

Syllabus for POLS 1333 (Honors)
American Government I Politics
Fall 2025

Course: POLS 1333 American Government I (Honors)

Class: MWF 9:00-9:50 am DB 342

Lecturer: Steve Garrison, Ph.D.

Contact	Information
Office:	111B Bridwell
Phone:	397-4978
Email:	steve.garrison@msutexas.edu
Office Hours:	M and W 11:00–11:50 am and 1:00-2:00 pm, TR 8:30-9:30 am and 11:00-2:00 pm 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 role and creation of government in society; the role of democracy in government; how history has influenced the state and federal constitutions; the impact of federalism; elections, the media, political parties; public opinion and interest groups.

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 (6th edition)*, Paula McClain and Steven Tauber. (2023), 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 for our discussions that I will disseminate in class.

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 devote several class periods to discussion of some 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), Associated Press, Reuters, The New York Times, USA Today, Dallas Morning News, Austin American Statesman, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post 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:	20%
Research Project Presentation:	10%
Classroom Participation:	10%

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.

Plagiarism: I take plagiarism very seriously and will check your work. 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. The University's *minimum penalty* for cheating or plagiarism is *a failure of assignment*. Cheating or plagiarism can lead to expulsion from the university. If you have questions about original work, please consult the Student Handbook Code of Student Conduct section 10.

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*.

TP = *Texas Politics*

Course Schedule

August 25: Introduction

- No Readings

August 27 : Why do We Need Government?

- MT Chapter 1

August 29 : The Process of Institutional Design

- MT Chapter 1 (cont.)

September 1: Labor Day

- No class.

Section I: Foundations of American Politics

Sept 3 & 5 : Declaration of Independence

- MT Appendix I.

Sept. 8 & 10: US Constitution

- MT Chapter 2

September 12: Discussion I:

- D2L

Sept. 15 & 17: US Constitution

- MT Appendix II

September 19: Exam One

- Study Guide One

September 22 and 24: Federalism

- MT Chapter 3.

Sept. 26: Discussion II:

- D2L

Sept 29 and Oct. 1: Texas Constitution

- TP Chapter Two.

Oct. 3: Discussion III:

- D2L

Section II: Societal Influences on American Politics

October 6 and 8: U.S. Political Parties

- MT Chapter Fourteen

October 10: Discussion IV:

- D2L

October 13 and 15: Texas Political Parties

- TP Chapter Eight

October 17: Discussion V:

- D2L.

October 20 and 22: Public Opinion

- MT Chapter Ten

October 24: Discussion VI:

- D2L.

October 27 and 29: Media

- MT Chapter Eleven.

October 31: Discussion VII:

- D2L.

November 3: Exam II

- Study Guide II

November 5 & 7: Project Preparation

-

November 10 & 12: Interest Groups

- MT Chapter Thirteen

November 14: Discussion VIII:

- Disseminated in class.

Section III: Local Politics

November 17 and 19: Local Texas Government

- TP Chapter Twelve

November 21: Discussion IX:

- Disseminated in class.

November 24: Project Work Day

- Prepare presentation

November 26 and 28: Thanksgiving Break

- no class

December 5: Discussion X:

- Disseminated in class.

December 1, 3, & 5: Research Project Presentations

- Final Projects Due

Final Exam

December 8, Monday (8:00-10:00 a.m.): Final Exam

- Study Guide III