



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
**SAN ANTONIO**

Department of Criminology and Political Science

Eugen L. Nagy, Lecturer

Spring 2025

Office: CAB 351 I

GOVT 2305-001, Federal Government

Office hrs: Wed 2:00-3:00pm & by appt.

Class: MW 8:00-9:15 am

Email: use Blackboard messaging

Classroom: CAB 334

### **Federal Government**

#### **DESCRIPTION**

Within this course, the students will become familiar with the origins, development, structure and functioning of the institutions of the American political system, with a focus on the federal level of government. We will examine the American political system from *historical*, *institutional* and *comparative* perspectives, studying the process of nation- and state-building; the origins and development of the institutions of the federal government; the history and organization of American political parties; the elections processes; the structure and operation of the three branches of the federal government etc. During this process, the students will also acquire some of the key concepts and tools of the discipline of political science, learning how to apply them to American politics.

#### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

By the end of the semester, the students will possess a solid understanding of the foundations, development, structure and functioning of the principal institutions and actors of the American political system, and of the federal model of organizing the state. The overarching goal is to help the students see American politics “from the outside,” as it were, going beyond the usual preconceptions or partisan debates of the moment, and being able to explain and discuss American politics with the tools of the discipline of political science. This will empower the students to become better informed, more active, and intentional citizens, who truly understand the functioning of American politics, and who are able to participate and make their mark on it, if they so desire.



In addition, throughout the semester the students will also acquire and practice a number of study and learning skills: from how to close-read a text, to conceptualizing with precision and clarity; from taking good notes and reviewing the studied material, to planning one's work and synthesizing what one has studied; and from test-taking skills, to learning from the feedback received.

## **CLASS WORK**

### ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

We will meet in the classroom every Monday and Wednesday, with the exceptions noted in [TAMUSA's academic calendar](#). **Attendance is mandatory**, as the most important teaching and learning tool in this course is represented by the **class lectures**. This means that you can only succeed in this class if you attend each class, pay close attention, and take good and detailed lecture notes.

You are expected to actively participate in our common classroom work (classroom discussions). **Student participation** is evaluated on an ongoing basis and is graded separately.

Together, attendance and participation will make up the **A&P portion of your final grade**.

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

**Pop-quizzes** might also be administered at any point in time during our classes. Such pop-quizzes will count toward your overall **A&P grade**.

**Other activities**, such as attending talks, campus events or field trips, as specified by the instructor, or completing specific surveys or written evaluations indicated by the instructor, might also be included in our activities during the semester. Some of these might yield points counting (again) toward the **A&P grade**. Specific information regarding such potential activities will be provided if and when needed.



## CLASS CANCELLATION

If a class is cancelled due to unexpected circumstances, we will do our best to make up for it through **video lectures and online graded assignments**, which will count toward your **A&P grade**.

## DISCIPLINE

Whenever we meet, you are expected to be an **active and respectful member of our learning community**. Positive participation is encouraged, and will contribute to a better grade. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated, and shall result in: expulsion from class; deduction of points from the A&P grade; expulsion from the entire course; reporting to the disciplinary bodies of the university; reporting to University Police; an **automatic F grade for the entire class** etc. Repeated disciplinary issues will lead to consequences ranging from deduction of points from the A&P grade, to expulsion from the course.

In this class, **electronic devices** (smartphones, laptops etc.) can only be used **in order to take notes**, or to consult materials specifically indicated by the instructor. Using them for any other purpose in class is **forbidden**, and is considered a disciplinary infraction, that will lead to the disciplinary measures listed above. The use of any other kind of electronic devices (such as headphones etc.) is forbidden, as well.

## COMMUNICATION

All email communication in this class will take place exclusively **through Blackboard messaging**. The normal answer time period during regular business days is 24 hours. This does not apply to weekends (Sat-Sun), or any other non-working days, when work-related communication is not being checked.

