

Federal Government Syllabus

(GOVT 2305-601)

3 credit hours

Spring 2024

January 16, 2024 to April 29, 2024

Online Course

Instructor Information

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1. COURSE OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

Origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, structure and powers of the national government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties and civil rights.

2. COURSE PREREQUISITE

Meet TSI college-readiness standard for Reading and Writing; or equivalent

3. COURSE OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Student Learning Outcomes. Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States (Communication Skills)
- Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system (Communication Skills)
- Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice (Social Responsibility)
- Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government (Communication Skills; Personal Responsibility)

- Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system (Critical Thinking; Personal Responsibility)
- Analyze the election process (Critical Thinking)
- Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens (Personal Responsibility; Social Responsibility)
- Analyze issues and policies in the U.S. politics (Critical Thinking; Social Responsibility)

Course Objectives. Upon completion of this course, students will have a greater understanding and appreciation for American political structures, institutions, and processes, including:

- the cultural and institutional origins of American government
- the motivation for and basic principles of the Constitution
- political organization and structures under federalism
- the difference between civil rights and civil liberties
- the major branches of the US political system
- how political ideology impacts attitudes and behavior
- the important function that informal political institutions like parties, interest groups, and the media serve
- how public policy is shaped and made

4. GRADING

Grade scale. To calculate your grade at any point in this class, divide the number of points you currently have by the total possible points (as found in Blackboard).

Your letter grade in this class will be based on the following scale:

- (A) 90 - 100%
- (B) 80 - 89%
- (C) 70 - 79%
- (D) 60 - 69%
- (F) Below 60%

There are 475 possible points available in this class. The points are broken down as follows:

- **Discussion Forum:** 200 points possible
- **Case study components:** 100 total points possible (see Blackboard for point breakdown)
- **Final Project:** 100 points possible
- **Pre- and post-test:** 50 points possible
- **Syllabus assignment:** 25 points possible

Discussion Forum. Active engagement is vital to success in online classes. To help facilitate engagement and discussion in this course, we'll make use of discussion forums. The maximum number of points possible for discussion forums is 200 points. You'll participate in the forums through original threads and response posts (see below) until you reach the required 200 points.

Instead of responding to a prompt or series of questions, you'll be responsible for creating an open-ended question of your own, related to that week's reading. Each week's forum will stay open for 2 weeks¹ (e.g. if the Week 2 forum opens on January 21 it will close on February 3).

Country case study (4 total components). Over the course of the semester, you'll submit 4 main components of a case study comparison between a country of your choosing and the United States. These components are meant to help you write a final, comprehensive discussion of how democracy works and functions between countries. See course calendar and Blackboard for the due dates and instructions.

Final Project (Case study). Instead of a final exam, you'll be asked to create a final project discussing how American government compares to that of another country. The purpose of this project is to apply what you've learned about American democracy and government to the topic of democratic advances and back slides around the world. See course calendar and Blackboard for the due date and instructions.

Pre- and post-test. At the start of the semester, you'll take a pre-test to help gauge your knowledge of American government and democracy. At the end of the semester, you'll take the same test again to gauge how much you've learned. These tests are completion only; there are no wrong answers.

Syllabus assignment. Everything you need to know about the course can be found in this syllabus or Blackboard. To ensure you've carefully read through and understand this syllabus, you'll complete a short assignment at the start of the semester.

5. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Required Text.

- Barbour, Christine (2020). *AmGov: Long Story Short*. (3rd edition). SAGE Publications Inc. (2023)

¹With the exception of the last forum (Week 15 discussion forum) which will only be open for one week

This text is required for this class. You *must* do the weekly required readings in order to be prepared for in-class discussion.

Course Website. You are responsible for logging into Blackboard regularly (at least three times a week).

6. COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Make-Up Policy. I do *not* accept late work. Period. No exceptions. However, I will offer one make-up assignment at the end of the semester to replace up to 25 points worth of low or missing assignments. This will be the only makeup opportunity I offer over the course of the semester.

Classroom civility. We may touch on some sensitive topics, and rudeness or inappropriate comments will not be tolerated at all. Virtual discussions give students a chance to increase their understanding of the material and how it relates to their everyday lives. As such, the discussion forum will *not* be a platform or a license for un-civil behavior. Rude, sexist, racist, homophobic, or otherwise inappropriate language is not welcome and will be penalized.

Technology. Because graded work will be submitted online, students should have a basic level of computer literacy in order to fully participate in the course. Students are responsible for ensuring the compatibility of their own computers and software prior to beginning this course. Students are also responsible for securing high speed internet connectivity throughout the duration of this course.

Plagiarism and Cheating. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a 0 for the assignment and may face further punitive actions from the University. I do not take this issue lightly and reserve the right to fail a student from the course for cheating and/or plagiarizing. For more information, please see the University's statement on academic honesty.

Use of Generative AI. Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared by the student and the student alone. Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace. Therefore, AI-generated submissions are *not* permitted and will be treated as plagiarism.

