have a mastery of the subject matter, I am also here for you to discuss the deeper issues and implications of the material covered in the course. If these hours are inconvenient, do not hesitate to contact me and make an appointment.

Contacting Me:

The best way to reach is by email or by stopping by my office hours. I will make all attempts to answer emails within 48 business hours unless it is over a holiday break. You must check your MSU email account as this is the primary account I will use to communicate with you outside of class. Office hours are walk-in, no appointment necessary. If you cannot come to my open office hours due to a schedule conflict, email me to ask about a separate appointment time.

Attendance Policy:

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 applied to your grade in Attendance and Participation. Each student can miss two classes without an excuse and not suffer a penalty to your attendance grade. 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 and with documentation, university-approved absences such as travel as member of an MSU sports team, or emergency situation as determined by the instructor.

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 make make the appropriate arrangements to accommodate your situation. 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	Percentage
Participation and attendance	20%
Reading Quizzes	20%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Exam 4	15%
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

Grade	Points
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-29
D	60-69
F	Less than 60

Class Attendance and Participation:

Class meets three times weekly, for approximately 25 class dates. Participation is based on attendance AND participation in discussion in class. I expect you to talk during class, engaging with me as the

instructor, and your fellow students. Science has shown we learn best by asking and discussing our questions about issues. I encourage questions, dialogue, and open debate, just not a monopoly of class discussions. Some participation will include written assignments in class. You may miss two classes, without excuse (please use this for days you are sick, when you should not attend). Otherwise, all absences must receive medical, legal, or sports participation documentation to avoid attendance penalty.

Reading Quizzes

These are to insure you are reading and understanding the assigned texts each week. Read thoroughly, take notes, jot down questions, and bring these to class, so we can discuss them together. I expect you to complete the readings BEFORE each class, so that we may discuss them in full. The lectures will be to help you synthesize the concepts across the readings, not only to introduce the readings. The reading quizzes are posted in D2L, under the Quizzes 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. Two attempts each quiz, with the lowest two quiz grades dropped. Quizzes close at the start of class on the due date and WILL NOT BE REOPENED.

Exams

These are multiple choice exams with a few long answer questions, based on lecture content and readings (the textbook readings and 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.

Exam	Date
1	Thursday, February 6
2	Thursday, March 5
3	Tuesday, April 14
4/Final	Thursday, May 14, 10:30am-12:30pm

Policy on Missed Work

Makeup for the exams will only be given in cases of legitimate and documented emergencies. These makeup exams can be more difficult than the regular ones. Do not miss an examination unless there is a real emergency. MAKE UP EXAMS ARE A DIFFERENT EXAM (HONORS LEVEL) and must be completed within 3 days of the regular exam window. If you miss the time window for a make-up test, I assume that you do not want to take it. My recommendation is that you avoid having to make-up exams as much as possible and if you have special circumstances, contact me immediately!

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:”

Please note, the semester’s midpoint is **March 30, 2020 at 4:00pm**. 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)

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. Before each exam, I will post a FEW of my lecture slides; these will serve as your study guide for the exam.

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:

You are expected to complete all readings BEFORE the class date listed. All reading quizzes are due at the beginning of the class period of the due date. *See next page for schedule.*

Course Schedule

Dates	Reading Assignments/Exams	Reading Quiz Due Date
Week 1- Tue, Jan 21	Course introduction, no assigned readings	
Thurs, Jan 23 - Congress	<i>Power & Purpose</i> Ch 6, pgs. 188-205	
Week 2 - Tues, Jan 28	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 6, pgs. 205-221	
Thurs, Jan 30	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 6, pgs. 221-230	
Week 3 – Tues, Feb 4	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 6, pgs. 230-242; Exam review	Quiz 1 ends 12:30 pm
Thurs, Feb 6	Exam 1	
Week 4 – Tuesday, Feb 11 - The Presidency	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 7, pgs. 248-267	No quiz
Thurs, Feb 13	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 7, pgs. 268-mid of 284	
Week 5 – Tuesday, Feb 18	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 7, pgs. 284-296	Quiz 2 ends 12:30 pm
Thursday, Feb 20 – Federal Courts	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 9, pgs. 336-346	
Week 6 – Tuesday, Feb 25	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 9, pgs. 347-368	
Thursday, Feb 27	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 9, pgs. 368-382	Quiz 3 ends 12:30 pm
Week 7 – Tuesday, Mar 3	Exam Review	
Thursday, Mar 5	Exam 2	
Week 8 – Tuesday, Mar 10 – Civil Liberties	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 4, pgs. 104-130	
Thursday, Mar 12	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 4, pgs. 131-146	Quiz 4 ends 12:30 pm
March 17-19	<i>NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK</i>	
Week 9 – Tuesday, Mar 24 – Civil Rights	NO CLASSES- DR. DOWD AT ACADEMIC CONFERENCE Read: <i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 5, pgs. 148-162	
Thursday, Mar 26	NO CLASSES- DR. DOWD AT ACADEMIC CONFERENCE –; Watch “Separate and Unequal” Frontline PBS video; post	

Dates	Reading Assignments/Exams	Reading Quiz Due Date
	discussion to D2L board; https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/separate-and-unequal/	
Week 10 Tuesday, Mar 31	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 5, pgs. 162-170	
Thursday, Apr 2	<i>Power and Purpose</i> , Ch 5, pgs. 170-186	Quiz 5 ends 12:30 pm
Week 11– Tuesday, April 7	Exam 3 review	
Thursday, April 9	<i>No class, Holiday Break</i>	
Week 12 – Tuesday, April 14	Exam 3	
Texas Legislature - Thursday, April 16	<i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 7: The Texas Legislature, pp. 213-223	
Week 13 – Tuesday, April 21	<i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 7: The Texas Legislature, pp. 223-middle of 240	Quiz 6 ends 12:30 pm
Texas Governor - Thursday, April 23	<i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 8: The Texas Executive Branch, pp. 251-middle 268	
Week 14 – Texas Courts - Tuesday, April 28	<i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 8: The Texas Executive Branch, pp. 268-288	Quiz 7 ends 12:30 pm
Thursday, April 30	<i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 9: The Texas Judiciary, pp. 289-302	
Week 15 – Tuesday, May 5	<i>Governing Texas</i> , Chapter 9: The Texas Judiciary, pp. 302-318	Quiz 8 ends 12:30 pm
Thursday, May 7	Review	
Thursday, May 14	Final Exam, 10:30am-12:30pm	

Final grades will be posted to D2L in the Gradebook, when complete.