

PS 2305-EPL Federal Government
Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. Yen-Hsin Chen

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Office hours:

- Monday & Wednesday: 9 AM-10 AM and 11:30 AM-12:30 PM
- Tuesday & Thursday: 11 AM- 12:00 PM

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the basic concepts of the U.S. federal government. This involves understanding the fundamental principles of the American government, its basic institutions, and the political participation of the American people. Additionally, we will examine the quantity and quality of American civil involvement and how our political system and public opinion have evolved.

Course Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Describe some of the most well-known political philosophers and their teachings
- Summarize what is included in the Constitution
- List and articulate your views on the big questions and great issues of government
- Explain and critically assess the formal and informal political institutions and their respective roles in American politics
- Summarize and explain several key Supreme Court rulings in our nation's history
- Assess the causes and consequences of different forms of political participation and outline how individuals and groups can affect political outcomes in the United States
- Critically analyze information to discern its meaning and validity
- Explain how the government impacts your daily life

2025-2026 Core Assessment

- Personal Responsibility
Students will develop principles of personal responsibility for living in a diverse world; to include intercultural competency, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
- Social Responsibility
Students will develop principles of social responsibility for living in a diverse world, to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

<p>Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science): Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate knowledge of significant theoretical approaches of political science through written work and oral communication. • Demonstrate the ability to analyze domestic and international political processes in written work and oral communication. • Demonstrate the ability to develop arguments about global equity and equality issues in politics through written work and oral communication. 	<p>Marketable skills for Political Science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can effectively communicate ideas and information verbally, visually, and in writing. • Students can distinguish between credible/relevant information and information lacking credibility/relevance • Students can identify critical and common institutions of political decision-making and policy-making across different nation-state settings. • Students can engage with social and political problems and use critical thinking to develop logical solutions.
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Texas Domain III Competency 003 (Geography & Culture)

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of geographic relationships involving people, place, and environments in Texas, the United States, and the world: the teacher also understands and applies knowledge of cultural development, adaptation, diversity, and interactions among science, technology, and society.

Texas Domain III Competency 004 (Economics)

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of economic systems and how people organize economic systems to produce, distribute, and consume goods and services.

Texas Domain III Competency 005 (Government & Citizenship)

The teacher understands and applies knowledge of concepts of government, democracy, and citizenship, including ways that individuals and groups achieve their goals through political systems.

Assignments and Grading

Topic Quiz (30% of your course grade)

Students must watch 20 lecture videos and complete five topic quizzes after each lecture video. Because there are 20 videos and five quizzes per topic, there are 100 topic quizzes in total.

Please be aware of the due dates for each topic and its corresponding quizzes. Furthermore, you may watch lecture videos multiple times, **but the system grades only your first attempt**.

Exams (70% of your course grade; midterm exam 30% and final exam 40%):

The course consists of two exams, each comprising multiple-choice and short-essay questions on the covered topics. The midterm exam covers topics from Topic 1-1 to Topic 1-10, while the final exam covers topics from Topic 2-1 to Topic 2-10. Please ensure you watch the lecture videos and complete the topic quizzes before taking the exams.

Students in this course need to install "Respondus" to lock down their browsers for taking exams. Please remember that it is your responsibility to prepare the materials before taking the exams. If you have any questions, please contact OIT and the Blackboard support team.

Extra Credit Assignment and Pop Quiz (Extra credit):

A number (to be determined by the instructor) of unannounced quizzes and extra assignments will be given occasionally. The score will be added to your course grade as extra points. However, please note that I will not offer any personal extra credit opportunities to individual students.

Attendance and Participation

This is a web-delivered asynchronous course. I do not take attendance, but I expect that you will watch all the lecture videos and complete each topic quiz on time. Additionally, I will occasionally administer pop quizzes as extra credit, so watching the lecture videos will enhance your chances of success in this course.

Grade Scale

Your points: Topic quiz scores \times 0.3 + Midterm Exam \times 0.3 + Final Exam \times 0.4 + your total extra points earned. Your course letter grade will be determined based on the following grading scale:

Points	Letter Grade
100- 90.0	A
89.9-80.0	B
79.9-70.0	C
69.9-60.0	D
59.9 or less	F

Assigned Reading

The required text for this course is:

Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright. 2025. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics, 12th Edition*. ISBN: 9781071929902

Tentative Course Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule of topics and reading assignments for the course. Thus, items on this syllabus are subject to change at the instructor's discretion. If I deem it necessary to make changes to the schedule, I will announce them on Blackboard.

