



POLS 3310: American Political Institutions section 001

Fall 2025

General Information

Course & Section #	POLS 3310 section 001
Term & Years	Fall 2025
Course Schedule	Tuesday and Thursday, 3:30pm-4:45pm
Course Location	Senator Frank L. Madla 254

Instructor Information

Name and Title	Dr. Daniel Braaten
E-mail	dbraaten@tamusa.edu
Phone Number	210-784-2276
Office Hours	Tuesday, Thursday 11:00am-1:00pm
Office Location	Central Academic Building, Office 347-C

Course Overview

Explores the structure and major issues and controversies in the study of American political institutions; topics include executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

Prerequisites: GOVT 2305 and GOVT 2306.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Gain a deep understanding of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of American Government
2. Develop critical reading skills
3. Develop data analysis skills

Required Course Materials

No textbook is required for this course. All class readings are available on Blackboard

Course Requirements

Exams – There are two exams in this course, a midterm and a final exam. Both will be in class exams and consist of short answer/essay questions. Midterm exam is worth 100 points and the Final exam is worth 150 points (250 points total)

Critical Reading Assignments – Each student is required to submit **three** critical reading assignments each one worth 25 points each. Critical reading assignments are analysis of the reading assignment for the week where students are required to describe the main points of the readings and any criticisms of the readings they have. Assignments will be 2-3 pages in length and must be submitted before class discussion of the reading. (75 points total)

Data Analysis Assignments – There are three data analysis assignment in the course, each one corresponding to a section of the course (Congress, President, and Judiciary). Each assignment will be 3-5 pages in length and worth 50 points each (150 points total)

Participation – Students are expected to attend every class, have the assigned readings completed before class begins, and participate in the class discussion. Participation grades are given out based on the discretion of the instructor (basically my perception of how much you contributed to class discussion and of course if you do not attend class you cannot participate.) (50 points total)

Grade Breakdown

Grade	Equivalent Points
A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%
C	70%-79%
D	60%-69%
F	Below 60%

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every class. If a student is unable to attend class, they should notify the Professor as soon as possible.

Electronics Policy

Students can use laptops and/or tablets in class if they feel they are helpful for their educational experience. However, as the instructor I reserve the right to tell students to stop using them if I feel they are causing a distraction to myself or the rest of the class. I prefer that student put their phones away for the duration of the lecture portion of the class.

Make-Up Assignments

I will also accept late assignments (in class and data analysis) for one week passed the deadline but those late assignments have to be for excused absences only. I will not accept late quizzes. If a student is unable to take an exam on the scheduled date, they must notify the instructor as soon as possible. Make up exams will only be given for legitimate reasons (i.e. illness, family emergency, school sponsored event)

Penalties for Academic Dishonesty

The faculty of the Department of Arts and Sciences expects students to conduct their academic work with integrity and honesty. Acts of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and can result in the failure of a course and dismissal from the University. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion- the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing work offered for credit, the abuse of resource materials, and misrepresentation of credentials or accomplishments as a member of the College. Students are

expected to do their own course work. Cheating or plagiarism by an individual student will result in a grade of F on the particular paper or in the course.

The University's policy on academic honesty and appeal procedures can be found in <http://www.tamusa.tamus.edu/undergraduate-catalog-2011.pdf>.

Prohibited Conduct

All forms of prohibited conduct are outlined in the TAMU-SA student handbook. In addition, guidelines and procedures for handling instances of student misconduct are contained therein, which can be viewed on line at: <http://www.tamusa.tamus.edu/studenthandbook.html>

No Use of Generative AI Permitted

GOVT 2305 assumes that all work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves, working individually or in groups. Students should not have another person/entity do the writing of any portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write assignments and/or using artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT. Use of any AI-generated content in this course qualifies as academic dishonesty and violates Texas A&M-San Antonio's standards of academic integrity

