

POLS 2305: U.S. Government and Politics Spring 2023

Section: W01

Department of Social Sciences
Texas A&M University Corpus Christi

1 Instructor Information

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Office Hours: Tuesdays: 12:00-2:00pm

Wednesdays: 3:30-5:30pm

Thursdays: 1:00-3:00pm

and by appointment

Class Location & Time: Asynchronous via
Blackboard

2 Course Description and Purpose

Why do I have to pay taxes? Can the federal government mandate covid vaccines? Who should I call if I don't get my tax return? Can a state legalize marijuana? Can you carry a gun on campus? Why do I have to get my dog a license, but not my cat? All of these questions are important to our daily lives; to answer *any* of these questions requires understanding how American government works. This course serves as an introduction to how the American political system works, and how people behave in that system.

This course assumes little knowledge about politics, it is after all an introductory course. It functions almost like a buffet, we'll explore lots of topics, including the structure of American government (the rules of the game) and the way people and groups behave in that system (how the players play the game). If find you're interested in a topic we cover (and I hope you will!), we probably have a course dealing specifically with that topic. Just talk to me and I'll let you know what that course is so you can register for it next semester.

Each week we'll cover a different aspect of American government in the abstract along with concrete examples. So for instance, we might talk about federalism, and then use drug legalization as an example of federalism in practice. The goal here is that you see the concepts in action and have a concrete example, which you have likely heard about and care about, to help you grasp the material. In order for this to work, you have the readings and participate in class- remember, I am interested in you participating in class; there is no penalty for answering incorrectly in classroom discussion.

Student Learning Outcomes

On completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Recall basic facts related to the foundations of U.S. national government

2. Describe key political concepts related to U.S. institutions such as Congress, the presidency, and the judiciary.
3. Demonstrate their understanding of key concepts relating to U.S. political behavior such as voting, elections, political parties, interest groups and the media.
4. Understanding of definitions, concepts, and theories of U.S. national government

Core Objectives

The Four Core Objectives related to this course are: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. By the end of the semester the course will have met these objectives:

1. By having the students engage in critical thinking activities related to the Constitution, the political and philosophical foundations of the nation, governmental institutions, and political behavior.
2. By having students engage in written, verbal, or visual activities related to the Constitution, the political and philosophical foundations of the nation, governmental institutions, and political behavior.
3. By having students engage in course related activities that connect personal responsibility and political ideology to encourage ethical decision making.
4. By having students engage in course related activities that connect social responsibility to civil rights, civil liberties, and to voting and voting behavior, and the policy making process.

3 Course Format

This class is fully online. This means we may never meet face-to-face. Though this is the case, I want to emphasize I am available via e-mail, in virtual office hours, physical office hours, and by appointment. The course is divided into a series of readings & an accompanying video lecture. Each is assigned to a specific day and it has an associated quiz. You are always free to work ahead. But, each day's assigned reading/quiz etc. is due listed on the syllabus.

The Unique Nature of Online Classes

Please be aware that while there are no class sessions for this course, this does not imply that the course will be easier or less work than a seated lecture course. Moreover, please understand that in online course it is extremely important that you be self-motivated and appropriately manage your time and keep to the due dates listed in the syllabus. This is made all the more pressing because this is a 7.5 week class where each week is the same as two weeks in the regular August through December semester. If you find yourself falling behind *please* contact me immediately.

This course primarily occurs through Blackboard. To do so you need a computer with internet access (I would recommend against a tablet or smart phone as your primary means of accessing the course). It is up to you to ensure you have reliable and sufficiently fast internet access to utilize all of the course resources (including videos).

Virtual Office Hours

If you opt for virtual office hours, it is okay to turn on/leave off your camera. I am also okay with communicating via the chat box rather than verbally if you prefer. In short, I will follow your lead. I have six scheduled office hours throughout the week to which you can “drop in.” If you opt for virtual office hours, I would ask you send me a quick e-mail so I can be sure to hit the “admit to room” button Zoom. If those hours do not work for you, just let me know and we can set up a time to meet.

