

Course Information

Course Number: **POLS 206**
Course Title: **American National Government**
Section: 501
Time: Sunday-Tuesday-Thursday, 1:25-2:15pm
Location: Room 238, TAMUQ
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Alex Honeker
Office: 329E, Division of Arts & Sciences, TAMUQ
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Office Hours: Sunday-Tuesday-Thursday 2:30-3:30pm, and by appointment

Course Description

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the national government, constitutional development, and politics of the United States. The course focuses on the institutional framework of the U.S. political system, its main relevant actors, and the attitudes and behaviors of elites and the mass public.

The course will consist of three main sections: political institutions, electoral and political behavior, and public policy. In Section 1, we will answer questions like: Were the Framers of the Constitution liberal or conservative? What are the consequences of a political system based on the separation of powers? Has the balance of power between Congress and the Presidency changed throughout the years? Is the U.S. Supreme Court democratic and should it be?

In Section 2, we will focus on the study of linkage institutions such as political parties and interest groups, and voter behavior, and explore questions like: How is public opinion measured? How do individuals' ideologies originate? Are American voters ideologically polarized? What is the effect of political mobilization on voter turnout?

Finally, in Section 3, we will explore the main issues facing American domestic and foreign policy. While the course is focused on American politics, examples of comparative political institutions and public opinion will be showcased in order to contrast the U.S. political system with that of other countries.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Course Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the main features of the U.S. political system and its main relevant actors.
- Explain the constitutional development of the United States.
- Critically evaluate the interactions between different institutional levels, the role of political actors, and the processes shaping citizens' attitudes towards government and society.
- Explore the main issues in contemporary American domestic and foreign policy.
- Compare and contrast institutional and behavioral aspects of the U.S. political system with comparative examples.

Special Course Designation

This is a University Core Curriculum (Government/Political Science) course.

University Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes

The following skills will be addressed in this course:

- **Critical thinking:** including creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information.
- **Communication:** including effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication.
- **Social responsibility:** including intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
- **Personal responsibility:** including the ability to connect choices, actions and consequences to ethical decision-making.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

There is one **required textbook** for this course, which you can download for free at <https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-3e>:

- Krutz, Glen. (2021). *American Government. Third Edition*. OpenStax. [Denoted as *Textbook*]

All other readings and materials will be posted by the instructor on **Canvas**, as specified in the class schedule below. Assigned readings should be done **before** the respective week.

Required Software

- We will use “iClicker” for some of the 10 quizzes mentioned below. Students will need to download the iClicker App on their phones. Some quizzes will be delivered on Canvas.

Grading Policy

Evaluation Criteria

Your grade will consist of the following components:

- 1) 10 Quizzes **30%** (3.75% each, drop 2 lowest grades)
- 2) Response Paper **30%**
- 3) Participation **10%**
- 4) Midterm Exam **15%**
- 5) Final Exam **15%**

1) **10 Quizzes.** There will be 10 quizzes during the semester over the material from that week or the week before (with the exception of the first quiz which will be on the content of the syllabus). Quizzes will be unannounced, so you have to make sure to be in class to take it. Quizzes will be delivered via the iClicker App or Canvas. I will drop the two lowest grades in the 10 quizzes, so you will be graded on your best 8 quizzes (worth 30% of your grade or 3.75% of your class grade each quiz).

2) **Response Paper.** You will write one short response paper on a journal article (see articles in class schedule below denoted as “[JA#]”) assigned during the week of your choice. The paper will contribute 30% towards your final grade. You can choose the week on which you want to write. The paper should critically discuss the article (you have to write about a journal article assigned, *not* a textbook chapter or newspaper article), connect the article’s content with readings from previous classes, and end with a critical question that you think the article does not answer or does so in an incomplete way. A more detailed description of this assignment along with a grading rubric will be provided on Canvas. The paper should be 3-4 pages long, double-spaced, and use 12-point Times New Roman font. For this assignment, you will work in groups of 3-4 students. The paper should be uploaded on Canvas. See class schedule below for due date. **Note on plagiarism:** Canvas uses software to identify plagiarism or the use of AI for writing. Please be aware that plagiarizing your paper or using AI to write it will result in a 0 grade besides the university procedures indicated below in the section “Academic Integrity Statement and Policy.”

3) **Participation.** Your participation grade will be based on your engagement in class discussions and activities. Specifically, you are expected to read the assigned readings before each week so you can actively participate in class and participate in the polls, quizzes and other activities we do in class. I may ask you to complete some polls and online quizzes before class to use for specific activities. Failure to complete these polls and quizzes will affect your participation grade. Participation will contribute 10% towards your final grade.

- 4) **Midterm Exam.** There will be a midterm exam on Week 7 covering the content from the first half of the course (weeks 1-6). The exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-response, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. The midterm exam will contribute 15% towards your final grade.

- 5) **Final Exam.** There will be a final exam covering the content from the second half of the course (weeks 7-15). The exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-response, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. The final exam will contribute 15% towards your final grade. The date and time of the final exam will be announced during the semester.

Note on Attendance. You are expected to attend class. Even though attendance will not be formally taken, quizzes will take place unannounced, so if you are not in class, both your quizzes and participation grades will be negatively affected. **Excused absences** will only be given if you **inform me in advance** and provide a justification. Otherwise, you will not be able to take a missed quiz. It is highly unlikely to get an A in this course if you miss class frequently.