## EXAMINATIONS & GRADING

**SECTIONS & TESTS:** The course is organized into **four sections**, each of them several weeks long, and dealing with one general subject area:

- S1: Nation- & State-Building



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- S2: Parties & Congress
- S3: Presidency & Federal Administration
- S4: Policy Making & Federal Judiciary.

. **After each section there will be a test** on the material covered in that section (four tests in total). The tests are made of **short-answer questions**. There will be **no final cumulative test**, which means that you will have the opportunity to perform equally well on each section, and on each test. This also means that you will have to keep the same level of effort and investment in our common work, throughout the semester (throughout each section).

**GRADING:** The main components of the final grade are listed below. Each of these components will receive a letter grade. Note that for individual tests and for the attendance & participation (AP) grade, we will use the traditional higher education grading scale (with minus and plus): A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C- etc.

*Test 1 (Nation- & State-Building): 20%*

*Test 2 (Parties & Congress): 20%*

*Test 3 (Presidency & Federal Administration): 20%*

*Test 4 (Policy Making & Federal Judiciary): 20%*

*Attendance & Participation: 20%*

In order to calculate the final grade, use the numeric equivalents of the letter grades for each component (eg. A=4.0, A-=3.7, B+=3.3, B=3.0, B-=2.7, C+=2.3 etc.), according to the formula below:

$$\text{Final Grade} = T1*20\% + T2*20\% + T3*20\% + T4*20\% + AP*20\%$$

Additional information and clarifications will be given in class and on Blackboard.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

All forms of **academic dishonesty** (*cheating, plagiarism etc.*) will be addressed promptly and with severity. Measures include: an F for the given assignment; an F for the entire course; expulsion from the course; reporting to the disciplinary bodies of the university etc. These



measures are at the discretion of the instructor.

The use of AI tools to complete any assignments in this class is forbidden.

## **SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS**

Texas A&M University – San Antonio has a range of services dedicated to student success and well-being. These resources are listed and described in detail in the IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES section of this syllabus (*see below*). Know how these resources can assist you, and do not be reluctant to use them; remember, your mental and physical health should always be your first concern!

If you are registered with DSS and need specific arrangements either in terms of the class work or for test taking, please make sure to inform the instructor ahead of time.

Overall, make sure to maintain a constant channel of communication with the instructor, and to let him know as early as possible if issues or problems occur that might have a negative impact on your attendance and work in this class.

## **STUDY MATERIALS**

The **study / learning materials** that we will use in this class are the following:

- class lecture notes
- textbook
- Blackboard materials.

**Lecture notes:** This is the most important teaching and learning tool in this class, so make sure that you attend each class, and that you take precise and detailed lecture notes. In this sense, it is a good idea to periodically exchange class notes with your colleagues, to make sure that you have the most comprehensive and precise information at hand.

**Textbook:** Theodore J Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg et al. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. Seventeenth Edition. W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN-13: 9781324039631  
ISBN-10: 1324039639

The best way to use the textbook is to read the sections assigned for each class (for each week), before coming to class.



**Blackboard materials:** Additional study materials will be posted on Blackboard on an ongoing basis. All materials posted on Blackboard constitute mandatory reading and examination materials.

## **PLANNING YOUR WORK**

### **SYLLABUS SCHEDULE**

The general schedule of work posted below is **for orientation purposes only**. In actuality, the pacing and rhythm of every class is decided by our common work, and each learning community has a slightly different pace of work. Accordingly, the general schedule included below will be modified, adjusted, updated and improved on an ongoing basis, to reflect the actual pace of the work, and to fit the goals of the course.

### **WEEKLY WORK PLAN**

This is why your actual planning tool in this course is represented by the **Weekly Work Plan** that is posted before every week, and which contains the up-to-date information regarding what we will discuss that week, for every class; the readings that you need to complete for that week; announcements regarding upcoming tests, or other evaluations or events; as well as other important information regarding our work in this course. Make sure therefore **to read and to follow the Weekly Work Plan before each week**.

