

American National Government

POLS 206-502

Fall 2020

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Class meeting: Online (asynchronous)
Office hours: Online by appointment

This syllabus and course schedule is subject to change by the instructor.
Updated September 22, 2020.

Course Description

The Texas Education Code § 51.301 (subchapter F) requires, *inter alia*, the following:

"Government or Political Science:

(a) Every college and university receiving . . . public funds shall give a course of instruction in government or political science which includes consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas. . . . [No] university receiving . . . public funds may grant a baccalaureate degree . . . to any person unless he has credit for such a course."

The agreement between Texas A&M University and the Qatar Foundation provides that the curriculum at TAMUQ follow the curriculum at the main campus in College Station as closely as feasible. This course partially fulfills for TAMU the state law's requirement by including consideration of "the Constitution of the United States." The course seeks to provide the student with basic knowledge of the U.S. national government and the system of governance in the U.S.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Special Course Designation

Government/Political Science core curriculum (CORE). 3 credit hours.

Required Texts

Bianco, William T. and David T. Cannon. 2019. *American Politics Today*, 6e. New York: Norton.

All other supplemental material will be provided by the instructor.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Describe the institutions of the US government.
- Describe national level politics and political issues in the US.
- Discuss US government policies and how they are created.
- Discuss political issues within the context of US government and politics.

Expectations

Attendance and participation: Attending class is an individual student responsibility. In an online, asynchronous class this means it is the student's responsibility to read all course material and complete each lecture and quiz as assigned in the schedule.

Absences and late policy: Make-up quizzes and examinations will be provided only for absences excused by University regulations (TAMU STUDENT RULES, Part I, §7). If in doubt whether an absence is excused, check first with the TAMU Student Rules. If still in doubt, per TAMU Student Rules, check with the instructor in advance of the absence. For an absence to be excused, students must contact the instructor via e-mail and receive an acknowledged response from the instructor, per TAMU STUDENT RULES, Part I, §7.3. If an absence is excused, it is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor to make-up any missed assignment, and to complete the work within the 30-day period stipulated in TAMU STUDENT RULES, Part I, §7.3.

Regularly check university email: From time to time I will communicate with the class as a whole via email. It is your responsibility to check your university email (@qatar.tamu.edu) regularly. The only acceptable email for university communications are from official TAMU accounts. I will only send you email from my qatar.tamu.edu account, and I will only respond to student emails from qatar.tamu.edu or tamu.edu accounts. Keep in mind that an email to your professor/instructor is professional correspondence.

Reading: Students are expected to complete the assigned readings for each week before the week's first class. The reading for this class is required; reading is not optional. Plan to set aside time each week to complete the reading. Students are required to understand and apply arguments from the reading material to complete quizzes.

Quizzes: This course has 14 weekly quizzes in eCampus. Quizzes must be completed in the week that they are assigned. Each weekly quiz is available on Thursday at 7am and must be completed by the following Saturday by 12am midnight. Quizzes are open-book and open-note but must be completed by the individual student.

Examinations: There are two examinations in this class, consisting of a mid-term and a final examination. The midterm will be available from 7a on Tuesday morning, October 6th until Thursday night at 12a midnight. The final exam is scheduled for (date to be announced). Exams are open-book and open-note but must be completed by the individual student.

Grading Policy

Grades in this class are comprised of quizzes and examinations. 80% of all possible points come from quizzes with the remaining 20% from examinations. Grades are assigned according to the following scale:

A	≥ 90%
B	≥ 80% and < 90%
C	≥ 70% and < 80%
D	≥ 60% and < 70%
F	≥ 50% and < 60%

Copyright Statement

The handouts used in this course are copyrighted. By "handouts," I mean all materials generated for this class, which include, but are not limited to syllabi, lectures, quizzes, exams, and in-class materials. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to copy or distribute the handouts, unless I grant permission.