E-mail and Communication. I respond to student e-mails within 24 to 36 hours on the weekdays, from around 9am to 5pm. I generally do not respond to e-mail on the weekends, so your best bet is to contact me during the weekdays.

Please stay in touch. I don't need all the specific details, but should extenuating circumstances arise that prevent you from completing your coursework please let me know as soon as you are able to; please **do not** wait until the end of the semester.

Etiquette. When you contact me (or any other faculty for that matter), please observe appropriate e-mail formatting guidelines and etiquette. To insure a timely response, please include the following in your e-mail:

- A descriptive subject in the subject line that includes your (1) course number and section (found at the top of this syllabus) and (2) a brief description of the subject matter
- An appropriate greeting with the recipients preferred title (Dr. Naasz or Professor Naasz are both appropriate)
- A brief description of the reason for the e-mail
- Full sentences with punctuation
- Your full legal name (as it appears in the class roster)

Grade Appeals. If you wish you to contest a grade, you must submit a written appeal over e-mail logically explaining why you think your assignment should be reviewed. Your appeal must be submitted within one week of the grade posting.

Student Academic Progress. Students are encouraged to discuss academic goals and degree completion with their instructors. Specific advising is available throughout the semester from academic advisors and career specialists.

7. UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A&M-San Antonio Academic Policies. See the current *A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook*

You can find the complete listing of the University's policies and resources under the 'Syllabus and Course Calendar' link on the sidebar in Blackboard.

8. TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Please see 'Syllabus and Course Calendar' link in Blackboard for detailed and printable reading schedule.

This is a tentative reading and course schedule and is subject to change. I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as necessary. I will notify students should changes be made.

Unit	Week	Dates	Topic	Reading	Graded Work (due date)	Notes
					*All graded work is due by 11:59pm CT on the indicated date	
I. Foundations of American Government	1	January 14 – 20	Course Introduction	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 1 discussion forum open (closes January 27) <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-test (January 20) <input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus reconnaissance activity (January 20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Familiarize yourself with the syllabus, course calendar, and Blackboard course page.</i> • <i>Source a copy of the textbook by the end of this week</i>
	2	January 21 – 27	Politics and Citizenship	*Chapter 1	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 2 discussion forum open (closes February 3)	
	3	January 27 – February 3	The Founding of the United States	*Chapter 2	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 3 discussion forum open (closes February 10) <input type="checkbox"/> Case study part 1 (February 3)	

	4	February 4 – 10	Civil Liberties	*Chapter 3 (section 3.2 – 3.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 4 discussion forum open (closes February 17)	NOTE: You will only be reading the first part of Chapter 3 this week
	5	February 11 – 17	Civil Rights	*Chapter 3 (section 3.5 – 3.10)	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 5 discussion forum open (closes February 24) <input type="checkbox"/> Case study part 2 (February 17)	NOTE: You will only be reading the last part of Chapter 3 this week
II. Formal Institutions of American Government	6	February 18 – 24	The Legislature	*Chapter 4	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 6 discussion forum open (closes March 2)	
	7	February 25 – March 2	The Executive Branch and the Federal Bureaucracy	*Chapter 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 7 discussion forum open (closes March 9)	
	8	March 3 – 9	The Judicial Branch	*Chapter 6	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 8 discussion forum open (closes March 23) <input type="checkbox"/> Case study part 3 (March 9)	
	9	March 10 – 16 (SPRING BREAK)		N/A	N/A	

III. Political Behavior and Informal Institutions of American Government	10	March 17 – 23	Political Parties	*Chapter 7 (Introduction – section 7.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 10 discussion forum open (closes March 30)	NOTE: You will only be reading the first part of Chapter 7 this week
	11	March 24 – 30	Interest Groups	*Chapter 7 (Section 7.5 – 7.7)	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 11 discussion forum open (closes April 6)	NOTE: You will only be reading the last part of Chapter 7 this week
	12	March 31 – April 6	Voting and Political Participation	*Chapter 8	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 12 discussion forum open (closes April 13)	
	13	April 7 – 13	The Media	*Chapter 9	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 13 discussion forum open (closes April 20) <input type="checkbox"/> Case study part 4 (April 13)	<i>April 13: Last day to drop with 'W'</i>
IV. Public Policy	14	April 14 – 20	Domestic Policy	*Chapter 10 (section 10.1 – 10.4)	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 14 discussion forum open (closes April 27)	NOTE: You will only be reading the first part of Chapter 10 this week
	15	April 21 – 27	Foreign Policy	*Chapter 10 (section 10.5 – end)	<input type="checkbox"/> Week 15 (last) discussion forum open (closes April 27) <input type="checkbox"/> Post-test (April 27) <input type="checkbox"/> Final projects (May 4)	NOTE: You will only be reading the last part of Chapter 10 this week <i>April 29: Last day of classes</i>