

PS 5311: Intergovernmental Relations

Fall 2026



Professor: Jessica Velasco, DPA
Office Hours: M (12-1, 2-3), T (2-5), W (12-1) and by appointment
Office Location: LH 210
Telephone: 432-837-8742 (office)/505-362-0406 (cell)
Email Address: jessica.velasco@sulross.edu

Course Description:

Intergovernmental relations can be defined as “the activities and interaction that enable a federal system to function or not function” (Stephens & Wikstrom, 2007). Sounds simple, right? In reality and as society has evolved and social issues have become more complex, intergovernmental relations have become more complex as well. This course will explore that complexity, including a focus not only on the national-state-local interactions, but also on the interactions between the Native American nations and the various levels of government in our country.



Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Explain how intergovernmental relations (IGR) are defined in key government documents
- Describe the evolution of IGR in the United States
- Explain past and current challenges to positive IGR
- Identify some of the big questions in IGR, as well as potential answers
- Describe findings of current research in IGR
- List and describe the purpose of some key IGR organizations
- Explain current public opinion of federalism and IGR
- Provide feasible, practical, and actionable advice for elected leaders

Required Texts: All of your other readings can be accessed through the SRSU library website, or they will be provided on Blackboard.

GRADING

The point distribution is listed below:

Syllabus quiz	20
Discussion Boards (4 x 70)	280
IGR & the Constitution Presentation	150
Reading Assignments (4 x 50)	200
Draft of Movie Analysis	50
Case Study	100
IGR Movie Analysis	200
Total	1000

Grades in this class will be determined by the number of points you earn by the end of the course.

A	895-1000 points
B	795-894 POINTS
C	695-794 POINTS
D	595-694 POINTS
F	BELOW 595 POINTS

ASSIGNMENTS:

Readings: The readings for the first two-thirds of the course will come from peer-reviewed journals, websites, and government documents. The citations for these will be provided on Blackboard. You will also be reading additional articles and materials to complete your assignments. These should be peer-reviewed or government/organization sources. **Online periodicals and magazines are not peer-reviewed and should only be used in rare cases.** Please see the information below about the SRSU library resources.

Discussion Boards: On some weeks, we will have discussion boards related to the readings that week and the week before. All students must follow the ground rules for discussion boards (see below). Please see the posted rubric for more information on the grading for the discussion boards. Please also review the examples of scholarly posts provided on Blackboard. You should view these response posts like mini research papers. Any claims you use on the discussion board should be substantiated. Also, reviewing all questions and responses posted on the discussion board at the end of the week will help you get more out of the course.

During discussion board weeks, students must:

- Post three discussion questions by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m.
- Submit two scholarly responses by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.

Discussion board weeks are identified on the course calendar.

IGR & the Constitution Presentation: In the first few weeks of the course, you will be reviewing the U.S. Constitution and Texas Constitution through an IGR lens. By 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, September 13,

you will need to submit a brief presentation that highlights the IGR aspects of the *U.S. Constitution*. The instructions and rubric can be found on Blackboard. NOTE: My goal is to select the top presentations to share on our department socials on Constitution Day (9/17).

Other Reading Assignments: On some weeks, you will need to complete an assignment related to the readings for the week. Please submit these to the appropriate spot in Blackboard in Word using the template provided. Please also refer to the rubric provided for guidance on how points will be assigned. **DUE DATES:** Reading assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday on the weeks they are assigned. **Weeks for these assignments are noted on the course calendar.** NOTE: These assignments must be completed on Google Docs with the Process Feedback extension. Instructions are on Blackboard. You will be submitting the live report link and the pdf version of the document (from Process Feedback) for each assignment.

Case Study: You will have one case study at the end of the course, when we wrap up the final module focused on U.S relations with Native Nations. This will be a timed case study using the Respondus Lockdown and Monitor.

IGR Movie Analysis: To help you pull together all you will learn in this course and ruin your ability to casually enjoy movies forever, you will be completing a movie analysis with an IGR lens. The instructions and rubric are provided on Blackboard. I have also provided a list of movies to pick from. This paper is worth 200 points. **ALL WORK FOR THIS PAPER MUST BE COMPLETED IN A GOOGLE DOC WITH THE PROCESS FEEDBACK EXTENSION.** Please see instructions on Blackboard. You are expected to work on it throughout the semester, and it should reflect a serious effort on your part.

INTERACTION OPPORTUNITIES

It is important to me that we have some sort of interaction in the class. I will be having an optional, virtual Q&A session during the first week of class. In addition, I will be interacting with you on discussion boards, and I am happy to schedule individual meetings with any of you, if needed. Just let me know!