Course Outline

Week 1 - Understanding American Politics

August 23

- Lecture 1: Course overview
- Read: Syllabus

August 25

- Lecture 2
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 1, pp. 4-14
- Recommended: Badger, Emily. 2020. How Trump's Use of Federal Forces in Cities Differs From Past Presidents. *The New York Times*. July 23, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/upshot/trump-portland.html>.

August 27

- Lecture 3
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 1, pp. 15-25
- Quiz 1

Week 2 - The Constitution and the Founding

August 30

- Lecture 4
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 2, pp. 32-39
- Recommended: Selin, Jennifer. 2020. How the Constitution's federalist framework is being tested by Covid-19. *The Brookings Institution*. June 8, 2020. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/06/08/how-the-constitutions-federalist-framework-is-being-tested-by-covid-19/>.

September 1

- Lecture 5
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 2, pp. 39-48

September 3

- Lecture 6
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 2, pp. 51-65
- Quiz 2

Week 3 - Federalism

September 6

- Lecture 7
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 3, pp. 72-77

September 8

- Lecture 8
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 3, pp. 77-93

September 10

- Lecture 9
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 3, pp. 94-97
- Quiz 3

Week 4 - Civil Liberties

September 13

- Lecture 10
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 4, pp. 104-112

September 15

- Lecture 11
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 4, pp. 112-131

September 17

- Lecture 12
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 4, pp. 132-143
- Quiz 4

Week 5 - Civil Rights

September 20

- Lecture 13
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 5, pp. 150-166

September 22

- Lecture 14
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 5, pp. 166-187

September 24

- Lecture 15
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 5, pp. 188-193
- Recommended: Weingast, B.R., 1997. The political foundations of democracy and the rule of the law. *American Political Science Review*, 91(2), pp.245-263.
- Quiz 5

Week 6 - Public Opinion and the Media

September 27

- Lecture 16
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 6, pp. 200-211

September 29

- Lecture 17
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 6, pp. 211-220
- Recommended: Graham, M.H. and Svobik, M.W., 2020. Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States. *American Political Science Review*, 114(2), pp.392-409.

October 1

- Lecture 18
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 7, pp. 234-253
- Quiz 6

Week 7 - Political Parties

October 4

- Lecture 19
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 8, pp. 264-277

October 6

- Lecture 20
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 8, pp. 278-291
- Quiz 7

October 8

- **Mid-term exam** available from Oct 6th at 7am until Oct 8th at 12am midnight.

Fall Break

October 11-15

Week 8 - Elections

October 18

- Lecture 21
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 9, pp. 298-309

October 20

- Lecture 22
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 9, pp. 309-325

October 22

- Lecture 23
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 9, pp. 326-331
- Quiz 8

Recommended:

- Recommended: CGP Grey. 2011. How the Electoral College Works <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUS9mM8Xbbw>
- CGP Grey. 2011. The Trouble with the Electoral College <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wC42HgLA4k>

Week 9 - Interest Groups

October 25

- Lecture 24
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 10, pp. 342-352

October 27

- Lecture 25
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 10, pp. 352-364

October 29

- Lecture 26
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. , pp. 365-369
- Quiz 9

Week 10 - Congress

November 1

- Lecture 27
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 11, pp. 376-395

November 3

- Lecture 28
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 11, pp. 395-404

November 5

- Lecture 29
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. , pp. 404-413
- Quiz 10

Week 11 - The Presidency

November 8

- Lecture 30
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 12, pp. 420-437

November 10

- Lecture 31
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 12, pp. 437-441

November 12

- Lecture 32
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 12, pp. 441-449
- Quiz 11

Week 12 - The Bureaucracy

November 15

- Lecture 33
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 13, pp. 456-465

November 17

- Lecture 34
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 13, pp. 465-477

November 19

- Lecture 35
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 13, pp. 475-483
- Quiz 12

Week 13 - The Courts

November 22

- Lecture 36
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 14, pp. 490-505

