

Federal Government
POLs 2305 EP1 | CRN:12342
Fall 2026 | MW 10:10AM - 11:25AM

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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, the basic institutions that comprise the American government, and the political participation of the American people. In addition, we will examine the quantity and quality of American civil involvement and how our political system and public opinion have changed.

Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
- Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
- Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
- Analyze the election process.
- Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

2026-2027 Core Assessment

- **Critical Thinking**
Students will develop critical thinking skills to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
- **Communication**
Students will develop communication skills to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication.

Program Learning Outcomes (Political Science): Students will: • 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.	Marketable skills for Political Science: • 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 (20% of your course grade):

This course covers 20 topics. After my lecture on each topic, students must complete one quiz with five questions on that topic. In other words, since there are 20 topics and five questions per topic, there are 100 topic questions in total. Please be aware of the due dates for each topic and its corresponding quizzes.

Exams (80% of your grade):

There will be two exams for the course. Exams will include multiple-choice questions and short essays on topics covered in the course. The midterm exam is worth 40% of your final grade, and the final exam is worth 40% of your final grade.

The midterm exam will be held in class on **October 5th**, and the final exam will be held on **December 7th**. You need to take the exams in the classroom.

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.

Grade Scale

Your points: Topic quiz scores $\times$ 0.2 + Midterm Exam $\times$ 0.4 + Final Exam $\times$ 0.4 + your total extra points earned. Your 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

Students are expected to have read the assigned chapters before coming to class. Should the class be canceled due to illness or other unforeseen circumstances, the material scheduled for the missed class will be covered in the next class. All additional readings will be posted.

Attendance and Participation

Students decide to attend college and are responsible for their college education. As this is a college-level course, I do not take attendance. However, if you are not consistently in class, it will affect my evaluation of your performance. In addition, much of the exam material is based on class lectures; it would be in your best interest to attend class meetings regularly. I will occasionally administer pop quizzes for extra credit, so attending class regularly will improve your chances of success in this course.

Classroom Rules

All students must treat the instructor, their peers, and the classroom environment with respect. Please arrive on time, stay for the entire class, turn off cell phones during class, and refrain from disruptive activities, such as talking with friends or passing notes. These policies foster a classroom environment that enables all students to focus on the lecture and class discussion. It is also essential to respect alternative opinions and points of view during class discussions. Thus, you should listen when the instructor or a fellow student is speaking to the class and refrain from using insulting language and gestures, no matter how vehemently you disagree with your classmates. Please note that I reserve the right to stop the discussion at any time.

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 and modifications to the schedule, I will announce them.

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.

Week 1 (8/24): Course Guidelines and Expectations

- Welcome to the class. Review the syllabus and complete the syllabus quiz by 11:59PM on August 24th.

Week 2 (8/31): American Political Culture

- Chapter 2
- Topic 1-1 Politics and Political Science
- Topic 1-2 Politics and Economics

Week 3 (9/7): The Principles of American Politics

- Chapter 3
- Topic 1-3 Our Democracy
- Topic 1-4 Who Is an American

Week 4 (9/14): The Principles of American Politics

- Chapter 3
- Topic 1-5 Political Ideas Part I
- Topic 1-6 Political Ideas Part II

Week 5 (9/21): Federalism in the United States

- Chapter 4
- Topic 1-7 The Founding of The United States
- Topic 1-8 The U.S. Constitution

Week 6 (9/28): Federalism in the United States

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

Week 7 (10/5): Midterm Exam Week

- Midterm Exam during class meeting time on October 5th.

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 extent to which Americans participate in politics and how they do so; the structure and functions of the U.S. government's legislative, executive, and judicial branches; and the components of civil liberties in the United States.