### **HOW TO SUCCEED**

The best way to do well in this class is as follows:

- plan your work for each week, using the Weekly Work Plan
- read the assigned textbook sections, before coming to class
- attend every class, and take precise and detailed lecture notes
- participate actively in our classroom discussions
- use the Review Topics documents to prepare for the tests
- do equally well on each test, focusing only on the section covered by that test.



## **SCHEDULE**

### **WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION**

*Jan 21-26*

Syllabus. Work Plan. Expectations.

## ----- **SECTION 1: NATION- & STATE-BUILDING** -----

### **WEEK 2 NATION- & STATE-BUILDING**

*Jan 27-Feb 2*

Concepts. The rise of the modern state.

Competing colonialisms in North America.

From British colonies to independent statehood.

### **WEEK 3 NATION- & STATE-BUILDING**

*Feb 3-9*

The Declaration of Independence.

Concepts. The Confederation. Toward a new Constitution.

Federalists and anti-federalists.

### **WEEK 4 NATION- & STATE-BUILDING**

*Feb 10-16*

The Constitution - institutions.

The Constitution - federalism.

The Constitution - separation of powers & sharing-in powers.



----- **SECTION 2: PARTIES & CONGRESS** -----

WEEK 5 PARTIES & CONGRESS

*Feb 17-23*

The Bill of Rights.

***TEST 1 – Nation- & State-Building.***

WEEK 6 PARTIES & CONGRESS

*Feb 24-Mar 2*

Concepts. Formation of political parties.

Development of the US party system.

Realignments.

WEEK 7 PARTIES & CONGRESS

*Mar 3-9*

The two-party system. Third parties. Political parties today.

Nomination process: development.

Congressional elections: development.

~ SPRING BREAK ~

*Mar 10-16*

WEEK 8 PARTIES & CONGRESS

*Mar 17-23*

Congressional campaigns.

Congress & its functions. Representation.

Leadership structures.





WEEK 9 PRESIDENCY & FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION

*Mar 24-30*

The committee system. CMOs.

Congressional staff. Lawmaking process.

----- **SECTION 3: PRESIDENCY & FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION** -----

WEEK 10 PRESIDENCY & FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION

*Mar 31-Apr 6*

***TEST 2 – Parties & Congress.***

Presidency: the elections process (origins & development).

WEEK 11 PRESIDENCY & FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION

*Apr 7-13*

Presidential campaigns: actors, money, strategies.

The presidency – powers & development.

The Vice-President. The Cabinet.

The White House. The EOP.

WEEK 12 PRESIDENCY & FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION

*Apr 14-20*

The federal administration – concepts.

The federal administration – structure.

The functioning of the bureaucracy.

----- **FOURTH SECTION** -----

WEEK 13 POLICY MAKING & FEDERAL JUDICIARY

*Apr 21-27*

***TEST 3 – Presidency & Federal Administration.***

The Federal Budget.



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WEEK 14 POLICY MAKING & FEDERAL JUDICIARY

*Apr 28 - May 4*

Federalism: development.

The US judicial system.

The federal courts.

WEEK 15 POLICY MAKING & FEDERAL JUDICIARY

*May 5*

The Supreme Court.

FINALS WEEK

*May 7-13*

***TEST 4 – Policy Making & Federal Judiciary***



## **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](mailto: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](mailto: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.



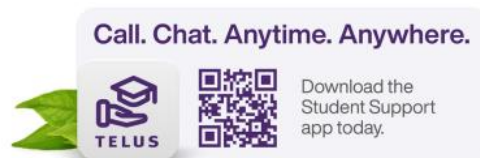
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All mental health services provided by the SCC are free and confidential (as the law allows). The Student Counseling Center provides brief individual and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For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

*Crisis support is available 24/7 by calling 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),



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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



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Benefits. Visit the Patriots' Casa building, room 202, or to contact the Office of Military Affairs with any questions at [military.va@tamusa.edu](mailto: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



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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](mailto: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](mailto: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>).



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**Use of AI tools.** In GOVT 2305 it is expected 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.

**Important Dates:**

The complete Academic Calendar for Spring 2025 is available online:

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