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Week	Topics Covered	Assigned Readings	Assignments Due
Week 1 (8/26, 8/28)	Studying Political Institutions	<i>CLIO and the Economics of QWERTY</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #1 Due on Blackboard before class on 8/28
Week 2 (9/2, 9/4)	Foundation of American Political Institutions	<i>US Constitution Federalist Papers #10 and #51 Political Engineering and the US Constitution</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #2 Due on Blackboard before class on 9/4
Week 3 (9/9, 9/11)	Congress I: Members as Individuals	<i>U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #3 Due on Blackboard before class on 9/11
Week 4 (9/16, 9/18)	Congress II: Organization and Rules	<i>The Dysfunctional Congress</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #4 Due on Blackboard before class on 9/18
Week 5 (9/23, 9/25)	Congress III: Lawmaking and Partisanship	<i>How Party Polarization Affects Governance</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #5 Due on Blackboard

			before class on 9/25
Week 6 (9/30, 10/2)	Congress Data Analysis Assignment	No Reading Assignment	Data Analysis Assignment #1 due on 10/2 at 11:59pm on Blackboard
Week 7 (10/7, 10/9)	Presidency I: Context and Development	<i>The Perils of Presidentialism</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #6 Due on Blackboard before class on 10/9
Week 8 (10/14, 10/16)	Mid Term Exam	No Reading Assignment	Exam 1 on 10/16 in class
Week 9 (10/21, 10/23)	Presidency II: Strategic Interactions	<i>The President and the Distribution of Federal Spending</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #7 Due on Blackboard before class on 10/23
Week 10 (10/28, 10/30)	Presidency III: Unilateral Actions	<i>Presidential Unilateral Power</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #8 Due on Blackboard before class on 10/30
Week 11(11/4, 11/6)	Presidency Data Analysis Assignment	No Reading Assignment	Data Analysis Assignment #2 due on 11/6 at 11:59pm on Blackboard
Week 12 (11/11, 11/13)	Judiciary I: Law and Courts	<i>Judicial Institutions</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #9 Due on Blackboard before class on 11/13
Week 13 (11/18, 11/20)	Judiciary II: Judges and Ideology	<i>The New Judicial Politics of Legal Doctrine</i>	Critical Reading Assignment #10 Due on Blackboard before class on 11/20
Week 14 (11/25, 11/27)	No Class Thanksgiving Break	No Reading Assignment	No Assignment Due
Week 15 (12/2, 12/4)	Judiciary Data Analysis Assignment	No Reading Assignment	Data Analysis Assignment #3 due on 12/4 at 11:59pm on Blackboard
Week 16 Finals Week	Final Exam	No Reading Assignment	Final Exam 12/11 at 2pm in class

IMPORTANT POLICIES AND RESOURCES

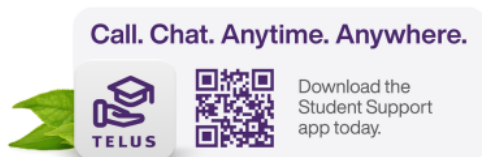
Academic Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing all students with reasonable access to learning opportunities and accommodations in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, Disability Support Services is located in the Central Academic Building, Suite 210. You can also contact us via phone at (210) 784-1335, visit us <https://www.tamusa.edu/Disability-Support-Services/index.html> or email us at dss@tamusa.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to, attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability-related needs with Disability Support Services and their instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Learning Center: The Academic Learning Center provides free course-based tutoring to all currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio. Students wishing to work with a tutor can make appointments through the Brainfuse online tutoring platform. Brainfuse can be accessed in the *Tools* section of Blackboard. You can contact the Academic Learning Center by emailing tutoring@tamusa.edu, calling (210) 784-1307, or visiting the Central Academic Building, room 202.

Counseling/Mental Health Resources: As a college student, there may be times when personal stressors interfere with your academic performance and negatively impact your daily functioning. If you are experiencing emotional difficulties or mental health concerns, support is available to you through the Student Counseling Center (SCC). To schedule an appointment, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120.