Grading Scale

Letter grades will be determined in the following way:

A = 90-100	B = 80-89	C = 70-79	D = 60-69	F = <60
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Grading Policy Changes

Regrade requests must be made within one week after your graded assignment has been returned and must be submitted with a written statement of at least 150 words via email to alexhoneker@tamu.edu. This statement should explain why you think the grade should be changed. Remember that, after re-evaluating your work, your grade may remain unchanged or be adjusted in either direction. There will be no grade changes after the final exam.

Late Work Policy

Late assignments will be penalized with a 5% reduction in the grade per day unless you provide a documented medical excuse.

Course Schedule

Section 1: Political Institutions

Week 1 – January 7-9-11

- Topics: Class introduction; the U.S. Constitution; the Founders' philosophy
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapters 1-2

- Federalist Papers 10, 51
- **Thursday 11: No class – Online assignment**

Week 2 – January 14-16-18

- Topics: Federalism
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapters 3
 - C.S. Monitor. (2019). “How states’ rights became a liberal environmentalist cause.”
 - Politico. (2018). “Trump endorses states’ rights — but only when he agrees with the state.”

Week 3 – January 21-23-25

- Topics: Civil liberties and civil rights
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapters 4-5
 - The Economist. (2017). “Free speech at American universities is under threat.”

Week 4 – January 28-30, February 1

- Topics: The legislative branch
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 11
 - **[JA1]** Russell, A. (2020). “Minority Opposition and Asymmetric Parties? Senators’ Partisan Rhetoric on Twitter.” *Political Research Quarterly*: 1–13.

Week 5 – February 4-6-8

- Topics: The executive branch
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 12
 - **[JA2]** Canes-Wrone, B. & Shotts, K. W. (2004). “The Conditional Nature of Presidential Responsiveness to Public Opinion.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 48(4): 690-706.

Week 6 – February 11-15 (February 13: No class - Qatar National Sports Day)

- Topics: The judicial branch
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 13
 - **[JA3]** Bonneau, C. W., et al. (2017). “Evaluating the Effects of Multiple Opinion Rationales on Supreme Court Legitimacy.” *American Politics Research*, 45(3), 335-365.

Week 7 – February 18-20-22

- Topics: The bureaucracy
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 15
- **Thursday, February 22: Midterm Exam**

Week 8 – February 25-27-29

- **Spring break – No class this week.**
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*Section 2: Elections and Political Behavior***Week 9 – March 3-5-7**

- Topic: Public opinion
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 6
 - **[JA4]** Huddy, L. (2005). "Threat, Anxiety, and Support of Antiterrorism Policies." *American Journal of Political Science*, 49(3), 593-608.

Week 10 – March 10-12-14

- Topic: Ideology and political issues
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 6, pages 192-194.
 - **[JA5]** Johnston, C., and Ollerenshaw, T. (2020). "How different are cultural and economic ideology?" *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 34, 94-101.

Week 11 – March 17-19-21

- Topic: Political parties; polarization
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 9
 - **[JA6]** Huddy, L., et al. (2015). "Expressive Partisanship: Campaign Involvement, Political Emotion, and Partisan Identity." *American Political Science Review*, 109(1).

Week 12 – March 24-26-28

- Topic: Voting, campaigns, and elections
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 7
 - **[JA7]** Bond, R., et al. (2012). "A 61-million-person experiment in social influence and political mobilization." *Nature*, 489, 295–298.

Week 13 – March 31, April 2-4

- Topic: Interest groups; news media
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 10, 8
 - **[JA8]** Grossmann, M., et al. (2021). "Political Parties, Interest Groups, and Unequal Class Influence in American Policy." *Journal of Politics*, 83(4).
- **Thursday, April 4: Response Paper due. Upload on Canvas by 11:59pm.**

*Section 3: Public Policy***Week 14 – April 7-9 (April 11: No class - Eid Al-Fitr)**

- Topic: Domestic policy
 - Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 16
 - Pew Research Center. (2022). "Public's Top Priority for 2022: Strengthening the Nation's Economy."
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Week 15 – April 16-18 (April 14: No class - Eid Al-Fitr)

- Topic: Foreign policy
- Readings:
 - Textbook Chapter 17
 - The Economist. (2023). “The destructive new logic that threatens globalisation.”

Week 16 – April 21-23

- Topic: Course recap. Review for final exam.
- Readings: None
- **April 28 – May 1: Final Exam. Date to be confirmed.**

Course Information Items

Technology Support

Students can direct their technical questions to servicedesk@qatar.tamu.edu.

Learning Resources

Students should contact the Center for Teaching and Learning at ctl@qatar.tamu.edu for questions related to learning support, peer tutoring, supplemental instruction, writing support, etc.

Science Learning Support (SLS)

The Science Learning Support within the Division of Arts and Sciences provides a variety of services to support the academic success of all students at Texas A&M at Qatar.

Peer tutors are available to support their peers in achieving their academic goals. Students are welcome to book free one-to-one or group appointments to reinforce their learning outside class, gain confidence and develop study skills in chemistry, physics, math, and fundamental engineering courses. Walk-ins are also welcome! Visit the [Science Learning Support](#) website to find out more about their student support services and how to register or book an appointment.

Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions are also offered for select subjects. Led by SI leaders who will typically reach out to students in specific supported courses, these sessions provide an opportunity for students to think critically about challenging concepts, solve practice problems, and apply various learning strategies in an interactive environment. Please get in touch with joelle.fadlallah@qatar.tamu.edu for assistance and further information.

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 the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below) 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.

Disability Services is located 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 is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

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, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct 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 healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

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