

PSCI 1120 Section 001: Introduction to American Government

Tuesday/Thursday, 3:45 – 5:05 pm

Rogers-Stout Hall 324

East Tennessee State University, Fall 2021

Professor: Dr. Wesley Wehde, e-mail: [wehdew@etsu.edu](mailto:wehdew@etsu.edu)

ZOOM Office Hours: BY APPOINTMENT

**COVID Clause:** Please wear a mask or other appropriate Face Covering to class. Wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth communicates the care and respect you have for yourself, the care and respect you have for those you live with, and the care and respect you have for other members of this classroom community. The best evidence we have, from public health professionals, is that wearing masks is one of the best ways to protect against the spread of COVID-19 and other airborne illnesses. Students with medical conditions that inhibit their ability to wear masks should register through disability services by contact Disability Services by telephone at 423-439-8346 or by email at [littleme@etsu.edu](mailto:littleme@etsu.edu) to request an accommodation. The policy can be found at <https://www.etsu.edu/policies/health-safety/face-coverings.php>.

**I WILL BE ENFORCING the above policy. IF YOU REFUSE TO WEAR A MASK, THEN YOU WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN THE CLASSROOM. This is for YOUR SAFETY and the SAFETY OF OTHERS.**

I will provide a VERY limited assortment of masks, in case you forget. However, once I run out for the semester I will not be purchasing more. They do not pay me enough for that.

Ultimately, this semester will not be normal. There is STILL a pandemic. One we tried to react to quickly, but not quickly enough, and strongly, but not strongly enough, back in March of 2020. Life is harder than normal right now. If you need extra time on an assignment, just let me know. No need to tell me why but a quick heads-up is super helpful. If you need extra time on lots of

assignments, definitely let me know so we can talk and figure out how to build a structure of support for you to finish this class and your degree. All I ask for is patience and kindness in return.

**ETSU Course Description:**

A survey of American government focusing on the United States Constitution, American political culture and political processes.

**My Course Description:**

As an introductory and survey course, this course will provide a basic understanding of what the government does and how, its fundamental structures and processes, and the concepts, ideas, and theories that inform contemporary governance. For some this course may be the only opportunity to study the United States government in a classroom setting. Therefore, the objective of this course is to provide you with a working understanding of government and your place within the political process. In addition to understanding basic terms, concepts, and theories, at the end of this course you will be able to engage in not just an informed discussion about American politics but in American politics itself.

The kinds of questions we will explore in this class are varied yet relevant to US politics, past and present. For example, how much government is necessary? Is citizenship a right or responsibility? What is a democracy? Can we have democracy and effective government at the same time? What did the Framers of the US Constitution think of democracy at the national and state level? How democratic is the US today? What do federal courts and the Supreme Court do? What does it mean to have freedom of speech and religion? What does it mean to have a right to privacy? What is the role of race in American politics historically and in the present? What role does the president play in the American political system, and what makes an effective president? What role does Congress play in the US political system and what does it take to be elected? Which actors outside government influence policy and political participation? Where do Americans get their news, and why do the media remain important in a modern democracy? And, hopefully, many more.

**Course Goals and Learning Outcomes:**

Students will leave this course with a deeper understanding of the American government system, primarily the federal government.

Students will leave this course with the knowledge and skills to become more civically engaged, including knowledge of who their various representatives are and how to contact them.

Students will develop writing abilities and critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate political and policy arguments through course assignments.

**Required Text:**

**OpenStax American Government 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Krutz and Waskiewicz, available here:**  
<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-2e>

This open education resource is a free to use textbook that can be accessed through this link or through the class D2L website where it will also be uploaded. The bookstore may have printed copies available as well.

Other texts such as news or journal articles will be posted to the course D2L site.

### **Components of student grade:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points</b>
Midterm Exam	25
Final Exam	25
Homework Assignments	25
Representation Assignment	15
Academic Article Response	10
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Grading Policy**

<b>A</b> = 94-100	<b>B+</b> = 87-89	<b>C+</b> = 77-79	<b>D+</b> = 67-69
<b>A-</b> = 90-93	<b>B</b> = 84-86	<b>C</b> = 74-76	<b>D</b> = 60-66
	<b>B-</b> = 80-83	<b>C-</b> = 70-73	<b>F</b> = 0-59

### **Management:**

I will use D2L for course management and support. Course documents, assignments, class announcements, and grades will be posted there. Note, however, that grades found on D2L are unofficial; official grades are those that the instructor keeps. Every effort will be made to post grades correctly, but the instructor reserves the right to correct clerical errors. Please monitor D2L for announcements

## **College Policies**

### **Syllabus Attachment**

Follow this link, <https://www.etsu.edu/reg/academics/syllabus.php>, for more information about the following listed resources, policies, and many more. Please let me know if you have any questions about the information obtained through this link.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

If you are a student who requires accommodations, please see me immediately. Together we will develop a full accommodation strategy for you in this course. It is the policy of ETSU to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal law, state law and the University's commitment to equal educational opportunities. Any student with a disability who needs accommodations, for example arrangement for examinations or seating placement, should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Faculty accommodation forms are provided to eligible students by Disability Services. Disability Services is located in the D.P. Culp Center, Room 326, telephone 439-8346. <http://www.etsu.edu/students/disable/>.