All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information on SCC services visit tamusa.edu/studentcounseling

Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 (after-hours select option '2'). Additionally, the TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including support for in the moment distress, an anonymous peer to peer support network, mental health screenings, podcasts, and articles to improve your mental wellbeing.



Emergency Preparedness: JagE Alert is Texas A&M University-San Antonio's mass notification. In the event of an emergency, such as inclement weather, students, staff and faculty, who are registered, will have the option to receive a text message, email with instructions and updates. To register or update your information visit: <https://tamusa.bbcportal.com/>.

More information about Emergency Operations Plan and the Emergency Action Plan can be found here: <https://www.tamusa.edu/about-us/emergency-management/>. Download the SafeZone App (<https://safezoneapp.com/>) for emergencies or call (210) 784-1911. Non-Emergency (210) 784-1900.

Financial Aid and Verification of Attendance: According to the following federal regulation, 34 CFR 668.21: U.S. Department of Education (DoE) Title IV regulation, a student can only receive Title IV funds based on Title IV eligibility criteria which include class attendance. If Title IV funds are disbursed to ineligible students (including students who fail to begin attendance), the institution must return these funds to the U.S. DoE within 30 days of becoming aware that the student will not or has not begun attendance. Faculty will provide the Office of Financial Aid with an electronic notification if a student has not attended the first week of class. Any student receiving federal financial aid who does not attend the first week of class will have their aid terminated and returned to the DoE. Please note that any student who stops attending at any time during the semester may also need to return a portion of their federal aid.

Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center: The Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center supports graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Tutors work with students to develop reading skills, prepare oral presentations, and plan, draft, and revise their written assignments. Our language tutors support students enrolled in Spanish courses and students composing in Spanish for any assignment. Our digital studio tutors support students working on digital projects such as eportfolios, class presentations, or other digital multimedia projects. Students can schedule appointments through JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. The Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our website at <https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/>.

Meeting Basic Needs: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to submit a CARE referral (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities/file-a-report.html>) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources.

Military Affairs: Veterans and active-duty military personnel are welcomed and encouraged to visit the Office of Military Affairs for any question involving federal or state VA Education Benefits. Visit the Patriots’ Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at military.va@tamusa.edu or (210)784-1397.

Religious Observances: Texas A&M University-San Antonio recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holidays according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or course work requirements that may be

missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes for regular session classes.

The Six-Drop Rule: Students are subject to the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 1231 passed by the Texas Legislature in 2007. SB 1231 limits students to a maximum of six (6) non-punitive course drops (i.e., courses a student chooses to drop) during their undergraduate careers. A non-punitive drop does not affect the student's GPA. However, course drops that exceed the maximum allowed by SB 1231 will be treated as "F" grades and will impact the student's GPA.

Statement of Harassment and Discrimination: Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to the fundamental principles of academic freedom, equal opportunity, and human dignity. To fulfill its multiple missions as an institution of higher learning, A&M-San Antonio encourages a climate that values and nurtures collegiality and the uniqueness of the individual within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees should be based on applicable law and individual merit. Texas A&M University-San Antonio, in accordance with applicable federal and state law, prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the appropriate offices within their respective units.

Texas A&M University-San Antonio faculty are committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students and for the university as a whole. If you have experienced any form of sex- or gender-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking, know that help and support are available. A&M-San Antonio's Title IX Coordinator can support those impacted by such conduct in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, and more. The university strongly encourages all students to report any such incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Please be aware that all A&M-San Antonio employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as counselors and trained victim advocates) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the university. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the university's Title IX Coordinator (titleix@tamusa.edu, 210-784-2061, CAB 439K). If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting requirement, you can contact the Student Counseling Center at (210) 784-1331 or visit them in Madla 120.