4 Requirements

Text

There is one required book which the majority of our readings will come from. Other readings are posted on Blackboard and are noted on the course schedule. Be sure to read all readings for each listed day *before* the lecture.

The book is available at the campus bookstore, for both purchase and rental. However, you can purchase or rent the book for a substantially lower rate online. To this end, I provide the ISBN for the book in the syllabus and will place all of the first week’s readings on Blackboard to allow for shipping time. After the first week I expect you to have the book and bring it with you to class.

1. Barbour, Christine and Gerald C. Wright. 2021. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*. 9th Brief Edition. Congressional Quarterly Press: Thousand Oaks, CA. **ISBN: 9781544393896**

Assessment

This course is worth 100 points which are broken up over several different items. It is your responsibility to keep track of your grade over the course of the semester

- Short Discussion Papers: 10 points
 - Quizzes: 30 points
 - Exams: 60 points
1. **Short Discussion Papers (10 points)**— Over the course of the semester, you will write two short papers (2-3 pages) answering a short question relating the class material to the contemporary political world in 2023. Early in the semester, you will have a choice to sign up for the topics you would like to write about. Please know there are a limited number of slots for each paper and they are “first come, first serve.” So, be sure to sign up early. You must sign up for the topics you want to write on at the start of the semester and cannot change your choice. Paper deadlines are always at 11:59pm on a Friday evening (although they can be turned in early). A full list of these readings is available on Blackboard. By Thursday January 19 at 4:00pm, be sure to sign up for your choices on Blackboard. For more details, see the Short Papers handout.

2. **Quizzes (30 points)**— Over the course of the semester there will be periodic quizzes. All quizzes are due on the day listed on the syllabus by 11:59pm. They are all listed on the Quiz Schedule handout on Blackboard. The quizzes consist of five multiple choice questions. They are open note, but are timed at ten minutes with just one attempt, so I recommend taking the time to review your notes before taking the quiz. If you do the readings, you should have no problem with the quizzes. There will be a total of ten quizzes, each is ultimately worth 3 points toward your final grade.

3. **Exams (60 points)**—There are three exams. Each is worth 20 points, or two letter grades. Exams consist of 50 multiple choice questions. None of the exams are cumulative. Before each exam I will provide a study guide. Attending exams is imperative, if you miss an exam and do not have a valid documented excuse (ie: a doctor's note) the make up exam will be a separate research paper. Should you miss the exam, the onus is on you to schedule a make-up with me. Exams are open from the start of the semester. However, Exam 1 is due by 11:59pm Monday February 13, Exam 2 is due by 11:59pm on Monday February 27, and Exam 3 is due by 11:59pm on Tuesday March 7.

Assessment Scale

A: 90-100	B: 80-89.9	C: 70-79.9	D: 60-69.9	F: <59.9
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Disclaimer

Since politics is a reflection of the society in which we live, we will cover several topics which touch on topics which might be sensitive. Some examples include same-sex marriage, gun control, protest movements, and transgender rights. These topics are included because we cannot adequately study American government without covering them. My personal policy is to remain neutral (I'm a political scientist, emphasis on the second word). I encourage disagreement, but it must be done in a respectful way. You have my assurance that I will do everything reasonably related to keeping these discussions civil and academic.

5 Course Policies

Contacting the Instructor

I am happy to help you either via e-mail, or during office hours. If my office hours do not fit your schedule let me know and we can schedule a meeting at a time that is more convenient. If you come to office hours you should come prepared; bring your book, notes, and read the material in advance. If you contact me via e-mail, I will respond within 48 hours, though in most cases it will be less than six hours. Should you not hear from me after 48 hours, feel free to send a follow-up. However, in any e-mail you must identify yourself and use proper format which consists of an opening (As simple as the recipient's name), a closing (as simple as your name), and a descriptive subject line. If you do not follow that convention or if you use Internet shorthand (ie: "u" instead of "you,") I will not reply to the message.

