

**Syllabus for POLS 1333  
American Government I**

**Course: POLS 1333 American Government I**

Class: Internet

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

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**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:**

Benjamin Ginsberg, Margaret Weir, Theodore Lowi and Caroline Tolbert. 2019. *We the People (12th edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Sons.

Anthony Champagne and Edward Harpham. 2019. *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics (4th Edition)*. New York: W.W. Norton & Sons.

**Expectations, Examinations, and Grading:**

I understand this is an internet course and that logistics are different than inclass courses, however, I do expect students to complete assignments in a progression throughout the course. The course is organized into weeks and assignments and exams must be completed by the end of the day Sunday

of each week. Given that students will have a week to complete the discussion assignments I assume you will have ample time to complete the assignment. If you do not complete the assignment or miss a test please abide by the following policies: contact me before the due date and then provide me with documentation for a valid reason for not completing your assignment i.e. car wreck or medical issue would be a valid reason, taking a trip to Padre without your instructor (just kidding) would not. The privilege of additional work will not be granted. Additionally I expect students to behave as adults. Disruptive or abusive behavior towards the instructor or other students will result in your withdrawal from the course.

There will be two exams (20% each) and a final (30%)examinations, practice quizzes (10%), writing assignments (10%) and discussion assignments (10%). The highest grading scale will be 90 (A), 80 (B), 70 (C), and 60 (D). You **are required to have a webcam** for the two exams. In order to fully grasp the workings of state and local government it is important that students examine the relevance of the course material in terms of current political events. As part of the course I encourage students to start paying attention to some reputable news source. In fact, I would urge you to begin following numerous sources. I am open to format; internet, radio, television just ensure that is actually news and not purely opinion. If you have questions about specific sources let me know. During each unit I will post three discussion questions related to our course material and typically current events of the week. As part of your course requirements I expect each student to post three responses to these questions throughout the week. It is ok to post more and in fact I would encourage you to post more. Please have something substantive to post. In other words you need more than just I agree. At the end of the week provide me with copies of three of your posts during the week. Collectively this will account for your participation and discussion assignment grade. Note: I intend for this to be largely student driven. I will post the prompt and monitor the discussions but I will provide you with a lot of leeway to decide the direction of the course.

**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.

**Writing Assignments:** In addition to the exams students will also be required to complete three writing assignments. These writing assignments are designed to allow students to explore contemporary political issues in greater detail. Specific instructions on these assignments will be posted under each lesson. I will alert you to each assignment in a class announcement. Given previous problems I have had with plagiarism, students will be required to submit their paper electronically which will verify the originality of your writing assignment.

**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 students work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and educational purposes. 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 for the designated week. The date represents the lesson for the beginning of each week. I have abbreviated the textbooks as follows: **WTP**=We the People and **GT**=Governing Texas. **LN**=Lecture Notes.

Date (Week of)	Topic	Readings
Aug 23	Lesson One: Government & Institutional Design	Syllabus
Aug 30	Lesson Two: Colonial Society	WTP Chapter One
Sept 6	Lesson Three: Declaration of Independence	Appendix
Sept 13	Lesson Four: US Constitution	WTP Chapter 2
	Writing Assignment One	
Sept 20	Lesson Five: Texas Constitution	GT Chapter 2
	Quiz One	Study Guide One
Sept 27	Exam One	Study Guide One
Oct 4	Lesson Six: Federalism	WTP Chapter 3
Oct 11	Lesson Seven: US Political Parties	WTP Chapter 9
Oct 18	Lesson Eight: Texas Political Parties	GT Chapter 4
	Writing Assignment Two	
Oct 25	Lesson Nine: Interest Groups	WTP Chapter 11
	Quiz Two	Study Guide Two
Nov 1	Exam Two	Study Guide Two
Nov 8	Lesson Ten: Public Opinion	WTP 6
Nov 15	Lesson Eleven: Media	WTP Chapter 7
	Writing Assignment Three	
Nov 22	Thanksgiving Holiday	no class
Nov 29	Lesson Twelve: Local Government	GT Chapter 10
	Quiz Three	Final Exam Study Guide
Dec 6	Final Exam	Final Exam Study Guide