Pregnant/Parenting Students: Texas A&M-San Antonio does not require a pregnant or parenting student, solely because of that status or issues related to that status, to (1) take a leave of absence or withdraw from their degree or certificate program; (2) limit the student's studies; (3) participate in an alternative program; (4) change the student's major, degree, or certificate program; or (5) refrain from joining or cease participating in any course, activity, or program at the University. The university will provide such reasonable accommodations to pregnant students as would be provided to a student with a temporary medical condition that are related to the health and safety of the student and the student's unborn child. These could include

maintaining a safe distance from substances, areas, and activities known to be hazardous to pregnant individuals and their unborn child; excused absences because of illness or medical appointments; modified due dates for assignments; rescheduled tests/exams; taking a leave of absence; and being provided access to instructional materials and video recordings of lectures for excused absences, if these would be provided to any other student with an excused absence. Pregnant/parenting students are encouraged to contact the Title IX Coordinator with any questions or concerns related to their status (titleix@tamusa.edu; 210-784-2061; CAB 439K).

Texas A&M-San Antonio has also designated the Title IX Coordinator as the liaison officer for current or incoming students who are the parent or guardian of a child younger than 18 years of age. The Title IX Coordinator can provide students with information regarding support services and other resources.

Students' Rights and Responsibilities: The following statement of students' rights and responsibilities is intended to reflect the philosophical base upon which University Student Rules are built. This philosophy acknowledges the existence of both rights and responsibilities, which is inherent to an individual not only as a student at Texas A&M University-San Antonio but also as a citizen of this country.

Students' Rights

1. A student shall have the right to participate in a free exchange of ideas, and there shall be no University rule or administrative rule that in any way abridges the rights of freedom of speech, expression, petition and peaceful assembly as set forth in the U.S. Constitution.
2. Each student shall have the right to participate in all areas and activities of the University, free from any form of discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and pregnancy/parenting or veteran status in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
3. A student has the right to personal privacy except as otherwise provided by law, and this will be observed by students and University authorities alike.
4. Each student subject to disciplinary action arising from violations of university student rules shall be assured a fundamentally fair process.

Students' Responsibilities

1. A student has the responsibility to respect the rights and property of others, including other students, the faculty, and administration.
2. A student has the responsibility to be fully acquainted with the published University Student Rules found in the Student Handbook, [Student Code of Conduct](#), on our website, and University Catalog, and to comply with them, as well as with federal, state, and local laws.
3. A student has the responsibility to recognize that student actions reflect upon the individuals involved and upon the entire University community.
4. A student has the responsibility to recognize the University's obligation to provide a safe environment for learning.
5. A student has the responsibility to check their university email for any updates or official university notifications.

We expect that students will behave in a manner that is dignified, respectful, and courteous to all people, regardless of sex, ethnic/racial origin, religious background, sexual orientation, or disability. Conduct that infringes on the rights of another individual will not be tolerated. Students are expected to exhibit a high level of honesty and integrity in their pursuit of higher education. Students engaging in an act that violates the standards of academic integrity will find themselves facing academic and/or disciplinary sanctions. Academic misconduct is any act, or attempt, which gives an unfair advantage to the student. Additionally, any behavior specifically prohibited by a faculty member in the course syllabus or class discussion may be considered as academic misconduct. For more information on academic misconduct policies and procedures please review the Student Code of Conduct (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/documents/Student-Handbook-2022-23.pdf>) or visit the resources available in the OSRR website (<https://www.tamusa.edu/university-policies/student-rights-and-responsibilities/academic-integrity.html>).

Important Dates: Fall 2025 Regular 16-Week Session

August 25 First day of class

September 1

Labor Day Holiday – No classes

September 10

Census Date

November 14

Last day to drop with an automatic “W”

November 25 Last day to withdraw from the University

November 26 Study Day – No classes

November 27-29 Thanksgiving Holiday – No classes

December 4 Last day of classes

December 5 Study Day – No classes

December 6-12 Final exams

December 16 Commencement

The complete academic calendar is available online:

<https://www.tamusa.edu/academics/academic-calendar/index.html>



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