Make-up Exams and Assignments

To qualify for a make-up test a student must notify me of the absence in advance via e-mail and provide documentation. Make-up exams will be a written research paper. The onus is on the student for a make-up exam. I will not seek you out to let you know you missed an exam.

Extra Credit

I offer two forms of extra credit. First, I offer is a one point increase for each of the writing assignments (remember, the course is only worth 100 points) for consulting with the writing center for your paper. Appointments are usually necessary. Just screenshot your confirmation and place it at the end of your paper. Second, there is a “bonus” quiz (so if you do all of the quizzes, the last one is extra credit).

Academic Honor Code

Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the University Student Handbook. The Academic Honor Code is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student’s own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community. Violations of the Academic Honor Code will not be tolerated.

Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism of any kind are unacceptable. There are no exceptions. Consequences for academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism include, but are not limited to, a failing grade for an assignment or exam, a failing grade for the course, noncredit for an assignment or exam, additional work, and/or direct referral to university officials.

If academic dishonesty, cheating, or plagiarism is suspected on any assessment, the instructor reserves the right to impose restrictions and make changes on future assessments for an individual and/or the entire class as needed.

Please also note that the university requires that faculty members formally report all instances of academic misconduct. Here are the official procedures: http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/assets/procedure_academicmisconductcases.pdf

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses without permission, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. The term cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments, plagiarism; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university faculty or staff. The term plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling or distribution of term papers or other academic

materials. If you have questions about the university's policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Student Code of Conduct at <http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/StudentCofC.html>.

Please note "plagiarism" includes intentionally, knowingly, or carelessly presenting the work of another as one's own. Additionally, the procedure has been updated to reflect the Academic Integrity Committee as the body to consider grade appeals and academic misconduct cases, as well as identifies the selection process of committee members. Detailed information can be found on the University Handbook of Rules and Procedures website. Contact for interpretation or clarification is the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Disabilities Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall 116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

Student Caregivers: If you have caregiving responsibilities (e.g., parent of a child or care for elderly parents) and you anticipate scheduling difficulties, please discuss this with me the beginning of the semester to work out an appropriate strategy in advance.

Sexual Assault & Gender Based Discrimination

TAMUCC faculty is fully committed to supporting students and upholding an environment free of sexual violence and gender based discrimination. If a student chooses to confide in faculty (or other entities on campus) regarding an issues of sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking it should be understood that faculty members are often obligated to report this information. Students can choose to disclose their experience confidentially to the following resources:

- University Counseling Center
- Student Health Center

Academic Advising (for students with a majors in the College of Liberal Arts)

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center using DegreeWorks. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted.

- **For all students with 0-45 hours earned** you will be advised by the **Islander Advising Center:** University Services Center (1st Floor), 361-825-3453.

- **For CLA students with more than 45 hours earned** you will be advised by the **CLA Academic Advising Office:** Faculty Center 148, 361-825-3466.

For all other colleges with more than 45 hours earned, you will be advised by the Advising Center that oversees your major:

- **College of Business:** OCNR 120, 361-825-2653
- **College of Education and Human Development:** FC 201, 361-825-2662
- **College of Nursing and Health Sciences:** IH (3rd Floor), 361-825-2799
- **College of Science and Engineering:** CI 350D, 361-825-3928

Dropping a Class

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. **Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course.** Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to **University Center 324** and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. You may also submit a PowerFormSigner online. **April 10, 2023** is the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

Student Grade Appeals

As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C0.03, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at <https://www.tamucc.edu/governance/rules-procedures/index>. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught or the Office of the Provost.

Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e., emails, web sites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

Civil Rights Reporting

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is committed to fostering a culture of caring and respect that is free from discrimination, relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and ensuring that all affected students have access to services. For information on reporting Civil Rights complaints, options and support resources (including pregnancy support accommodations) or university policies and procedures, please contact the University Title IX Coordinator, Sam Ramirez at Samuel.ramirez@tamucc.edu or Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Rosie Ruiz at Rosie.Ruiz@tamucc.edu ext. 5826, or visit website at Title IX/Sexual Assault/Pregnancy.

