

Syllabus for POLS 1433 (Honors)
American Government II
Spring 2026

Course: POLS 1433 American Government II (Honors)

Class: M, W, & F 9:00–9:50, 178 Dillard

Lecturer: Steve Garrison, Ph.D.

Contact	Information
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Bridwell Office Hours:	M T W R & F 11:00-1:00 and by appointment

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the political system of the United States and the state of Texas. In this course we will study the institutions of American government including the three branches of government at the Federal and state level; governmental bureaucracy and foreign policy.

Texas Core Objectives:

This course will support the development of the following state mandated core learning objectives: Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility.

Texts: *American Government in Black and White: Diversity and Democracy (4th edition)*, Paula McClain and Steven Tauber. (2019), New York: Oxford university Press. There will also be some readings on Texas politics that will be available in D2L.

In addition to text books there are a series of readings on Texas politics and various material as well as for our discussions that I will place in D2L.

Expectations, Examinations, and Grading: Students are expected to attend class. Lectures will not reproduce the texts. During lectures, students are expected to behave in an adult fashion:

i.e. no note passing, punching, kissing, kicking or other juvenile behavior. Disrespectful behavior towards other students or the teacher will not be tolerated and will result in your removal from the class. Also, please turn cellular phones off during class. There will be two inclass exams and a final exam. The format of each is short answer questions and identification of key terms. The highest grading scale will be 90 (A), 80 (B), 70 (C), and 60 (D). If for any reason you should have to miss a test or assignment you must inform the instructor prior to the time of the test and proper documentation is required for any makeup test. The privilege of additional work will not be granted.

Since this is an honors course students will also complete a research project. This project is designed to allow students to pursue a political issue relating to their area of study or interest. Additional requirements and details will be presented at the beginning of the course, including due dates.

Throughout the semester we will discuss contemporary political events. In order to engage in thoughtful discussions it is imperative that students begin paying attention to some reliable news source, such as National Public Radio, Newshour (PBS), ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, The New York Times, USA Today, Dallas Morning News, Austin American Statesman, Washington Post, Wall-street Journal or any variety of reputable news sources. Separate discussion readings will be posted in D2L to guide these discussions. Students are expected to participate in classroom discussion and will be graded on their participation.

Grading:

Activity	Grade
First Examination:	20%
Second Examination:	20%
Final Exam:	20%
Research Project:	25%
Quizzes:	15%

Disability Policy: Any student in this course who has a disability that may preclude demonstrating fully his or her abilities should contact me as soon as possible. We will discuss the accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate education.

Academic Misconduct: I take academic misconduct, including plagiarism, very seriously and will check your work. All work submitted as part of this course must be original. By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a “limited right” in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The “limited right” shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student’s work product in order to verify originality and authenticity,

for educational purposes. This includes work submitted in another course. Students must receive written permission from the instructors from both courses to use the same work in multiple classes. The University's *minimum penalty* for academic misconduct is *a failure of assignment*. Academic misconduct can lead to expulsion from the Honors program and the university. If you have questions about original work, please consult the Student Handbook Code of Student Conduct on Academic Dishonesty (page 55): <https://msutexas.edu/student-life/assets/files/handbook.pdf>

A.I.: To ensure all students have an equal opportunity to succeed and to preserve the integrity of the course, students are not permitted to submit text that is generated by artificial intelligence (AI) systems such as Chat GPT, Bing Chat, Google Bard, or any other automated assistance for any classwork or assessments. This includes using AI to generate answers to assignments, exams, or research papers and projects, or using AI to complete any other course related tasks. Using AI in this way undermines your ability to develop critical thinking, writing, or research skills, that are essential for your academic success. Students may use AI as part of their research and preparation for their assignments, or as a text editor, but text that is submitted must be written by the student. Violations of this policy will be treated as academic misconduct.

Calendar The following course schedule represents the schedule of readings and topics for the course. The reading assignments are located under the date and topic. Student's should read the assigned readings prior to class. The instructor reserves the right to change the schedule.

Note: the following key applies to the reading schedule.

MT = McClain and Tauber. *American Government in Black and White*.

Course Schedule

Section I: Governing & Equality in America

January 21: Introduction

- Syllabus

January 23, & 26: Formulating Policy

- Morone, James and Rogan Keres. 2019. "Public Policymaking and Budgeting" in *By The People* (D2L).

January 28, 30, February 2, & 4: Civil Liberties

- MT Chapter Four

Feb 6, 9, 11, & 13: Civil Rights

- MT Chapter Five

February 16: Catch Up

- Study Guide One

February 18: Exam One

- Study Guide One

February 20: No class

- No class

Section II: American Institutions

February 23, 25, & 27: US Presidency

- MT Chapter Seven

March 2, 4, & 6: Texas Governor

- Texas Executive (D2L)
- Research project topic deadline

March 9, 11, & 13: Spring Break

- No class

March 16, 18, & 20: US Congress

- MT Chapter Six

March 23, 25 & 27: Texas Legislature

- Texas Legislature (D2L)

March 30: Exam Two

- Study Guide Two

April 1 & 3: No Class

- Work on research project

April 6, 8, & 10: US Judiciary

- MT Chapter Nine

April 13, 15, & 17: TX Judiciary

- Texas Judiciary (D2L)

April 20, 22, & 24: The Bureaucracy

- MT Chapter Eight

April 27, 29, May 1, 4, 6, & 8: US Foreign Policy

- D2L

May 11 Monday: Final Exam: 8:00 am - 10:00 am

- Study Guide Three
- Final projects due