Before the midterm exam, we will discuss the fundamental principles of the U.S. Government. Our objective is to review the agreements, principles, and primary institutions that comprise the American Government. Please read the first four chapters of the required textbook and watch the following ten lecture videos.

Week 1 (1/14)

- Welcome to this class. Please read the syllabus and complete the syllabus quiz by January 18.
- Please complete the Respondus Ready Statement by 1/18.
- After you complete the syllabus quizzes, the Topic 1-1 lecture video and quizzes will be open to you.

Week 2 (1/19)

- Chapter 2
- Topic 1-1 Politics and Political Science
- Topic 1-2 Politics and Economics
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 1/25.

Week 3 (1/26)

- Chapter 3
- Topic 1-3 Our Democracy
- Topic 1-4 Who Is an American
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 2/1.

Week 4 (2/2)

- Chapter 3
- Topic 1-5 Political Ideas Part I
- Topic 1-6 Political Ideas Part II
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 2/8.

Week 5 (2/9)

- Chapter 4
- Topic 1-7 The Founding of The United States
- Topic 1-8 The U.S. Constitution
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 2/15.

Week 6 (2/16)

- Chapter 4
- Topic 1-9 Our Federalism
- Topic 1-10 Different Levels of Government

- Please complete the topic quizzes by 2/22.

Week 7 (2/23)

- Midterm exam week
- Students need to use Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (webcam) to complete this exam.
- Please complete the online midterm exam **by** March 1st (Sunday).

After the Midterm Exam, we will discuss political participation, civil rights and civil liberties, and the fundamental institutions of the U.S. Government. We will examine the degree to which Americans participate in politics and how they do it, the structure and functions of the U.S. government's legislative, executive, and judicial branches, and what comprises civil liberties in the United States. Please read chapters 5-14 of the required textbook and watch the following ten lecture videos.

Week 8 (3/2)

- Chapter 5 and Chapter 6
- Topic 2-1 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights I
- Topic 2-2 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights II
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 3/8.

Week 9 (3/9)

- Spring Break

Week 10 (3/16)

- Chapter 11
- Topic 2-3 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights III
- Topic 2-4 Public Opinion
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 3/22.

Week 11 (3/23):

- Chapter 11 and Chapter 12
- Topic 2-5 Measuring Public Opinion
- Topic 2-6 Political Parties
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 3/29.

Week 12 (3/30)

- Chapters 13 and 14
- Topic 2-7 Interest Group
- Topic 2-8 Voting and Elections in the United States
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 4/5.

Week 13 (4/6)

- Chapter 7, Chapter 8, Chapter 9, and Chapter 10
- Topic 2-9 Congress

- Topic 2-10 Presidency and Our Legal System
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 4/12.

Week 14 (4/13)

- Research week.
- No new topic videos to watch. Please use this week to prepare for your final exam.
- Final exam will be open to you after you complete Topic quiz 2-10.

Week 15 (4/20)

- Final exam week
- Students need to use Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (webcam) to complete this exam.
- Please complete the online final exam **by** April 26th (Sunday).

Other Course Policies & Resources**Academic Integrity**

Intellectual development requires hard work. Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. The policy can be found at: <https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/> In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments.

Classroom Climate of Respect

This class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose, and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another based on race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of discussing politically sensitive issues fruitfully.

Course Blackboard Resources

There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class.

Blackboard Technical Support

SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support Online Support Desk Contact Info: Toll Free: 888.837.6055. Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

Supportive Statement

I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. I understand that the recent pandemic, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events may impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create a supportive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.

SUSR Library Services

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or phone (432-837-8123).

The Southwest Texas Junior College (SWTJC) Libraries at Uvalde, Del Rio, and Eagle Pass offer additional access to library spaces and resources. Del Rio, Eagle Pass, and Uvalde students may also use online resources available through SWTJC website, library.swtjc.edu. The SWTJC Libraries serve as pick-up locations for Inter Library Loan (ILL) and Document Delivery from the Alpine campus.

ADA Statement

SRSU Disability Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Alpine students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartze Grisham, M.Ed., LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203, or email mschwartze@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall – room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.