



POLS 1433 American & Texas Government
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
CRN 21879 Section 206
Spring 2022, Tues/Thurs 12:30-1:50pm

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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.** If a personal emergency should arise, the instructor reserves the right to place some material online in D2L, and/or 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, 16th edition: ISBN: 978-0393538946

- Governing Texas, by Champagne, Harpham, and Casellas; W.W. Norton, 5th edition, ISBN: 978-0393539226

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 class. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [MSU Student Conduct](#)

Electronic Devices:

Many assignments in this course will be conducted in D2L. Tests and exams may utilize the Respondus Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor for testing. In order to install these programs, you will need the following:

- A desktop computer or laptop other than a Chromebook. NOTE: Chromebooks DO NOT WORK with the Respondus Lockdown Browser and Monitor.
- Apple iPads may be used for quizzes and exams, but these are not advised for any assignment with a written component. Please notify me if you plan on using an iPad for your tests.
- Mobile phones and similar devices are not compatible with the required programs.
- A working webcam on the computing device used for the exam.
- Microsoft Office or a compatible program for written assignments. Access to Microsoft Office 365 available through the Office 365 for Students on the Microsoft website.

Please note: a limited number of webcams and laptops with cameras are available for check-out through the MSU Texas Moffett Library. If you do not have access to your own computer for completion of online assignments and tests, make sure you make any necessary arrangements to use publicly available computers on campus.

Office Hours:

Office hours are an open invitation to walk into my office without appointment and discuss with me anything of concern related to the course. Due to the ongoing 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 with 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.

Communication:

The best way to reach me is by the email address at the top of this syllabus. **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, 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.

When sending an email to me, please include ALL of the following information:

- Your first and last names (Ex: Taylor Smith)
- Your MSU ID# (Ex: M#2223045667)
- Your class information (Ex: POLS 1433 2503 American Government, Section 201- Tues/Thurs 12:30)
- An appropriate greeting (ex: Dear Dr. Dowd, I have a question about....)

If you do not include all of the above, answers to your email may be delayed, or even unanswered, because I will not be able to locate the information I need to address your concern. Remember I teach many classes, and I need the above information to identify you from other students.

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 10 random dates and will be applied to your grade in Attendance and Participation. 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, or participation in a sports-related event at MSU which provides a coach-granted excuse. Failure to attend will be reported to the registrar’s office and can result in reducing your financial aid available in future terms, as well as permanently damaging your GPA due to failing this class.

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
Attendance	20%
Reading Quizzes	20%
Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Exam 4	15%
Total	100%

Grading Scale:

Grade	
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79

Grade	
D	60-69
F	Less than 60

Student Responsibilities:

Attendance 20%

Class meets twice weekly, for approximately 30 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 may include written assignments in class. All excused absences must receive medical, legal, or sports participation documentation to avoid attendance penalty.

Reading Quizzes 20%

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 are timed, so you need to read and take notes before attempting the quizzes. Two attempts each quiz.

Exams

There are four, multiple choice exams, based on lecture content and textbook readings. Anything I say in the lectures, along with anything in the assigned readings could be used for the exams. If exams are administered through D2L, prior to the exams you must download the Lockdown Browser AND have a working and activated webcam if you are taking the exam off-site. 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
4	

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 course grade requirements set by the registrar's office.

Withdrawal by midpoint:

Please note, the semester's midpoint is **March 21 at 4pm CST**. **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 platform 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. 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 through 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	Due Dates
<i>Module 1- US Congress</i>		
Tues, Jan 11	No readings – Course Intro in Class	
Thurs, Jan 13	<i>Power & Purpose</i> Ch 6, pgs. 194-210	
Tues, Jan 18	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 6, pgs. 211-230	Reading Quiz 1 ends, Sun, Jan 16, 11:59pm.
Thurs, Jan 20	<i>Power & Purpose</i> , Ch 6, pgs. 231-240	Reading Quiz 2 deadline Sunday, Jan 23, 11:59pm.