CALENDAR

(Monday start for each week)

W	Week of	Topic	Reading	Due & Important Dates
1	8/24	Introduction to the Course & Movie	Syllabus	Post an introduction to the discussion board, take the syllabus quiz, and watch a movie from the list
2	8/31	The U.S. Constitution & Articles of Confederation	The U.S. Constitution & Articles of Confederation	Discussion Board (Initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m., response posts by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.)
3	9/7	Evolution of IGR	See Blackboard	IGR & the Constitution Presentation Due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, 9/13

4	9/14	Fiscal Federalism	See Blackboard	Article Summary due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday *PF Required
5	9/21	Cooperation/Organizations	See Blackboard	Discussion Board (Initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m., response posts by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.)
6	9/28	Conflict/Challenges	See Blackboard	Article Summary due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday *PF Required
7	10/5	Movie Analysis Draft		Submit a draft of your movie analysis by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. *PF Required
8	10/12	Public Opinion	See Blackboard	Article Summary due by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday *PF Required
9	10/19	Comparative IGR	See Blackboard	Discussion Board (Initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m., response posts by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.)
10	10/26	Current Legislation	See Blackboard	Follow instructions on Blackboard to review legislation impacting IGR
11	11/2	Court Cases	See Blackboard	Discussion Board (Initial post by Wednesday at 11:59 p.m., response posts by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.)
12	11/9	Native Nations and the U.S.	See Blackboard	Reading Assignment due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. *PF Required
13	11/16	Current & Ongoing Challenges (Native Nations & U.S.)	GAO Reports	Case Study due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. *Respondus Monitor and Lockdown Browser Required
14	11/23			THANKSGIVING WEEK
15	11/30	Work on Final Paper		Work on IGR Movie Analysis & Complete Course Evaluation
16	Finals Week	Finals week and Graduation		Submit IGR Movie Analysis by 11:59 p.m. on December 6, 2026 *PF Required

Other important dates:

- August 24, First Day of Classes
- August 27, Last day for registration and schedule changes
- September 7, Labor Day Holiday, No classes
- September 9, Last day to drop a 16-week class without creating an academic record
- October 5, Last day to register to vote in November elections
- October 19, First day of early voting
- October 30, Last day of early voting
- November 2, Registration for Spring 2027 begins
- November 3, Election Day
- November 6, Last day to drop a 16-week course with a “W”
- November 25-27, Thanksgiving Day Holiday (begins after last class meets on Tuesday)
- December 2, Last class day before finals
- December 3, Dead day
- December 4, 7-9, Final Exams

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME:

- I will provide weekly communication with the class through announcements (email and posted on Blackboard), email notifications, and virtual office hours.
- I will provide email responses within 24 hours of receipt during the hours of 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday.
- I will provide grades and feedback for assignments within one week of the submission due date.
- I will provide clear and concise instructions on how to complete the online course requirements.
- I will provide a range of opportunities to engage in the course content in a meaningful way.
- I will engage in the weekly discussion boards to provide direction or clarification to the discussion.
- I will do my best to stay abreast of the current research in the field to help you get the best possible experience in the course.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU:

- You will familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, policies, assessments, evaluation, grading criteria, and course design.
- You will acquire the tools necessary to be successful in this class. This includes the book, reliable Internet access, and a device other than your phone for completing assignments.
- You will complete all assigned readings and coursework by assigned due dates.
- You will engage in the course, with your peers, and with me, using open and appropriate communication
- You will be diligent about using communication in a way that shows respect to me and your classmates
- You will submit graduate-level work that has been checked carefully for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation (using a free extension like Grammarly is recommended).
- You will respond to communication from me and your classmates in a timely manner (within 24 hours).
- You will not plagiarize the work of others or yourself, and you will also not collaborate with others on class assignments (unless clearly authorized to do so). You will refrain from using

generative AI for your work in this class.

