



POLS 1433 American & Texas Government

Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences

CRN 12956-X12 and CRN 12957-X51

Fall 2021, Online Course

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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 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 are sometimes necessary. Any changes may be announced in class and/or posted to D2L.** The instructor reserves the right to reduce the number of assignments, and will readjust the grade calculations, which may result in assignments increasing in value.

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

- American Government – Power and Purpose, by Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere; W.W. North, 15th edition: ISBN: 978-0-393-76500-0
- Governing Texas, by Champagne, Harpham, and Casellas; W.W. Norton, 4th edition, ISBN: 978-0-392-64430-2

Student Handbook

Refer to: [2021-2022 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). Plagiarism also includes using content you have produced for other classes or assignments, without prior approval from all instructors involved to “recycle” this material in this Global Studies class. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [MSU Student Conduct](#)

Office Hours:

Office hours are an open invitation to discuss with me anything of concern related to the course. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, I will have virtual office hours during this term, unless special arrangements are made. See the top of the syllabus for the times in which I am “virtually” in my office. To speak with me during the posted times, just click the office hours link on D2L. If this time presents a conflict for your schedule, send me an email using the address at the top of this syllabus and I will schedule a virtual Zoom appointment with you.

Contacting Me:

The best way to reach me is by email. **I will make all attempts to answer emails within 48 business hours unless it is over a holiday break.** You must check your email listed as the primary account in your Banner information, as I will use this address to communicate with you outside of class. I will use D2L for posting syllabi, course communication, course schedule and changes, attendance, and the gradebook. There may be some online office hours announced through D2L, if they vary from the office hours posted above. You should regularly check D2L and the email hosted via D2L for important course information.

Attendance Policy:

This is a fully online course. Your attendance and participation are tied to Monday-Friday, regular logins to D2L and completion of course assignments. I will closely monitor your participation in discussion board assignments, as this replaces the regular in-class attendance of traditional classes. Failure to complete assignments will be reported to the registrar’s office as a failure to attend, which could impact your future financial aid dispensation.

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 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. THIS ALSO APPLIES TO INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR IN ONLINE COURSES. 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 |
|-------------------|----------------|
| Discussion boards | 20% |
| Reading Quizzes | 20% |
| Exam 1 | 20% |
| Exam 2 | 20% |
| Exam 3 | 20% |
| Total | 100% |
| Bonus: Films | Up to 5 points |

Grading Scale:

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

Student Responsibilities:

Discussion Boards

These are designed to replace the dialogue and conversations we would normally have in an in-person class. You have one discussion post due each week, usually by Thursday or Friday. Your

replies are expected to be original, courteous, and completed to follow the directions for each discussion. The content will vary – some written responses, some memes, some video responses.

Reading Quizzes

These are to insure you are reading and understanding the assigned texts each week. Read thoroughly and take good notes; much of the exam material is based on the textbook content. The lectures will be to help you synthesize the concepts across the readings, and to fill in any gaps in the textbooks. The reading quizzes are posted in D2L, under the Quizzes tab. They are open book, with 10-20 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. There are four quizzes.

Lectures

You will watch narrated PowerPoint lectures, which can be accessed in D2L. The links open a new window for a closed YouTube channel that contains the lectures. Each lecture is approximately 15 minutes in length. The lectures will contain additional material not found in the textbook, so it is in your best interest to view these and take notes. Content on the exams will include lecture material.

Exams

There are three, multiple choice exams, taken online in D2L, open-book, and based on lecture content and textbook readings. Anything I say in in the lectures, along with anything in the assigned readings could be used for the exams. Most exams are open for a week. They are timed, so take careful notes and study before opening the exam. Once it is open, it must be completed. **NO EXAMS WILL BE REOPENED AFTER THE DUE DATE HAS PASSED.** Prior to the exams you must download the Lockdown Browser AND have a working and activated webcam. You will be recorded while taking the exam to avoid cheating such as having someone else take the exam for you.

| Exam | Due Date |
|------|--------------|
| 1 | September 26 |
| 2 | October 31 |
| 3 | November 26 |

Policy on Missed Work

There will be no makeup for the reading quizzes. Makeup credit for exams will only be given in cases of legitimate and documented emergencies such as doctors excuses, college coach-provided travel schedules, or legal court attendance. Do not miss these assignments unless there is a real emergency. All makeup work must be requested by email within 5 days of the regular due date, except for the last exam; this must be taken on time to avoid missing final grade requirements set by the registrar's office.

Withdrawal by midpoint:

Please note, the semester's midpoint is **October 25**. **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. Also note, I have to report to the university whether students have attended class, and how

regularly you attend. If you have never attended this class when I have to submit my report to the university, or you have stopped attending, it is possible that the university will reduce your financial assistance.

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

Desire-to-Learn (D2L):

Use of the MSU D2L program is a required part of this course, and 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 technical support and [Submit a Problem Report](#) for help. I do not post my PowerPoint notes to D2L, nor do I provide study guides for the exams in D2L. Students are expected to attend class and take their own notes to use for study purposes.

