

GOVT 2305: Federal Government section 004

Spring 2026

General Information

Course & Section #	GOVT 2305-004
Term & Years	Spring 2026
Course Schedule	Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00pm-3:15pm
Course Location	Central Academic Building 337

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

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.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course students should be able to demonstrate knowledge of the following topics

1. The origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States
2. The federal system
3. Separation of powers and check and balances in both theory and practice
4. The legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government
5. The role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system
6. The election process
7. The rights and liberties of people in the United States
8. The close reading of important historical texts
9. The basics of descriptive data analysis

Required Course Materials

American Government: A Brief Introduction 18th Edition, Theodore J Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A Shepsle, Stephen Ansolabehere, Hahrie Han. 2025. **Free through Blackboard**

“Are We Alone in the Universe” Charles Krauthamer *Washington Post* December 29, 2011 (on Blackboard)

Declaration of Independence (on Blackboard)

U.S. Constitution (on Blackboard)

“Letter from Birmingham Jail” Martin Luther King Jr. (on Blackboard)

Course Requirements

Exams - There are two exams in this course, a midterm and a final exam. The exams will take place in class and are scheduled in the syllabus (see below). Each exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The midterm exam will be worth 125 points and the final exam will be worth 175 points. A study guide will be provided prior to each exam, and we will also have an in-class review session prior to each exam. (300 total points)

Quizzes - There are 11 weekly quizzes in this course. Each quiz will cover the chapter for that week and any additional reading assigned. Each quiz is worth 12 points with 1 point per question. I will drop the lowest quiz score and make up quizzes will only be given in the case of excused class absences (120 total points)

Writing Assignments – There are two writing assignments in this course. The due dates for the assignments are below, and each assignment will require students to use a readily available data source or a primary written source to answer specific questions about American politics. Each assignment is worth 50 points and will be 3-5 pages in length (100 total points).

Participation/In class Assignments – The participation grade for class is based on two components – class participation and completion of in class assignments. For the most part if I can tell the student put in a good faith effort on the assignments and their participation, they will receive full credit but if not, they will be docked points. The assignments are designed to be completed in class so that means students must be present in class to participate. Make up in-class assignments will be given only when the students are gone from class for an excused absence (i.e., illness or university sponsored event) (100 total points)

Grade Breakdown

Grade Table

GRADE	EQUIVALENT POINTS
A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%

GRADE	EQUIVALENT POINTS
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. To be eligible for a make-up quiz or exam, or for turning in a late assignment a student must have an excused absence from class. Excused absences are those where a student cannot attend class because of an illness, family emergency, or because they are attending a school sponsored event on or off campus.

Electronics Policy

Students can use laptops and/or tablets in class if they feel they are helpful for their educational experience. However, as the professor, 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 accept late writing assignments for one week passed the deadline, but those late assignments must be for excused absences only. I will also allow make up quizzes but again only for excused absences only. 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 excused absences (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 this [website](#)

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 online at this [website](#)

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

Academic Freedom Statement

Higher education is predicated on the exchange, vetting, and deliberation of often controversial and unsettled ideas. In this class, for example, we explore how the discipline of political science has addressed issues of racial justice in American politics. We are not here to simply express personal opinions or repeat talking points, but rather to engage a set of ideas and research findings that have a long and complicated history and are therefore subject to ongoing debate. Committed students and scholars can, and do, disagree on the topics we will be discussing.

The syllabus has been designed to bring these controversies and disagreements to the fore. Students are also invited to introduce additional challenges in a serious and open-minded manner.

Such conversations require mutual trust and respect. It is therefore essential that students feel free to express their deeply held views and continually developing perspectives. This means ensuring that all students and faculty feel included and welcomed to engage in discussion. Because hateful or discriminatory speech and behavior degrades the possibility for a free exchange of ideas, it will not be tolerated.

Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Class Schedule Table

WEEK	TOPICS COVERED	ASSIGNED READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
WEEK 1 (JANUARY 20, 22)	What is Politics?	Syllabus, <i>American Government</i> Chapter 1, <i>Are we alone in the Universe</i>	No Assignments due
WEEK 2 (JANUARY 27, 29)	America's Founding and the Constitution	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 2, <i>Declaration</i>	Quiz #1 on January 29th