- You will reach out to me immediately if you are having trouble in the class or with access to course materials (although please call the Help Desk--888.837.6055 for general access issues)

GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION BOARDS

SOURCE: Center for Teaching and Learning. (2020). Sample discussion board ground rules. Retrieved from <https://ctl.wiley.com/sample-discussion-board-ground-rules/>

- **Ask questions.**
If you find something confusing or want to know more, do not hesitate to ask questions. Make sure to post your questions in the appropriate thread.
- **Participate.**
Do not hide in the background; it is not fair to lurk and let others do all the work. Contribute to discussions to get as much as possible from the course and to maintain your participation grade.
- **Do not dominate a discussion.**
Share your knowledge, but not to the point of excluding others. If you have something to offer, please share it, but allow everyone to contribute equally to a discussion.
- **Be intellectually rigorous.**
Do not excuse sloppy or illogical thinking. Challenge yourself and one another.
- **Be tactful.**
Be critical of ideas but remember there are other people involved. Be tactful and kind. You can hurt the feelings of a person reading your post.
- **Forgive other students' mistakes.**
Do not correct others, even if you follow the rules of netiquette and use good manners. Just because you do not agree with a student's post does not mean that he or she is wrong. Instead, offer a different perspective to encourage further discussion.
- **Read the whole thread before posting.**
Read all the posts in a thread before responding so you don't repeat what others have already said. Try to contribute clarifying information or a new idea to a discussion.
- **Be concise.**
Do not waste people's time by posting basic, repetitive information. Make your point clearly and quickly.
- **Reread and check your posts.**
Practice professionalism. Be mindful of how you look online; others will likely judge the tone and quality of your writing. Reread your posts and edit for clarity and mechanics.
- **Cite your sources.**
If you use a source, cite it properly. Give credit where credit is due. Include links where appropriate.
- **Maintain confidentiality.**
Respect your classmates' privacy. Do not repeat the personal information that others share.
- **Report technical problems.** If the platform is not working properly, please let me know as soon as possible

OTHER COURSE POLICIES & RESOURCES

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 engaging 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. ***In this course, every element of class assignments must be fully prepared by the student. The use of generative AI tools for any part of your work will be treated as plagiarism.*** 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.

Please follow all of the instructions for each assignment, especially as it relates to use of the extension.

Respondus Lockdown Browser & Monitor will be used for certain assignments. I do NOT like using these tools, but they are an unfortunate necessity in a world with generative AI.

If you have any questions about this, please ask!

LATE WORK:

I have been very intentional about how I have designed this course and distributed the content to optimize your learning and comprehension. Trying to cram weeks of work into a few days or waiting until the end of the semester to do everything isn't conducive to learning. For this reason, you must have an extenuating circumstance and approval from me to submit late work. If you submit late work without an approved extension from me, I reserve the right not to grade it.

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. NOTE: Please post general, course-related questions to the discussion board forum I have set up for this. Typically, if one student in the class has the question, others do as well. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and then feel free to email me or call me directly with your question.

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.

INCOMPLETE POLICY: We do have the ability to assign students an incomplete at the end of a course. However, two conditions are required for an incomplete to be granted: 1) an extenuating circumstance, and 2) most of the work for the course has been completed (more than 50%). The max extension for an incomplete is the end of the following semester, and incompletes are calculated as an "F" in your GPA until you have successfully completed the final assignments.

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.

COUNSELING SERVICES

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.

ALPINE LIBRARY INFORMATION

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 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.

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.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON GRADUATE COURSEWORK AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Grades: In graduate school, a "C" is required to pass the class. In addition, you must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing. The program faculty evaluate the progress of students in the program at the end of each semester. Just maintaining a "B" average in the program is not enough to be deemed eligible to continue in the program or to complete the comprehensive exam.

Comprehensive Exam: A comprehensive exam is required in the final semester of coursework for MA-PS and MPA students. We will send out information to those finishing coursework in their final semester. However, you can request the comprehensive exam information anytime. Please make sure to save copies of all of your papers, assignments, and books. These will assist you in the comprehensive exam.

Program Learning Outcomes

Public Administration	Political Science
The graduating student will: • Demonstrate the ability to critique significant theoretical approaches of public administration. • Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international administrative processes. • Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.	The graduating student will: • Demonstrate the ability to analyze significant theoretical approaches of political science • Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international political processes • Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis

Marketable Skills

Public Administration	Political Science
• Students can organize and execute presentations relevant to public administration • Students understand and can execute a program evaluation • Students can conduct statistical analyses that are useful to the work of public administrators. • Students can read and interpret an organization budget	• Students can organize and execute verbal and written presentations of complex social issues • Students can tackle social and political problems by acquiring relevant data and using insight and technical skills to analyze data and develop logical solutions • Students understand the roles and responsibilities of institutional authority within local, state, national, and international communities. • Students understand and can execute a policy analysis

Reference citation:

Stephens, G. R. (2007). *American intergovernmental relations: A fragmented federal polity*. Oxford University Press.