### **Adjustments for Pregnancy/Childbirth Related Issues**

Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of

documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability.

**Religious Beliefs policy:**

It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to reschedule examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays, without penalty.

**Title IX Resources**

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24.7, counseling services, mutual no contact orders, scheduling adjustments and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Title IX coordinator Sara Houck at 423-439-8544/ [houckse@etsu.edu](mailto:houckse@etsu.edu) for aid in the above. The University Counseling Center <https://www.etsu.edu/students/counseling/default.php> and the BucsPress2 hotline at (423)-439-4841 are also available to help students in these types of situations.

**Mental Health and Wellness Resources:**

Students may experience overly stressful situations throughout the semester in their personal, professional or academic lives. The university provides a variety of resources for students in these situations or any situation the student may find they need help. One such resources is the University Counseling Center is in Nell Dossett Hall and can be contacted at 423-439-3333. The BucsPress2 hotline is a 24/7 mental health helpline available to students at (423)-439-4841. Finally, students should take care of their physical well-being as well. Resources to do so include the CPA and the University Health Center which can be reached at 423-439-4225. (Syllabus Easter egg 1: send an e-mail to my etsu.edu address with a picture of your favorite animal, can be your own or any random picture, and I will give you a half percentage point of extra credit on the first test).

**Class Policies and Assignments:**

**Student Hours:**

Student hours are by appointment over ZOOM to discuss the content of this course. Appointments must be made through email ([wehdew@etsu.edu](mailto:wehdew@etsu.edu)) a full 24 hours in advance and can be during business hours (9:00 am to 6:30 pm) on Monday through Thursday and from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm on Fridays. You are welcome to help or clarification on the assignments, tests, lectures, or any other material. Please take advantage of this time; otherwise, I'll be sitting in my office alone probably staring at my computer waiting for you to come in.

**Academic Misconduct:**

Cheating is strictly prohibited because it devalues the degree you are working hard to get. As a member of the ETSU community it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the rules. To be successful in this class, all work on exams and quizzes must be yours and yours alone. You may not receive outside help. On examinations and quizzes you will never be permitted to use your notes, textbooks, calculators, or any other study aids. Plagiarism is also a form of cheating. If I find that you are plagiarizing on any of your assignments, you will be

given a 0 for that assignment and may face further penalty, depending on the severity. Should you see someone else engaging in this behavior, I encourage you to report it to myself or directly to the Office of Academic Integrity Programs. That student is devaluing not only their degree, but yours, too. Be aware that it is my professional obligation to report academic misconduct, which I will not hesitate to do. Sanctions for academic misconduct can include expulsion from the University and an F in this course, so don't cheat. It's simply not worth it.

### **Representation Assignment, DUE 10/9 by 11:59 pm:**

Each student will complete an internet research assignment related to the activity and congruence between the student and his/her own elected representatives. The student should use their permanent "home" address for this assignment (which could be a different state than Tennessee). Note: International students should use their U.S. address, such that the assignment is about American government. Based on your home address, you will research who all **\*\*10\*\*** of your elected representatives are, including, city or town council, mayor, school board, state House, state Senate, Governor, U.S. House, U.S. Senate (both of them), and US President. Identify who they are and two (2) of their issue positions. Then, most importantly, examine what your own issue positions are on these 2 issues and analyze whether the elected person is representing YOU well or not. You will do this for each the elected representative.

### **Article Response Assignment, DUE 11/27 by 11:59 pm:**

You will be required to produce a reasoned response to an article that you select from one of the major academic political science journals. You may choose any topic you like, however, there are 2 stipulations, **the article must appear in one of these journals: The American Political Science Review, The American Journal of Political Science, or The Journal of Politics**, and the article should be from the last 5 years. You are expected to obtain, read, and offer a response to the article. Your response is expected to be 3-5 pages in length, summarizing the piece and then providing your reaction to it. Be sure to include the full and proper citation as well. More details on this assignment will follow.

### **Homework Assignments**

There will be five homework assignments due throughout the semester. Each is worth 5 points. Each is described briefly here and more information will be provided on D2L.

