

GOVT 2305: Federal Government

Texas A&M University- San Antonio
Department of Criminology and Political Science
Spring 2026
Section 602: Online Asynchronous

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Office Hours: 9:30-10:30 and 12:30-1:30 Mondays and Wednesdays, in office and on

Zoom: <https://tamusa.zoom.us/j/4999465807>

Zoom appointments available upon request.

Course Description:

This course examines the origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, the 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.

Learning Outcomes:

After completing GOVT 2305 students will have an understanding of:

- The origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
- The federal system.
- Separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
- The legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
- The role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
- The election process.
- The rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Required Textbook:

American Government: Power & Purpose, 18th edition by Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, Stephen Ansolabehere, and Hahrie Han.
Publisher: W.W. Norton and Company

The textbook will be available to students with no charge on Blackboard.

Additional material may be posted on Blackboard.

Assignments and Grading:

Course Structure

This course is organized into four modules, each containing four lessons. For every lesson, you will:

- Read the assigned textbook chapter(s)
- Review the materials posted in the course

Each module's assignments will be available for a four-week period (refer to the course calendar for specific dates).

Grading Components

Your final grade will be based on the following:

Quizzes – 16 total (25%)

- Each lesson includes a quiz covering the readings and posted materials.
- Quizzes consist of multiple choice and true/false questions.
- You will have 15 minutes to complete each quiz.
- Four quizzes will be available during each module's four-week window.

Writing Assignments – 2 total (25%)

- You will complete two essays, each approximately 500 words.
- APA citation format is required.
- Assignments will be given during Modules 1 and 3.

Exams – 2 total (50%)

- Exams will be administered during Modules 2 and 4.
- Each exam will be open for one week at the end of its respective module.
- Exam 1 covers Modules 1 and 2; Exam 2 covers Modules 3 and 4.
- Exams are not cumulative.
- Each exam includes multiple choice and short answer questions (1–2 paragraph responses).
- You will have 2 hours to complete each exam.
- Exams require the Respondus LockDown Browser. Instructions for downloading and using the browser are available in the Information tab on Blackboard.

Grading Scale

Final grades will be assigned as follows:

- **A:** 90–100%
- **B:** 80–89%
- **C:** 70–79%
- **D:** 60–69%
- **F:** 59% or below

Census Date:

The census date for this course is February 4th. To confirm your attendance and engagement, you must complete a short, one-question Census Date Quiz, located in the Quizzes and Exams tab.

- This quiz does not count toward your grade.
- Please complete it as soon as possible after joining or adding the course.
- Failure to complete the quiz may be interpreted as non-participation and could result in being dropped from the course.

If you have any questions or issues accessing the quiz, please reach out right away.

Course Calendar:

Please note that I reserve the right to add or subtract readings to adequately cover all topic areas for the course. Any changes will be announced on Blackboard the week prior to the original assignment.

Module	Dates	Topics	Assignments	Open Date	Due Date
1	January 20-February 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and the Constitution • Federalism • Civil Rights • Civil Liberties 	Quiz 1 Quiz 2 Quiz 3 Quiz 4 Writing Assignment 1	January 20	February 15
2*	February 16-March 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress • President • Executive Branch • Judiciary 	Quiz 5 Quiz 6 Quiz 7 Quiz 8 Exam 1	Quizzes: February 16 Exam: March 16	All Assignments: March 22
3	March 16-April 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Opinion • Elections • Political Parties • Organized Interests 	Quiz 9 Quiz 10 Quiz 11 Quiz 12 Writing Assignment 2	March 16	April 12
4	April 13- May 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media • Economic Policy • Social Policy • Foreign Policy 	Quiz 13 Quiz 14 Quiz 15 Quiz 16 Exam 2	Quizzes: April 13 Exam: May 4	All Assignments: May 12

* Modules 2 and 3 overlap due to timing of Spring Break.

Course Policies:

Expectations

“Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities for all of the classes for which they are registered.” ([A&M-SA attendance policy](#))

This is an asynchronous course, which means you are not required to attend class at specific times. However, regular engagement with the course materials is essential for success.

I strongly encourage you to:

- Check Blackboard frequently
- Pace yourself by spreading out your work over the time assignments are available
- Avoid waiting until the last few hours before a deadline to complete your work

Consistent participation and time management will help you stay on track and get the most out of the course.

Communication

For all course-related messages, please use the Messages feature in Blackboard. This helps keep communication organized and ensures I see your message promptly.

If you choose to email me directly via my university email, please include the course number (GOVT 2305) in the subject line to help me identify your message quickly.

I aim to respond to all messages within 24 hours, though replies may take longer on weekends and holidays.

Late Work

Missed assignments cannot be made up unless you provide a documented university-approved excuse.

- If you know in advance that you'll miss a deadline, please notify me before the due date.
- If you miss a deadline unexpectedly, contact me as soon as possible after the assignment is due.

If you do not have an approved excuse, late submissions will be accepted with a penalty of 10% per business day. I encourage you to reach out quickly to discuss arrangements for submitting late work.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

This course 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.

University Policies:

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 as soon as possible.

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 <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 with 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.

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 students' 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-andresponsibilities/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/academicintegrity.html>).