WEEK	TOPICS COVERED	ASSIGNED READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
		<i>of Independence, U.S. Constitution</i>	
WEEK 3 (FEBRUARY 3, 5)	Federalism and Separation of Powers	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 3, <i>Federalist Papers</i> #10 and #51	Quiz #2 on February 5th
WEEK 4 (FEBRUARY 10, 12)	Civil Liberties	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 4 up to the Bill of Rights today section	Quiz #3 on February 12th
WEEK 5 (FEBRUARY 17, 19)	Civil Rights	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 4 continuing to the Conclusion section, <i>Letter From Birmingham Jail</i>	Quiz #4 on February 19th
WEEK 6 (FEBRUARY 24, 26)	Congress: The Legislative Branch	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 5	Quiz #5 on February 26 th
WEEK 7 (MARCH 3, 5)	Midterm Exam	No Reading Assignment	Writing Assignment #1 due on March 3rd, Mid Term Exam on March 5th
WEEK 8 (MARCH 10, 12)	Spring Break	No Reading Assignment	No Class and No Assignments Due
WEEK 9 (MARCH 17, 19)	The Institutional Presidency	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 6	Quiz #6 on March 19th
WEEK 10 (MARCH 24, 26)	The Federal Courts	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 8	Quiz #7 on March 26th
WEEK 11 (MARCH 31, APRIL 2)	Public Opinion and the Media	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 9	Quiz #8 on April 2nd
WEEK 12 (APRIL 7, 9)	Federal Elections	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 10	Quiz #9 on April 9th
WEEK 13 (APRIL 14, 16)	Political Parties	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 11	Quiz #10 on April 16th
WEEK 14 (APRIL 21, 23)	Interest Groups	<i>American Government</i> Chapter 12	Quiz #11 on April 23rd
WEEK 15 (APRIL 28, 30)	Review Week	No Reading Assignment	Writing Assignment #2 due on April 28th

WEEK	TOPICS COVERED	ASSIGNED READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
WEEK 16 (MAY 12)	Final Exam	No Reading Assignment	Final Exam on 5/12 at 2pm

Important Policies and Resources

University Email Policy and Course Communications:

All correspondence between professors and students must occur via University email accounts. You must have your Jaguar email account ready and working. If it is not working, contact the help desk at helpdesk@tamusa.edu or at 210-784-HELP (4357). If you don't hear back within 48 hours, contact them again. They have many requests during the first part of the semester, so you may need to follow up with them.

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 at the [website](#) 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:

All currently enrolled students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio can utilize the Academic Learning Center for subject-area tutoring. 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. Online tutoring is also available for after hours and weekend assistance.

While tutoring hours may change based on tutor schedules and availability, the current tutoring hours for MATH in the ALC are as follows:

Tutoring Schedule Table

	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
MONDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
TUESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm

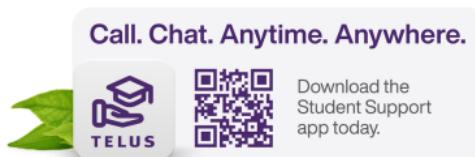
	Appointments available	Walk in Tutoring – No appointment needed
WEDNESDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
THURSDAY	8 am – 6 pm	9 am – 5 pm
FRIDAY	8 am – 5 pm	11 am – 4 pm

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, visit our website, call 210-784-1331 or visit Madla 120 between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM.

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. **Crisis support is available 24/7/365 by calling the SCC at 210-784-1331 or through the TELUS student support App.**

The TELUS Student Support App provides a variety of mental health resources to including 24/7/365 support for in the moment distress, crisis support, 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](#). Download the SafeZone App (access the app [here](#)) 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.

[Jaguar Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center \(WLDCC\):](#)

The Jaguar Writing Center provides writing support to graduate and undergraduate students in all three colleges as well as faculty and staff. Writing 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. The Writing Center offers face-to-face, synchronous online, and asynchronous digital appointments. Students can schedule appointments with the Writing Center in JagWire under the Student Services tab. Click on “Writing, Language, and Digital Composing Center” to make your appointment. Students wanting to work in realtime with a tutor can schedule an “Online Appointment.” Students wishing to receive asynchronous, written feedback from a tutor can schedule an “eTutoring” appointment. More information about what services we offer, how to make an appointment, and how to access your appointment can be found on our [website](#). The Writing Center can also be reached by emailing writingcenter@tamusa.edu.

[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 report](#) for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable them to direct you to available resources. A food pantry is available on campus; click [here](#) for hours and contact information.

[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 on our campus and within our state, nation, and world. All decisions and actions involving students and employees are to 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, or pregnancy/parenting status. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or discrimination prohibited by this statement are encouraged to contact the University's Civil Rights Officer at 210-784-2061 or titleix@tamusa.edu.

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 discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic or dating violence, or stalking based on sex, 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 sex-based 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. Young Jaguars can support parenting students with daycare if students meet this criteria: (1) must be enrolled in classes at Texas A&M-San Antonio in the current semester, (2) must be Pell eligible or a single parent, (3) child(ren) must be aged 3 to 12-years-old, and (4) child(ren) must be enrolled in Pre-K-3 through 6th grade. For more information, please contact Young Jaguars at youngjaguars@tamusa.edu or call (210) 784-2636.

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, 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](#) or visit the resources available in the [OSRR website](#)

Important Dates: Fall 2025 Regular 16-Week Session

Important Dates Table

Dates	Event
January 13	Tuition & Fee Payments deadline
January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. – No Classes
January 20	First day of class
February 4	Census date
February 23-March 6	Midterm grading period
March 9-March 14	Spring Break
April 3	Study Day – No classes
April 17	Last day to drop with an automatic “W”
May 1	Last day to drop a course or withdraw from the University
May 4	Last day of classes
May 5	Study Day – No classes
May 6-May 12	Final exams
May 19	Commencement

The complete [academic calendar](#) is available online