**Quizzes Assignment:** For this assignment, you should prove you have taken a few quizzes. These quizzes will not be graded but are instead included to help give you some perspective on your personal ideology, help you understand fake news and social media trolls, and other concepts central to understanding the politics of the United States today. To "prove" you have taken the quizzes, you must take a screenshot or picture of the final page of each quiz and then copy and paste that screenshot or picture into ONE SINGLE WORD document which will then be uploaded to D2L. You should then write a short reflection paper on what you learned about yourself and US politics more generally from taking these quizzes. This reflection paper should be less than 500 words and be included in the document with the pictures uploaded to D2L. Links to all quizzes and an example assignment will be provided on D2L.

**Meme Assignment:** Students will make a meme reflecting the content of this course as well as write a short reflection paper on the information presented in the meme. The meme should be a still

image and can use either an original image or a popular meme format but with original captions/content. Students must write a short reflection on the content of the meme 500 words or less, with at least one credible citation to back up the position or content of the meme. Credible citations can include either academic peer-reviewed research or credible journalistic sources such as The Wall Street Journal or the New York Times.

**Playlist Assignment:** Students will create a playlist reflecting the content of the course. The playlist should be at least 15 songs long – ideally one for each week though I will be flexible, especially considering there will be 2-3 weeks of content not yet covered by the time this is due. Each song must be accompanied by a 3-4 sentence description of why the song reflects that topic. Each song should be identified by its title and artist. The assignment must include either a link to each individual song or to the playlist as a whole – preferably either through YouTube or Spotify. A few examples include the song Same Love by Mackelmore for the week on the Supreme Court and the legalization of same sex marriage or This is America by Childish Gambino for Civil Rights. However, reflection of class topics can be more abstract – just make the argument!

**Extra Credit:**

There may be opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester; however, this is up to the discretion of the instructor. These opportunities may take the form of pop quizzes, current event discussions, notable civic engagement, among others. Asking for extra credit will, in all cases, be unlikely to result in an opportunity for extra credit. Should there be extra credit opportunities, the points from them will be added into grades before the midterm and final exams to give students an understanding of their position in the course.

**Exam Policy: THIS SECTION IS A DRAFT PENDING STUDENT INPUT**

Exams will be administered using the D2L course website. They will be comprised of a series of different types of essay questions requiring citations as if they were a paper or essay. These citations should primarily come from the course text, slides, and lecture notes though you are not restricted to these materials. You will be given a full 24-hour period to access the exam questions and answer them. If you do not turn in your exam during this time period, your exam will be subject to the following late work policy.

**Late Work Policy for Assignments:**

Work for the assignments for this class will be accepted **up to three days after the due date**. For each day late, the assignment will be docked ten points. So if an assignment is due 9/10 and is turned in on 9/13 then the maximum grade a student can receive is a 70. After the third day, the student will receive a 35% for that assignment.

**Course Schedule:**

\*\*\*ALL READINGS SHOULD BE DONE BEFORE A TOPIC IS COVERED IN CLASS\*\*\*

Dates:	Topic	Readings
Week One: 8/23 – 8/27	Engagement/participation & youth voting	Amer. Govt. ch.1

Week Two: 8/30 – 9/3	Constitutional Design	Amer. Govt. ch.2, Fed. 10, 51
Week Three: 9/6 – 9/10	Federalism	Amer. Govt. ch.3
Week Four: 9/13 – 9/17	Civil Liberties, <b>quizzes assignment, due 9/18</b>	Amer. Govt. ch.4
Week Five: 9/20 – 9/24	Civil Rights,	Amer. Govt. ch.5
Week Six: 9/27 – 10/1	Courts	Amer. Govt. ch.13
Week Seven: 10/4 – 10/8	Public Opinion, <b>representation assignment due 10/9</b>	Amer. Govt. ch.6
Week Eight: 10/11 – 10/15	NO CLASS 10/12 <b>Midterm Exam on 10/14</b>	
Week Nine: 10/18 – 10/22	Campaigns and Elections,	Amer. Govt. ch.7
Week Ten: 10/25 – 10/29	Political Parties	Amer. Govt. ch.9
Week Eleven: 11/1 – 11/5	Interest Groups, <b>meme assignment due, 11/6</b>	Amer. Govt. ch.10
Week Twelve: 11/8 – 11/12	Congress	Amer. Govt. ch.11
Week Thirteen: 11/15 – 11/19	Presidency, <b>playlist assignment due, 11/20</b>	Amer. Govt. ch.12
Week Fourteen: 11/23	Public Administration (Bureaucracy), <b>Journal Article Response due 11/27</b>	Amer. Govt. ch.15
THANKSGIVING BREAK: 11/25	<b>UNIVERSITY CLOSED</b>	
Week Fifteen: 11/29 – 12/3	Domestic and Foreign Policy	Amer. Govt. chs. 16-17
Finals Week: 12/4 – 12/9	<b>FINAL EXAM – 24 hours on 12/9</b>	Comprehensive