

POLS 206: American National Government

Texas A&M University

Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Dominique Lewis

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Office hours:

Last names A - L: Tuesdays, 1 pm - 2 pm

Last names M - Z: Wednesdays, 10 am - 11 am

Please see page 2 for more information about office hours.

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the government and political processes of the United States. The course will begin with a discussion of the foundations of our governmental system including the adoption of the Constitution and the importance of federalism. We will turn to the core political institutions and their functions, namely the three branches of government and the federal bureaucracy. Finally, the course will acquaint you with the complexities of the American political system with discussions about campaigns and elections, political parties, and political behavior.

To put it another way: the first half of the course will focus on the rules of the game (political institutions), while the second half of the course will focus on the game (politics). You must first understand the rules if you want to participate in the game. At the end of this course, you will be better equipped to critically observe and discuss current political events.

Course Learning Outcomes

- To understand the structures and processes of American government and politics, the collective action challenges inherent in this system, and the practical implications of political structure and contestation in our lives.
- To sharpen our ability to think critically about the American political system by reading both contemporary and classic materials from a variety of sources that encompasses both objective and opinion-based points of view.
- To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political debates.

Course Materials

Required textbook

- *Texas A&M University POLS 206 American National Government Electronic Edition*. CQ Press. ISBN number: 978-1071838747. You have two options for the REQUIRED textbook:

- The eBook option: [Textbook link](#)
- If you would also like the print version, you can purchase the print version at the A&M bookstore and that will come with the access code for the online version. **YOU MUST HAVE ACCESS TO THE ELECTRONIC VERSION.**

Other required readings

- Any other readings outside of the textbook will be provided to you on our course page in Canvas (canvas.tamu.edu).

Course Structure

Online & Asynchronous

- This course is an asynchronous, online course. This will remain the case for the entire semester.
- The course is organized into “modules” on our Canvas course page. Each “module” corresponds to a week of course material.
- Modules will begin on Sunday of each week and end on Saturday of each week (except for the first and last week of class because those are much shorter weeks).
 - This DOES NOT mean that you have to do work on Saturday and Sunday. It means that the weekly course material will be available on Sundays and many of the course assignments will be due on Saturdays. You will have the entire week to turn in most assignments, so there is no reason to do your work on Saturdays or Sundays unless it is convenient for you! I am including Sundays and Saturdays as part of our week to make the class as flexible as possible for everyone.

Course Assignments

Readings: We will have readings every week and students are expected to complete the assigned readings prior to each class session. Lectures will supplement the readings, but will not cover everything you are expected to read. The readings are listed according to the date they should be completed. On occasion, you will be assigned to watch a short video instead and those will be available on Canvas.

Please consult the following links for descriptions of the course assignments:

- [Syllabus quiz](#)
- [Chapter quizzes](#)
- [Current event discussions](#)
- [Visual interpretation quizzes](#)
- [Muddiest point](#)
- [Exams](#)

Course communication

Slack: Our main mode of communication will be through Slack. Please follow the Slack directions I have provided [here](#).

Office hours: I will hold regular office hours through Zoom. I will have two different times by LAST NAME:

Last names A - L: Tuesdays, 1 pm - 2 pm, [Zoom link](#)

Last names M - Z: Wednesdays, 10 am - 11 am, [Zoom link](#)

If neither of these scheduled office hours works for you, you can send me a direct message on Slack to schedule another time to meet via Zoom. You can also send questions via our regular Slack channels.

Email: although I greatly prefer Slack, you can send me an email. This is especially true for sensitive documents like accommodations letters from disability services or to send excusal notes from your doctor, etc.

- Please make sure to use your TAMU email when sending an email to your professors.
- Make sure you only send emails to my TAMU email: dominique.lewis@tamu.edu.
- Please begin your email by addressing your professor by title and last name.
- End your email with your first and last name.
- Please make sure to specify that you are emailing about POLS206-Section *** because I have students from other courses and sections as well.
- If you do not get a response within 48 hours between Monday-Friday, it is very likely the answer is in the syllabus.

Grading Scale and Grade Breakdown

I do not round or “bump” grades. Once your grade is calculated following the third exam, **your grade is final**. I will not change a grade unless there is a miscalculation. Any request to change your grade, unless there is a miscalculation, is considered a violation of the Aggie Honor Code and will not be tolerated.