Limits to confidentiality. Essays, journals, and other materials submitted for this class are generally considered confidential pursuant to the University's student record policies. However, students should be aware that University employees, including instructors, are not able to maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to report alleged or suspected civil rights discrimination that is observed by or made known to an employee in the course and scope of their employment. As the instructor, I must report allegations of civil rights discrimination, including sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator if you share it with me. These reports will trigger contact with you from the Civil Rights/Title IX Compliance office who will inform you of your options and resources regarding the incident that you have shared. If you would like to talk about these incidents in a confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with counselors in the University Counseling Center.

Campus Emergencies

At TAMU-CC, your safety is a top concern. We actively prepare for natural disasters or human-caused incidents with the ultimate goal of maintaining a safe and secure campus.

- For any emergency, dial the University Police Department (UPD) at 361-825-4444 or dial 911. It's a good idea to have the UPD emergency number (and non-emergency number 361-825-4242) saved in your cell phone.
- There are nearly 200 classroom telephones throughout campus. If you feel threatened or need help and don't have a cell phone, dial 4444 (emergency) or 4242 (non-emergency) to be connected to UPD.
- If we hear a fire alarm, we will immediately evacuate the building and proceed to the nearest safe exit.
 - Proceed to the nearest building exit or evacuation stairway. Do not use the elevator. Persons who need help navigating stairs should proceed to a marked Area of Rescue Assistance, if possible.
 - Persons with disabilities should speak with their faculty about how to best assist them in case of an emergency.
 - Review the evacuation route (see specific Building Emergency Plan).
- TAMU-CC employs the Code Blue Emergency Notification System, an alert system which connects the campus community during emergency situations.
 - The notifications include emails, text and pre-recorded messages, as appropriate.

- Code Blue emergencies may include severe weather warnings, threats, school closures, delays, evacuations and other incidents which disrupt regular campus activities.
- Students can update personal contact information anytime at <https://emergency.tamucc.edu/contactform/>
- Shelter in Place via Code Blue.
- “Shelter-in-place” means to take immediate shelter where you are and may be implemented for severe weather, hazardous material spills, active shooters or other dangerous situations.
- If there is a shelter in place for a **tornado warning**, our preferred location is the bottom floor of this building, away from windows and doors.
- Active Threat Protocol. There are three things you could do that make a difference if there is an active threat: Run, Hide, and/or Fight. For more information about the Run, Hide, Fight protocol, including what to do when law enforcement arrives, visit <https://www.tamucc.edu/finance-and-administration/facility-administration/ehs/>
- For the Quick Campus Guide to Campus Emergencies (including a list of Areas of Rescue Assistance and additional protocols on assisting persons with physical disabilities, hurricanes, bomb threats, animal bites, crime reporting, elevator entrapment, etc.), visit <https://www.tamucc.edu/finance-and-administration/facility-administration/ehs/emergency-management/assets/documents/finalbooklet.pdf>.

Classroom Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is an essential component of creating an effective learning environment. All students have the right to learn without unnecessary distractions. These distractions include: cell phones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the instructor), reading newspapers, falling asleep, etc. If you need a cell phone for emergency purposes, leave it on vibrate. Entering and leaving are also significant sources of distraction. It is your responsibility to be on time and to stay for the entire period. In circumstances where you need to leave early, tell the instructor beforehand. Repeated disruptions of class will lead to a reduction in your final grade.

Most importantly, the syllabus includes many sensitive topics which can lead to strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussion must be respectful and scholarly. This is to say you must be respectful, in both content and tone, of diverse opinions and not make personal or partisan attacks.

Acceptable Comments

- are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- are related to class and/or the course material
- focus on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs, and
- are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner.

