



Course Syllabus: 1433 – 206 American–Texas Government II

College of Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Spring 2026

Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursday 12:30 –1:50 p.m. (Room PY200)

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Mohsen Jalali

office: O'Donohoe Hall in PY College, Room O-204

office hours:

- *Monday:* 1:00 – 3:00 pm
- *Wednesday:* 1:00 – 3:00 pm
- *Thursday:* 2:00 – 3:00 pm
- *By Appointment* (I can accommodate your availability if the current office hours do not work for you)

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Course Description

Political Science 1433 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, different branches of the government both in Texas and the United States, the ongoing challenges and evolving nature of the government system. Learning about the different branches of government that produce policies in the national and state levels as well as non-governmental actors, students will gain insights into the ways the political system produces policies that affect everyday life across the nation and the state. The study of politics is to examine who gets what when and how; in this course, students learn about who gets what when and how by gaining insights into the processes of decision-making at both national and state levels.

By the conclusion of the course, students will have developed a good understanding of key components of the national and state governing institutions, including the legislative, the executive, local governments, public policy, campaigning and elections, political participation and voting, and the United States' foreign policy. 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:

- ◆ Examine and engage in debates surrounding civil rights.
- ◆ Describe the process through which the United States and Texas legislative branches function.
- ◆ Describe the power of the President in the United States and the complexities of the executive branch in Texas government.
- ◆ Analyze how political parties campaign in the United States and who can and do participate in elections.
- ◆ Identify the key players shaping the United States' foreign policies.
- ◆ Analyze the role of groups in influencing public policy for the day-to-day affairs of society at both national and state levels.
- ◆ Learning about the power and significance of local governments.

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

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

- ❖ Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline Tolbert, and Andrea Campbell. *We the People*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (acceptable editions: 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th)
 - We the People in Syllabus WTP
- ❖ Anthony Champagne, Edward Harpham, and Jason Casellas. *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (acceptable editions: 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th)
 - Governing Texas in 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 titles and topics. Try to focus on chapter **titles** if you have a different edition.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

I will communicate the information as soon as the hours decided by the department.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [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 individual to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

A Note on AI use

***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 or similar large language models. The online portal for uploading assignments detects and flags sections of writing that has been generated by AI.

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. [Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Completing ALL the readings and regular attendance (online) will be required of all students. Active participation in discussions is critical for students to succeed in this course.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Points
Exam I	15
Exam II	15
Final Exam	20
Response Papers (4*5)	20
In-class Presentation	10
Attendance and 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.
 - The prompt for the paper and the materials to be used in the paper are provided by the instructor.
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 (1 = 10 points)**
 - Students are required to give two 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: Total points for final grade.

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

Class Policies

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 8 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 situations as determined by the instructor. Students wearing earphones during the class are considered absent. Students are late more than 15 minutes are considered absent. At the end of the semester, I automatically excuse two

absences regardless of notes. Save these for absences you cannot excuse but still could not attend, such as not feeling well when you were unable to see a doctor.

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 race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, 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 and will result in removal from the classroom and reporting to the appropriate university authority. This syllabus is your warning.

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 is graded for full grade. All other assignments not submitted by the due date will receive the mark of zero.

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: May 8th, 2026, [Academic Calendar](#).

Deadline to file for graduation: February 16th, 2026. [Academic Calendar](#).

Last Day to drop with a grade of “W:” April 29th 2026. 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 Redwine Wellness Center (email: disabilityservices@msutexas.edu and Tel: (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
Response Paper 1	Open on Jan 23 rd and due by Feb 6 th at 11 p.m.
Exam I	<p>In class, on D2L, on Thursday, Feb 12th</p> <p><i>Chapters: Civil Rights – Political participation and Voting – Campaigns and Elections – Congress</i></p>
Response Paper 2	The assignment will open on Feb 14 th and is due by March 1 st at 11:00 p.m.
Response Paper 3	The assignment will open on March 1 st and due by March 22 nd at 11:00 p.m.
Exam II	<p>In class, on D2L, on Thursday March 26th</p> <p><i>Chapters: Presidency – Social Policy – Foreign Policy – Economic Policy</i></p>
Response Paper 4	The assignment will open on April 4 th and due by April 19 th at 11:00 p.m.
Final Exam	<p>Final Exam: Thursday May 14th, at 10:30 a.m., in person, in classroom</p> <p><i>Chapters:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>The Legislature in Texas</i>▪ <i>The Executive Branch in Texas</i>▪ <i>The Judiciary in the US and in Texas</i>▪ <i>Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas</i>▪ <i>Local Governments (part of the chapter)</i>▪ <i>Public Policy in Texas (part of the chapter)</i>▪ <i>Public Finance in Texas</i>