Grading Scale:

A	90 - 100%
B	80 - 89.99%
C	70 - 79.99%
D	60 - 69.99%
F	0 - 59.99%

Grade Breakdown:

Syllabus Quiz	2%
Highest Score Exam	20%
Median Score Exam	15%
Lowest Score Exam	15%
Chapter Quizzes	18%
Current events discussion	12%
Muddiest point	10%
Visual Interpretation quizzes	8%

Course Policies

Course make-up work policy: If you miss an exam on the scheduled date and you have an excused absence as defined by rule 7, you can schedule a make up with me without penalty (please see University Policies below for information regarding the university make-up work policy). If you do not have an excused absence, you can still take the exam, but I will deduct 5% every day past the exam deadline. For example, exam 1 takes place on September 21. If you take the make-up exam on September 23, then that is a 10% reduction. You should send me a slack message or an email ASAP to schedule a make-up for any missed exams. From Student Rule 7, the university requires a student to:

1. NOTIFY the professor in writing (acknowledged email message is acceptable) prior to the day of absence. In cases where advanced notification is not possible (i.e. hospitalization, emergency), the student must provide notification by the **end of the second business day after the last date of the absence**. This notification must include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to class (section 7.1).
2. The student is responsible for providing documentation substantiating the reason for the absence within three business days of the last date of the absence (section 7.3).
3. Students are encouraged to work with instructors to complete make-up work in advance of known scheduled absences (section 7.4).

For all other assignments (quizzes and discussions), you are able to drop at least one of the lowest grades. Please see the descriptions of course assignments in this syllabus for the exact policies for each assignment.

Statement about Course Materials/Copyright and Academic Dishonesty: The materials used in this course are copyrighted. By “materials,” I mean all products generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, webpages, powerpoint presentations, exams, readings, in-class materials, and review sheets. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy the materials, unless I expressly grant permission.

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. I take this matter very seriously. This includes, but is not limited to, copying any portion of another’s assignments, copying portions of books or websites without proper citation in your writing assignments, or in any other way claiming another’s work as your own. If you have any questions regarding this matter, please consult the Texas A&M University web site, <http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/>.

Statement on Group Messaging Apps (GroupMe, Slack, WhatsApp, etc.) and File Sharing (dropbox, google docs, etc.): Can your use of group messaging apps get you in trouble? The answer is YES. Participating in or joining a Group Messaging App is not an academic misconduct violation; however, the exchange of answers to graded work and the exchange of copyrighted materials are examples of academic misconduct.

Examples of appropriate group messaging activities are questions related to due dates or specific instructions about assignments or where to find materials on Canvas. Again, if you distribute answers to quizzes/tests to everyone in a group chat, then that is academic misconduct. If you upload answers to quizzes/tests to a file-sharing service and then allow people to access those notes, then that is academic misconduct.

Statement on study apps/websites such as Quizlet, StudyBlue, etc: you do not have permission to take materials from this course and make it public on apps/websites like quizlet. This includes but is not limited to:

- quiz material (questions & answers),
- exam material (questions & answers),
- material from lecture slides (definitions, direct language from slides, etc)

You may use websites like quizlet, but **you must set any material related to this course to PRIVATE**. This is different from password protected. This link explains the difference and how to make those changes: [quizlet link](#). I check these websites frequently; if you violate this rule, those sets will get removed.

University Policies

Attendance policy: I was not allowed to change the wording from the university even though I will not take attendance in this class since it is taught asynchronously. This is the university policy on attendance: “The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments. Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.”

Makeup Work Policy: Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student’s grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

- Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.
- “Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#))
- “The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence” ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#))
- Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. See [Student Rule 24](#).

Campus Safety Measures (COVID-19): To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University has adopted policies and practices for the Fall 2020 academic term to limit virus transmission. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses and course-related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.):

- Self-monitoring: Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. **Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely and should not participate in face-to-face instruction.**

- Face coverings: [Face coverings](#) (cloth face covering, surgical mask, etc.) must be properly worn in all non-private spaces including classrooms, teaching laboratories, common spaces such as lobbies and hallways, public study spaces, libraries, academic resource and support offices, and outdoor spaces where 6 feet of physical distancing is difficult to reliably maintain. Description of face coverings and additional guidance are provided in the [Face covering policy](#) and the [FAQ](#) available on the Provost website.
- Physical Distancing: Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in course and course-related activities.
- Classroom Ingress/Egress: Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.
- To attend a face-to-face class, students must wear a face covering (or a face shield if they have an exemption letter). If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the [Student Conduct office](#) for sanctions. Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day's class remotely for all students.

Personal Illness and Quarantine: Students required to quarantine must participate in courses and course-related activities remotely and **must not attend face-to-face course activities**. Students should notify their instructors of the quarantine requirement. Students under quarantine are expected to participate in courses and complete graded work unless they have symptoms that are too severe to participate in course activities.

