

# Federal Government; PS 2305

## Sul Ross State University; Fall, 2020

## Course Syllabus

### Course Description

Designed to give students a more in-depth understanding of how the federal government works in this media age, the course will cover the U.S. Constitution, the structure and power of the federal government including the legislative, executive and judicial branches, the role and impact of the media, as well as federalism and the relationship between the state and federal governments, political participation and modern day challenges of governing.

Course participants will be required to complete assigned readings and homework assignments, participate actively in class discussions, keep track of current events and successfully complete quizzes and exams.

### Lecturer in Political Science

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### Class Plan

Our class will meet Tuesdays and Thursdays on from 8:00am - 9:15am in Lawrence Hall, Room 309. Class participants will be expected to arrive on time.

As our textbook, we will be using *American Government and Politics in the Information Age* produced by the **University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing** through the **eLearning Support Initiative**. It is available online at <https://open.lib.umn.edu/american-government/>. No other textbook will be necessary. All readings assigned will be available online.

Prior to class, you will be expected to have completed your readings and any homework assignments and to be aware of current events involving the federal government. This is crucial to success in the class.

Homework assignments must be turned in on a timely basis. Your homework grade will be lowered by a full letter grade for each day that your homework assignment is late.

Finally, in addition to a final exam, periodic exams on our readings and classroom discussions will occasionally be administered. These periodic exams will be administered (probably every other week) to be sure that you are understanding the readings and deriving something from the class discussions.

## Basis of Grading

You will be graded on attendance and participation in the class discussions, the homework assignments you have submitted, and your performance on the exams. Our final exam will be cumulative. If you are interested in supplementing your grade with additional work, please see me early in the semester..

Your homework assignments will cumulatively account for 25% of your grade. Class participation will account for 25% of your grade. Your performance on exams will cumulatively account for 25% of your grade while your performance on the final exam will account for the remaining 25% of your grade.

The exams will be a combination of true/false questions, fill in the blank questions and short-answer essay exams. The short answer essay questions will account for 50% of your score.

Class Discussions and Readings	
<b>Tuesday, August 25th</b> <b>(Week 1)</b>	Organizational meeting; Preliminary discussions on federal government and politics, the U.S. Constitution. Discussion of goals to improve core skills and develop better (1) communication skills to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication; and (2) teamwork skills including the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose/goal.

## Class Discussions and Readings

**Thursday, August 27th**  
(Week 1)

Communication in the Information Age (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 1). My alternative title: Can you believe everything you read, hear or see?

The Constitution and the Structure of Government Power (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 2). My alternative title: How did our Constitution get shaped?

**Tuesday, September 1st**  
(Week 2)

The Constitution and the Structure of Government Power (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 2). *Continued*

**Thursday, September 3rd**  
(Week 2)

Federalism (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 3). My alternative title: Why can't the states get along?

**Monday, September 7th**  
(Week 3)



**Tuesday, September 8th**  
(Week 3)

Civil Liberties (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 4). My alternative title: Can I get in trouble?

**Thursday, September 10th**  
(Week 3)

Civil Rights (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 5). My alternative title: Do I really have any rights these days?

**Tuesday, September 15th**  
(Week 4)

Political Culture and Socialization (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 6). My alternative title: Are my friends just like me?

Public Opinion: (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 7). My alternative title: Does anyone really care what I think?

Class Discussions and Readings	
Thursday, September 17th (Week 4)	Public Opinion: ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 7). <i>Continued</i>
Tuesday, September 22nd (Week 5)	Participation, Voting and Social Movements ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 8). My alternative title: Why should I care?
Thursday, September 24th (Week 5)	Participation, Voting and Social Movements ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 8). <i>Continued</i>
Tuesday, September 29th (Week 6)	Interest Groups ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 9). My alternative title: Who is a “lobbyist” and why are they bad people?
Thursday, October 1st (Week 6)	Political Parties ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 10). My alternative title: Aren’t Democrats, Libertarians, Republicans and Socialists the same thing really?
Tuesday, October 6th (Week 7)	Campaigns and Elections ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 11). My alternative title: Politicians are all the same. No?
Thursday, October 8th (Week 7)	Campaigns and Elections ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 11). <i>Continued</i>
Tuesday, October 13th (Week 8)	Congress ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 12). My alternative title: Are they crazy or are we crazy?
Thursday, October 15th (Week 8)	Congress ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 12). <i>Continued</i>
Tuesday, October 20th (Week 9)	The Presidency ( <i>American Government and Politics in the Information Age</i> , Chapter 13). My alternative question: Anyone can be president?

## Class Discussions and Readings

**Thursday, October 22nd  
(Week 9); LAST DAY  
TO ASK FOR  
ADDITIONAL WORK  
FOR EXTRA CREDIT**

The Presidency (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 13). *Continued*

**Tuesday, October 27th  
(Week 10)**

The Bureaucracy (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 14). My alternative title: Who's in charge here?

**Thursday, October 29th  
(Week 10)**

 The Bureaucracy (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 14).  
*Continued* 

**Tuesday, November 3rd  
(Week 11)**

The Courts (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 15). My alternative question: Who elected those people?

**Thursday, November  
5th (Week 11)**

The Courts (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 15). *Continued*

**Tuesday, November 10th  
(Week 12)**

Policy Making and Domestic Policies (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 16). My alternative question: Is my house clean?

**Thursday, November  
12th (Week 12)**

Policy Making and Domestic Policies (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 16). *Continued*

**Tuesday, November 17th  
(Week 13)**

Foreign and National Security Policies (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 17). My alternative question: Do we have any friends out there?

**Thursday, November  
19th (Week 13) - NO  
CLASS MEETING**

No Class Meeting; PPG at TSUS Board of Regents' Meeting

## Class Discussions and Readings

**Tuesday, November 24th  
(Week 14) - LAST IN-  
PERSON CLASS  
MEETING**

Foreign and National Security Policies (*American Government and Politics in the Information Age*, Chapter 17). *Continued*

**Thursday, November  
26th -  
THANKSGIVING  
HOLIDAY**



**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!**



**Tuesday, December 1st  
(Week 15) - CLASS  
RESUMES BY ZOOM -  
LAST CLASS  
MEETING**

**Semester Review**

**Thursday, December  
3rd (Week 15) - DEAD  
DAY; LAST DAY TO  
TURN IN  
ADDITIONAL WORK  
ASSIGNED FOR  
EXTRA CREDIT**

Available by Appointment for Questions by Zoom;  
Last Day to Turn In Additional Work for Extra  
Credit.

**Wednesday, December  
9th (Week 16) - FINAL  
EXAM - 8:00am to  
10:00am**

**FINAL EXAM**

**Friday, December 11th**

  **FREEDOM!!!!!!**  

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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!!**