Dates & Module Info	Reading Assignments/Exams	Due Dates
<p>Tues, Jan 25</p> <p>Thurs, Jan 28</p> <p>Tues, Feb 1</p>	<p><i>Power & Purpose</i>, Ch 6, pgs. 241-end</p> <p>Exam Review</p> <p>Exam 1</p>	<p>Reading Quiz 3 deadline, Sunday, January 30, 11:59pm</p>
<p>Module 2 – US Presidency</p>		
<p>Thurs, Feb 3</p> <p>Tues, Feb 8</p> <p>Thurs, Feb 10</p> <p>Bureaucracy - Tues, Feb 22</p> <p>Thurs, Feb 24</p> <p>Tues, Mar 1</p>	<p><i>Power and Purpose</i>, Ch. 7, pgs. 256-265</p> <p><i>Power and Purpose</i>, Ch. 7, pgs. 270-285</p> <p><i>Power and Purpose</i>, Ch. 7, pgs. 286-301</p> <p><i>Power and Purpose</i>, Ch. 8, pgs. 306-314, skim 320-334</p> <p>Exam Review</p> <p>Exam 2</p>	<p>Reading Quiz 4 deadline, Sunday, Feb 13, 11:59pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz 5 deadline, Sunday, Feb 27, 11:59pm</p>
<p>Module 3 – US Judicial System</p>		
<p>Thurs, Mar 3</p> <p>Tues, Mar 8</p> <p>Thurs, Mar 10</p>	<p><i>Power and Purpose</i>, Ch. 9, pgs. 344-359</p> <p><i>Power and Purpose</i>, Ch. 9, pgs. 360-377</p> <p><i>Power and Purpose</i>, Ch. 9, pgs. 378-391</p> <p>Note: March 14-18 SPRING BREAK</p>	<p>Reading Quiz 6 deadline, Sunday, Mar 13, 11:59PM</p>
<p>Module 4 – Civil Liberties</p>		
<p>Tues, Mar 22</p> <p>Thurs, Mar 24</p>	<p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 4, p. 106-127</p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch. 4, p. 128-150</p>	<p>Reading Quiz 7 deadline, Sunday, Mar 27, 11:59PM</p>
<p>Module 5 – Civil Rights</p>		
<p>Tues, Mar 29</p>	<p>Dr. Dowd at an academic conference Mar 28-April 1 – no office hours these days- AND content will be online</p> <p>Power and Purpose, Ch 5, pgs. 152-170, Watch Civil Rights Lecture Parts I and II ONLINE</p>	

Dates & Module Info	Reading Assignments/Exams	Due Dates
<p>Thurs Mar 31</p> <p>Tues, Apr 5</p> <p>Thurs, Apr 7</p>	<p>Power and Purpose, Ch 5, pgs. 171-191, Watch Civil Rights Lecture III ONLINE</p> <p>NORMAL CLASSES RESUME -Separate but Equal, and Exam Review</p> <p>Exam 3</p>	<p>Reading Quiz 8 deadline, Sunday night, Apr 3.</p>
<p>Module 6 – Texas Legislature</p> <p>Tues, Apr 12</p> <p>Tues, Apr 19</p>	<p><i>Texas Government</i>, Ch. 7, pgs. 215-mid 230</p> <p><i>Note: Campus Holiday, Apr 13, 10pm-Apr 15- no office hours these days</i></p> <p><i>Texas Government</i>, Ch. 7, pgs. Mid 230-248</p>	<p>Reading Quiz 9 deadline, Tuesday night, Apr 12.</p>
<p>Module 7 – TX Executive Office/Governor</p> <p>Thurs, Apr 21</p> <p>Tues, Apr 26</p>	<p><i>Texas Government</i>, Ch. 8, pgs. 253-273</p> <p><i>Texas Government</i>, Ch. 8, pgs. 274-290</p>	
<p>Module 8 – Texas Judicial System</p> <p>Thurs, April 28</p> <p>Thurs, May 5</p>	<p><i>Texas Government</i>, Ch. 9, pgs. 295-328</p> <p>EXAM 4- SPECIAL TIME: 10:30am-12:30pm</p>	<p>Reading Quiz 10 deadline, Friday night, Apr 29.</p>