

**Syllabus for POLS 1333 (Honors)  
American Government I Politics  
Fall 2020**

**Course: POLS 1333 American Government I (Honors)**

Class: MWF 9:00-9:50 am DB 336

**Lecturer: Steve Garrison, Ph.D.**

Contact	Information
Office:	111B Bridwell
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Office Hours:	M and W 11:00–11:50 am, TR 8:30-9:30 am and 11-2:00 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 (3rd edition)*, Paula McClain and Steven Tauber. (2018), New York: Oxford university Press. We will also be using an online Texas politics text entitled *Texas Politics (2nd Edition)* it can be accessed here: <http://www.soomolearning.com/catalog/texas-politics/overview>

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 required to abide by all of the University protocols to stop the spread of COVID-19 when attending class, including wearing a mask at all times. 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. Most importantly, there are absolutely no firearms in the classroom. 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), CNN, FOXNEWS, MSNBC, The New York Times, USA Today, Dallas Morning News, Austin American Statesman, 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 24: Introduction**

- No Readings

### **August 26 : Why do We Need Government?**

- MT Chapter 1

### **August 28 : The Process of Institutional Design**

- MT Chapter 1 (cont.)

## **Section I: Foundations of American Politics**

### **August 31 & Sept 2 : Declaration of Independence**

- MT Appendix I.

### **September 4: Discussion I: Social Order**

- D2L

### **September 7: Labor Day**

- No class.

### **Sept. 9: US Constitution**

- MT Chapter 2

### **Sept. 11: Discussion II: Voting Methods & The Constitution**

- D2L

### **Sept. 14 & 16: US Constitution**

- MT Appendix II

**Sept. 18: Discussion III:US Postal Service Controversy**

- D2L

**September 21 and 23: Federalism**

- MT Chapter 3.

**Sept. 25: Discussion IV: Federal Disaster Response**

- D2L

**Sept. 28 and 30: Texas Constitution**

- TP Chapter Two.

**October 2: Exam One**

- Study Guide One

**Section II: Societal Influences on American Politics**

**October 5 and 7: U.S. Political Parties**

- MT Chapter Fourteen

**October 9: Discussion V: Voter Suppression**

- D2L.

**October 12 and 14: Texas Political Parties**

- TP Chapter Eight

**October 16: Discussion VI: Immigration Reform**

- D2L.

**October 19 and 21: Public Opinion**

- MT Chapter Ten

**October 23: Discussion VII: Media, Public Opinion and the 2020 Election**

- D2L.

**October 26 & 28: Media**

- MT Chapter Eleven.

**October 30: Exam II**

- Study Guide II

**November 2, 4, & 6: Project Preparation**

- Student Conferences

**November 9 & 11: Interest Groups**

- MT Chapter Thirteen

**November 13:**

- Disseminated in class.

**Section III: Local Politics**

**November 16 and 18: Local Texas Government**

- TP Chapter Twelve

**November 20:**

- Disseminated in class.

**November 23: Project Work Day**

- Prepare presentation

**November 25 and 27: Thanksgiving Break**

- no class

**November 30, December 2, & 4: Research Project Presentations**

- Final Projects Due

**Final Exam**

**December 7, Monday (8:00-10:00 a.m.): Final Exam**

- Study Guide III