November 24

- Lecture 37
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 14, pp. 505-514

November 26

- Lecture 38
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 14, pp. 514-526
- Quiz 13

Week 14 - Economic, Social and Foreign Policy

November 29

- Lecture 39
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 15, pp. 533-550

December 1

- Lecture 40
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 16, pp. 575-586

December 3

- Lecture 41
- Read: Bianco and Cannon Ch. 17, pp. 616-642
- Quiz 14

Week 15 - Review

December 6

- Lecture 42: Course review

(Date to be announced)

- Final exam

Week 16

December 14 - Final grades due

University Policies

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to Student Rule 7 in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" (Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See Student Rule 24.)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" (Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20).

You can learn more about academic integrity and your rights and responsibilities at Texas A&M University at Qatar by visiting the Aggie Honor System website.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact Disability Resources in the Student Services Building or at +1 (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu. Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

Texas A&M University at Qatar students please contact Disability Services in the Engineering Building, room 318C or at +974.4423.0316 or visit <https://www.qatar.tamu.edu/students/student-affairs/disability-services>.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University at Qatar is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and US federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. V

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see University Rule 08.01.01.M1):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, you will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

Texas A&M University at Qatar students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to visit the Health and Wellness website for more information.

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's Title IX webpage.

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in proper self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline +1 (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays (CST) and 24 hours on Saturdays and Sundays. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the United States National Suicide Prevention Hotline +1 (800-273-8255) or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

Texas A&M University at Qatar students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to visit the Health and Wellness website for more information.

Campus Safety Measures

To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University at Qatar has adopted policies and practices for the Fall 2020 academic term to limit virus transmission. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses and course-related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.):

- Self-monitoring—Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely and should not participate in face-to-face instruction.
- Face Coverings—Face coverings (cloth face covering, surgical mask, etc.) must be properly worn in all non-private spaces including classrooms, teaching laboratories, common spaces such as lobbies and hallways, public study spaces, libraries, academic resource and support offices, and outdoor spaces where 6 feet of physical distancing is difficult to reliably maintain. Description of face coverings and additional guidance are provided in the Face Covering policy and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) available on the Provost website.
- Physical Distancing—Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in course and course-related activities.
- Classroom Ingress/Egress—Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot (2 meter) physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.
- To attend a face-to-face class, students must wear a face covering (or a face shield if they have an exemption letter). If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the Student

Conduct office for sanctions (using the Campus Community Incident Report form). Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day's class remotely for all students. At Texas A&M University at Qatar, faculty members should initially consult Qatar Foundation security personnel in cases of non-compliance, then report to the Department of Student Affairs.

- At Texas A&M University at Qatar, all students, faculty, staff, and visitors are required to verify their health status with Qatar Foundation security using the Ehteraz application upon entering the building.
- For specific information about Texas A&M University at Qatar's building access requirements and classroom safety measures, see here: <https://www.qatar.tamu.edu/programs/reopening-fall-2020/building-access/>

Personal Illness and Quarantine

Students required to quarantine must participate in courses and course-related activities remotely and must not attend face-to-face course activities. Students should notify their instructors of the quarantine requirement. Students under quarantine are expected to participate in courses and complete graded work unless they have symptoms that are too severe to participate in course activities.

Students experiencing personal injury or illness that is too severe for the student to attend class qualify for an excused absence (See Student Rule 7, Section 7.2.2.) To receive an excused absence, students must comply with the documentation and notification guidelines outlined in Student Rule 7. While Student Rule 7, Section 7.3.2.1, indicates a medical confirmation note from the student's medical provider is preferred, for Fall 2020 only, students may use the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class form in lieu of a medical confirmation. Students must submit the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class (in Howdy) within two business days after the last date of absence.

Operational Details for Fall 2020 Courses

For additional information on Fall 2020 courses at Texas A&M University at Qatar please visit, <https://www.qatar.tamu.edu/programs/reopening-fall-2020/>.