Unacceptable Comments

- are personal in nature. This includes attacks on a person's appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs.
- include interrupting the instructor or other students. Raise your hand and wait to be recognized.
- often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise, they must be discussed in a scholarly way (see above).
- may include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner.
- include ignoring the instructor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom environment.

Syllabus Change Policy

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice. These changes may come via e-mail. Make sure to check your university supplied email regularly. You are accountable for all such communications.

6 *Tentative* Course Schedule

A few notes about reading the course schedule:

- “*Barbour*” refers to the required Barbour & Wright book
- “(B)” means that reading can be found on Blackboard.

The Basic Structures of Government

Tuesday January 17– Introduction to the Course

- *No readings*

Thursday January 19– American Politics Basics

- Barbour Chapter 1
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2021. “What Are Democratic Norms?” *Civics 101* (B)

Tuesday January 24– The Constitution: The Rulebook

- Barbour Chapter 2
- Constitutional. 2017. “Framed.” *The Washington Post*. (B)

Basic Structures of Government

Thursday January 26– *Two Governments?!*: Federalism

- Barbour Chapter 3
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2020. “Emergency Powers of the Governor.” *Civics 101* (B)

Tuesday January 31– Media & Politics

- Barbour Chapter 13
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2017. “The First Amendment- The Freedom of the Press.” *Civics 101*. (B)

Rights & Liberties

Thursday February 2– The Bill of Rights

- Barbour Chapter 4
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2020. “What is the Difference Between Constructionist, Originalist, and Liberal Justices?” *Civics 101* (B)

Tuesday February 7– The Struggle for Rights

- Barbour Chapter 5
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2020. “The Declaration Revisited: The Declaration of Sentiments.” *Civics 101* (B)

Political Institutions: The Rules of the Game

Thursday February 9– Congress

- Barbour Chapter 6
- National Public Radio. 2018. “REDMAP.” *Planet Money*. (B)

Tuesday February 14– The Presidency

- Barbour Chapter 7
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2021. “Emergency Powers of the President.” *Civics 101* (B)

Thursday February 16– The Courts

- Barbour Chapter 9
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2020. “How Do Judicial Appointments and Elections Work?” *Civics 101* (B)

Tuesday February 21– The Bureaucracy

- Barbour Chapter 8
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2020. “The United States Postal Service.” *Civics 101* (B)

Political Behavior: How the Actors Behave

Thursday February 23– Public Opinion

- Barbour Chapter 10
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2021. “Insurrection, Protest, Terrorism, Sedition, Coup.” *Civics 101* (B)

Tuesday February 28– Parties and Interest Groups

- Barbour Chapter 11
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2021. “U.S. vs: Two Party System.” *Civics 101* (B)

Thursday March 2– Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

- Barbour Chapter 12
- New Hampshire Public Radio. 2020. “Voter Fraud.” *Civics 101*. (B)

FINAL EXAM: Due via Blackboard by 11:59pm, Tuesday March 7

7 Due Dates & Assignments

- **Week One**

- Tuesday January 17 *First Day Notecard*
- Thursday January 19 *Quiz 1*
- Thursday January 19 *Papers Preference Sign-Up*

- **Week Two**

- Tuesday January 24 *Quiz 2*
- Thursday January 26 *Quiz 3*
- Friday January 27 *Paper Option #1 (half the class)*

- **Week Three**

- Tuesday January 31 *Quiz 4*
- Thursday February 2 *Quiz 5*
- Friday February 3 *Paper Option #2 (half the class)*

- **Week Four**

- Thursday February 9 *Quiz 6*

- **Week Five**

- Monday February 13 *Exam 1*
- Tuesday February 14 *Quiz 7*
- Thursday February 16 *Quiz 8*
- Friday February 17 *Paper Option #3 (half the class)*

- **Week Six**

- Thursday February 23 *Quiz 9*

- **Week Seven**

- Monday February 27 *Exam 2*
- Tuesday February 28 *Quiz 10*
- Friday March 3 *Paper Option #4 (half the class)*

- **Week Eight**

- Tuesday March 7: *Exam 3*