Course Schedule

Module 1: Syllabus and Civil Rights

(Jan 20th – 23rd)

- ◆ Syllabus
- ◆ Chapter 5: Civil Rights (*WTP*)
- ◆ Podcast (Optional)—— “[Federal Surveillance and Civil Rights](#)” (American Politics and the US Constitution) (50 minutes)

Module 2: Political Participation and Voting

(Jan 26th – 30th)

- ◆ Chapter 8 of *WTP*
- ◆ Podcast (optional)—— [1960s African American Voter Registration](#)
Emory University professor Carol Anderson taught a class about efforts in the early 1960s to register African American voters in Mississippi. She described some of the leaders of the movement, their tactics, and the opposition they faced from segregationists.

*Response Paper 1: The assignment will open on January 23rd and due by Feb 6th at 11:00 p.m.

Module 3: Campaigns and Elections

(Feb 2nd – 6th)

- ◆ Chapter 10 of *WTP*
- ◆ Podcast (Optional)—— [Presidents and Campaign Communications since 1900](#)
 - Rider University professor Myra Gutin teaches a class on presidents and communications in both their campaigns and while in office, starting with Teddy Roosevelt in the early 20th century and continuing to the present day.
- ◆ Podcast (Optional)—— [Dwight Eisenhower and 1950s Political Advertising](#)
 - Purdue University professor Kathryn Brownell teaches a class about political advertising in the 1950s, highlighting Dwight Eisenhower's presidential campaigns.

Module 4 Congress

(Feb 9th – 13th)

- ◆ Chapter 12 of *WTP*

*Exam I: In class, on D2L, on Thursday Feb 12th

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

Module 5 Presidency

(Feb 16th- 20th)

- ◆ Chapter 13 of *WTP*
- ◆ Podcast —— “[Presidential Powers and the Constitution](#)” (We the People Channel) (50 minutes)

***Response Paper 2:** The assignment will open on Feb 14th and is due by March 1st at 11:00 p.m.

Module 6 Social Policy
(Feb 23rd – 27th)

- ◆ Chapter 17 of *WTP*
- ◆ Podcast (Optional)—— “[Affirmative Action Returns to the Court](#)” (We the People channel) (58 minutes)

Module 7 Foreign Policy
(Mar 2nd – 6th)

- ◆ Chapter 18 of *WTP*

***Response Paper 3:** The assignment will open on March 1st and due by March 22nd at 11:00 p.m.

March 9th – March 13th (Spring Break)

Module 8 Economic Policy
(Mar 16th – 20th)

- ◆ Economic Policy Chapter 16 of *WTP*

Module 9 (Review Week)
(Mar 23rd – 27th)

- ◆ Review Sessions (and/or finishing any remaining lecture)

***Exam II:** In class, on D2L, on Thursday March 26th

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

Module 10 The Judiciary in the US and in Texas
(Mar 30th – April 3rd) Holiday Break

- ◆ Chapter 7 of *Governing Texas (GT)*
- ◆ No in-Person class this Week (Lectures Posted)

Module 11 The Executive Branch in Texas
(April 6th – 10th)

- ◆ Chapter 8 (GT)

***Response Paper 4:** The assignment will open on April 4th and due by April 19th at 11:00 p.m.

Module 12 The Legislature in Texas
(April 13th – 17th)

- ◆ Chapter 9 (GT)

Module 13 Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas
(April 20th – 24th)

- ◆ Chapter 6 (GT)
- ◆ No in person class on Friday

Module 14 “Public Policy in Texas” and “Local Governments”

(April 27th – May 1st)

- ◆ Thanksgiving Holidays: Wednesday, Thursday, Friday
- ◆ This week the class will not meet in person. I will post the lecture on D2L.
- ◆ Chapter 10 (*GT*)

(Module 15) “Public Finance in Texas”

(May 4th – 8th)

- ◆ Chapter 11 (*GT*)
- ◆ Chapter 12 (*GT*)

* Final Exam: Thursday May 14th, at 10:30 a.m., in person, in classroom