Week 8 (10/12): Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- Chapter 5 and Chapter 6
- Topic 2-1 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights I
- Topic 2-2 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights II

Week 9 (10/19): Political Socialization, Participation, and Public Opinion

- Chapter 11
- Topic 2-3 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights III
- Topic 2-4 Public Opinion

Week 10 (10/26): Public Opinion and Political Parties

- Chapter 11 and Chapter 12
- Topic 2-5 Measuring Public Opinion
- Topic 2-6 Political Parties

Week 11 (11/2): Interest Groups, Voting, and Elections in the United States

- Chapter 13 and Chapter 14
- Topic 2-7 Interest Groups
- Topic 2-8 Voting and Elections in the United States

Week 12 (11/9): The U.S Congress and The Presidency

- Chapter 7, Chapter 8, and Chapter 9
- Topic 2-9 Congress
- Topic 2-10 Presidency and Our Legal System

Week 13 (11/16): The Judiciary

- Chapter 10
- Topic 2-10 Presidency and Our Legal System

Week 14 (11/23): Thanksgiving Holiday

- No class meeting

Week 15 (11/30): Catch-up Week

- This week is for catching up on previously missed topics/class meetings.

Week 16 (12/7): Final Exam Week

- Final Exam during class meeting time on December 7th.

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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.

Student Responsibilities Statement

All full-time and part-time students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the Student Handbook and the Undergraduate & Graduate Catalog and for abiding by the University rules and regulations. Additionally, students are responsible for checking their Sul Ross email as an official form of communication from the university. Every student is expected to obey all federal, state and local laws and is expected to familiarize themselves with the requirements of such laws.

SRSU Distance Education Statement

Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website.

Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

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.

Counseling

Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/365 support by visiting [Timelycare/SRSU](https://www.timelycare.com/srsu). The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

SRSU Library Services

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library and Archives of the Big Bend in Alpine offer 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 by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

Mike Fernandez, SRSU Librarian, is based in Eagle Pass (Building D-129) to offer specialized library services to students, faculty, and staff. Utilize free services such as InterLibrary Loan (ILL), ScanIt, and Direct Mail to get materials delivered to you at home or via email.

ADA Statement

SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the 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. To help protect confidentiality, students seeking accessibility/accommodation(s) services must submit the Accommodation Request Form located on our website. Students are welcome to call the Office of Accessibility Services at 432-837-8203 or stop by Ferguson Hall Room 112 if they have any additional questions regarding the process. Our mailing address is PO Box C-122; Alpine, TX; 79832.

Required Statement Regarding Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The University does not recommend or endorse any specific AI tools or resources. Students should be aware that many generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Microsoft Copilot) store user input and may use this data to train future models. For this reason, students should never upload or share personal, confidential, or identifiable information—such as names, ID numbers, health data, or assignment submissions containing such details—into any generative AI platform. When using AI tools, students should verify whether the tool complies with student privacy standards as indicated by the University. Faculty may recommend specific tools that better align with institutional data privacy policies, but ultimate responsibility for data protection rests with users. Students are encouraged to use faculty-recommended platforms when engaging in coursework involving generative AI. The University is not liable for any adverse experience or impact when students interact with these tools.

Tutoring Center

The Lobo Den Tutoring Center offers FREE tutoring support to help you excel in your courses. Whether you need assistance in Writing, Math, Science, or other subjects, we're here to help!

Important Information:

- Drop-in and Scheduled Appointments: Flexible options to fit your needs.
- Hours of Operation: Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM – 5:00 PM.
- Workshops: Attend our regularly hosted academic workshops on STEM topics and professional development, often in collaboration with specialized faculty.
- Location: BWML Room 128.
- Contact Us: For more information or to book an appointment, email tutoring@sulross.edu or call (432) 837-8726.

Looking for additional support?

- Tutor.com offers FREE 24/7 online tutoring in over 200 subjects, including specialized support for ESL and ELL learners with native Spanish-speaking tutors.

- Access Tutor.com via Blackboard: Log in to your Blackboard account to get started anytime, anywhere.

Take advantage of these valuable resources to boost your confidence and performance in your classes. We look forward to helping you succeed!