

PS 2305-W01 Federal Government
Fall 2026

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Office hours:

- Monday & Wednesday: 10 AM-12 PM
- Tuesday & Thursday: 11 AM-12 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:

- 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)

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 (80% of your course grade; midterm exam 40% and final exam 40%):

The course consists of two closed-book, closed-note 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.

Alpine students need to take paper-based exams at the testing center during the assigned exam weeks. Please contact the testing center to schedule your exam date and time at your earliest convenience. Meanwhile, non-Alpine students need to take the online exam. You will contact me to get the exam code, and you need to install "Respondus" to lock down your 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 $\times$ 0.2 + Midterm Exam $\times$ 0.4 + 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 (8/24): Welcome to this class.

- Please read the syllabus and complete the syllabus quiz by 8/30.
- After you complete the syllabus quizzes, the lecture videos will be open to you.
- Please complete the exam arrangement question by 8/30.

Week 2 (8/31): American Political Culture

- Chapter 2
- Topic 1-1 Politics and Political Science
- Topic 1-2 Politics and Economics
- After you complete the lecture videos, each topic quiz will be open to you.
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 9/6. No late submissions will be accepted.

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

- Chapter 3
- Topic 1-3 Our Democracy
- Topic 1-4 Who Is an American
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 9/13. No late submissions will be accepted.

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
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 9/20. No late submissions will be accepted.

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
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 9/27. No late submissions will be accepted.

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

- Chapter 4
- Topic 1-9 Our Federalism
- Topic 1-10 Different Levels of Government
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 10/4. No late submissions will be accepted.

Week 7 (10/5): Midterm exam week

- Alpine Students need to take the paper-based exam at the testing center by 10/11.
- Non-Alpine students need to take the online test. You need to install Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (webcam) to complete this exam by 10/11.
- You will lose 10 points for every calendar day your exam is late.

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 (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
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 10/18. No late submissions will be accepted.

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
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 10/25. No late submissions will be accepted.

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
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 11/1. No late submissions will be accepted.

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
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 11/8. No late submissions will be accepted.

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
- Please complete the topic quizzes by 11/15. No late submissions will be accepted.

Week 13 (11/16): Study Week

- No new topic videos to watch. Please use this week to prepare for your final exam.

Week 14 (11/23): Thanksgiving Holiday**Week 15 (11/30): Final exam week**

- Alpine Students need to take the paper-based exam at the testing center by 12/6.
- Non-Alpine students need to take the online test. You need to install Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor (webcam) to complete this exam by 12/6.
- No late submissions will be accepted.

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.

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. Here are some recommended statements faculty might adapt for their syllabi: <https://ctl.utexas.edu/chatgpt-and-generative-ai-tools-sample-syllabus-policy-statements>. Review the entire [AI Policy](#) [here](#).

Student Responsibilities

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 him/herself 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.

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](#). 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.

Libraries

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 LobolD 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.

Academic Integrity

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as 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. Students should also avoid using open AI sources *unless permission is expressly given* for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

Classroom Climate of Respect

Importantly, 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 on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

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.

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!