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 online classes.** To this end, you should know that the university policy on disruptive behavior in class applies. Disruptive class 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) and persisting in harassing 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 or D2L. 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 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) exists in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Grade Appeal Process

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

Course Schedule

| Dates & Module Info | Reading Assignments/Exams | Assignments & Due Dates |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Module 1- US Congress | <p>Read Syllabus, Download Lockdown Browser, Make Introduction video of yourself</p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 6, p. 188-221, Watch Congress Lecture I</p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 6, p. 221-242, Watch Congress Lectures II and III</p> <p>Answer Discussion Board 1 – <i>What Makes a Good Congress</i></p> | <p>Complete intro video by Friday, Aug. 29, 11:59PM</p> <p>Discussion board 1 ends Aug. 29, 11:59PM</p> |
| Module 2 – US Presidency | <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 7, p. 248-272, Watch Presidency Lecture I</p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 7, p. 273-296, Watch Presidency Lecture II</p> <p><i>Take Quiz 1 after completing all the material in Modules 1 and 2</i></p> <p>Answer Discussion Board 2 – <i>President v. Congress</i></p> | <p>Quiz 1 deadline Friday, September 12, 11:59PM</p> <p>Discussion board 2 ends, Sept. 12, 11:59PM</p> |
| Module 3 – US Judicial System | <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 9, p. 336-346, Watch Courts Lecture I</p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 9, p. 347-367, Watch Courts Lecture II</p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 9, p. 368-382, Watch Courts Lecture III</p> <p><i>Take Quiz 2 after completing all material in Module 3</i></p> <p>Answer Discussion Board 3 – <i>Celebrity Judge</i></p> <p>EXAM 1 OPEN, Sunday, Sept. 26- Sunday, Oct. 3.</p> | <p>Quiz 2 deadline, Sunday, September 26, 11:59PM</p> <p>Discussion board 3 ends Sunday, Sept. 26, 11:59PM</p> <p>Exam 1 ends Sunday, Oct 3, 11:59PM</p> |
| Module 4 – Civil Liberties | <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 4, p. 104-130, Watch Civil Liberties lecture I and II</p> <p>Answer Discussion Board 4 – <i>Civil Liberties Today</i></p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 4, p. 131-146, Watch Civil Liberties lectures III and IV</p> | <p>Discussion board 4 ends Sunday, Oct. 10, 11:59pm</p> |

| Dates & Module Info | Reading Assignments/Exams | Assignments & Due Dates |
|--|--|--|
| | Answer Discussion Board 5 – <i>Social Media and Free Speech</i> | Discussion Board 5 ends Sunday, Oct. 17, 11:59PM |
| Module 5 – Civil Rights | <p>Power and Purpose, Ch 5, pgs. 148-170, Watch Civil Rights Lecture Parts I and II</p> <p>Answer Discussion Board 6– <i>Women’s Suffrage</i></p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch 5, pgs. 171-186, Watch Civil Rights Lecture III</p> <p>MOVIE: Watch “Separate but Equal” Separate But Equal Movie Link</p> <p>Answer Discussion Board 7 – <i>Separate but Equal?</i></p> <p>Take Quiz 3- Civil Liberties/Rights</p> <p>EXAM 2 open Sunday, Oct. 31- Sunday, Nov. 7</p> | <p>Discussion Board 6 ends, Sunday, Oct. 24, 11:59PM</p> <p>October 25 - LAST DAY FOR COURSE WITHDRAWAL BY 4PM</p> <p>Discussion Board 7 AND Quiz 3 ends Sunday, Oct 31, 11:59PM</p> <p>EXAM 2 ends Sunday, Nov. 7, 11:59PM</p> |
| Module 6 – Texas Legislature | <p>Texas Government, Ch. 7, pgs. 213-231, Watch Texas Legislature Lecture I</p> <p>Watch Dallas Morning News Story Video Link</p> <p>Discussion Board 8 – <i>Texas Politics Craziness</i></p> <p>Texas Government, Ch. 7, pgs. 232-244, Watch Texas Legislature Lecture II</p> | Discussion Board 8 ends Sunday, Nov. 14, 11:59PM |
| Module 7 – TX Executive Office/Governor | <p>Texas Government, Ch. 8, pgs. 251-268, Watch Texas Executive Lecture I</p> <p>Texas Government, Ch. 8, pgs. 269-288, Video Lecture, Watch Texas Executive Lecture II</p> <p>Answer Discussion Board 9 – <i>Running for Governor in Texas</i></p> | Discussion Board 9 ends Sunday, Nov. 21, 11:59PM |

| Dates & Module Info | Reading Assignments/Exams | Assignments & Due Dates |
|---|---|--|
| Module 8 – Texas Judicial System | Texas Government, Ch. 9, pgs. 293-310, Watch Video Lecture Texas Courts I Texas Government, Ch. 9, pgs. 311-325, Watch Video Lecture Texas Courts II Watch Texas Court Case video Take Quiz 4 Answer Discussion Board 10 – <i>Paxton Court Case</i> | Quiz 4 ends AND Discussion Board 10 ends, Sunday, November 28, 11:59PM |
| | EXAM 3 OPENS, Friday, Nov. 26- Monday, Dec. 6 | Exam 3 ends Monday, Dec. 6, 11:59PM |