Students experiencing personal injury or illness that is too severe for the student to attend class qualify for an excused absence (See [Student Rule 7, Section 7.2.2](#). To receive an excused absence, student must comply with the documentation and notification guidelines outlined in Student Rule 7. While Student Rule 7, Section 7.3.2.1, indicates a medical confirmation note from the student's medical provider is preferred, **for Fall 2020 only, students may use the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class form in lieu of a medical confirmation. Students must submit the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class within three business days after the last date of absence.**

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy:

An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do.

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" [Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#).

You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at [.](#)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy: Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to

your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit . 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 Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality: Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, you will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University’s goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University’s [Title IX Webpage](#).

Operational Details for Fall 2020 Courses: for additional information, please review the [FAQ](#) on Fall 2020 courses at Texas A&M University.

Course Calendar

Topic schedule: *Given the nature of pandemics, it may be necessary to change our schedule to align with university requirements. Furthermore, I reserve the right to change the following calendar in order to ensure that we spend adequate time on each topic. Of course, if such changes are necessary, I will make an announcement to the class.*

Week	Dates	Topic	Textbook chapter
Week 1	Aug. 19 - 22	Course introduction	Chapter 1
Week 2	Aug. 23 - 29	U.S. constitution	Chapter 2
Week 3	Aug. 30 - Sep. 5	U.S. federalism	Chapter 3
Week 4	Sep. 6 - 12	Civil rights	Chapter 4
Week 5	Sep. 13 - 19	Civil liberties	Chapter 5
Week 6	Sep. 20 - 26	Legislative branch	Chapter 6
Week 7	Sep. 27 - Oct. 3	Executive branch	Chapter 7
Week 8	Oct. 4 - 10	Judicial branch	Chapter 9
Week 9	Oct. 11 - 17	Federal bureaucracy	Chapter 8
Week 10	Oct. 18 - 24	Elections	Chapter 11
Week 11	Oct. 25 - 31	Interest groups	Chapter 13
Week 12	Nov. 1 - 7	Political parties	Chapter 12
Week 13	Nov. 8 - 14	Public opinion	Chapter 10
Week 14	Nov. 15 - 21	News media	Chapter 14
Week 15	Nov. 22 - 24	TBA	TBA

Due dates

Given the nature of pandemics, it may be necessary to change our schedule to align with university requirements. Furthermore, I reserve the right to change the following calendar in order to ensure that we spend adequate time on each topic. Of course, if such changes are necessary, I will make an announcement to the class.

Assignment key	
Assignment name	Abbreviation
Muddiest point	M.P.
Current events	C.E.
Visual interpretation	V.I.

Week	Date/Time	Assignment(s)
Week 1	Aug. 22 11:59 PM	-Syllabus quiz
Week 2	Aug. 26 11:59 PM	-Course survey
	Aug. 29 11:59 PM	-Chapter 2 quiz -M.P. week 2
Week 3	Aug. 31 11:59 PM	-V.I. Quiz 1
	Sep. 5 11:59 PM	-C.E. week 3 -M.P. week 3
Week 4	Sep. 12 11:59 PM	-Chapter 4 quiz -M.P. week 4
Week 5	Sep. 19 11:59 PM	-C.E. week 5 -M.P. week 5
Week 6	Sep. 21 11:59 PM	-Exam 1
	Sep. 26 11:59 PM	-Chapter 6 quiz -M.P. week 6
Week 7	Sep. 28 11:59 PM	-V.I. quiz 2
	Oct. 3 11:59 PM	-C.E. week 7 -M.P. week 7
Week 8	Oct. 10 11:59 pm	-Chapter 9 quiz -M.P. week 8
Week 9	Oct. 17 11:59 PM	-C.E. week 9 -M.P. week 9
Week 10	Oct. 19 11:59 PM	-Exam 2
	Oct. 24 11:59 PM	-Chapter 11 quiz -M.P. week 10
Week 11	Oct. 26 11:59 PM	-V.I. quiz 3
	Oct. 31 11:59 PM	-C.E. week 11 -M.P. week 11
Week 12	Nov. 2 11:59 PM	-V.I. quiz 4
	Nov. 7 11:59 PM	-Chapter 13 quiz -M.P. week 12
Week 13	Nov. 14 11:59 PM	-C.E. week 13 -M.P. week 13
Week 14	Nov. 16 11:59 PM	-V.I. quiz 5
	Nov. 21 11:59 PM	-Chapter 14 quiz -M.P. week 14
Week 15	Nov. 24 11:59 PM	-C.E. week 15 -M.P. week 15