

PSCI 1120: Introduction to American Government

Tuesday/Thursday 9:35AM-11:05AM

Rogers-Stout Hall 327

Fall 2021

Instructor: David Miller

Email address: millerdr3@etsu.edu

Website: <http://www.davidryanmiller.com/>

Office location: Rogers-Stout Hall 301B

Office hours: Tuesday 1:00PM-3:00PM (in-person), Thursday 7:00PM-8:00PM (virtual), or by appointment ([reserve via Calendly](#))

Course Description

While living in the midst of a contentious period in American politics, it is critical to have a working knowledge of the American political process and to hone analytical skills with which to interpret contemporary events. This course is designed to accomplish these dual objectives. In our first few sessions, we will explore both key principles of social scientific thinking and the historical and intellectual origins of the American system of government. Then, we will use this foundation to explore the workings of the American political system in both its core institutions and the mass public. At the end of the semester, students should be able to understand and critically engage with information about American politics, as well as actively engage with the American political system (should they choose to do so).

Course Goals

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Describe the historical and intellectual underpinnings of the American political system and its evolution over time.
- Understand how citizens form and express political opinions, make political decisions, and exert influence in the American political process.
- Explain the functions of American political institutions and how those institutions condition political and policy outcomes.
- Analyze contemporary political phenomena through a social scientific lens.

Required Texts, Materials, or Equipment

- Krutz, Glen and Waskiewicz, Sylvie. *American Government*. OpenStax. (2nd Edition). ISBN-13 (digital): 978-1-947172-66-1. [Available on OpenStax](#).

Assignments and Grading

Course grades will be determined by students' performance on the following assignments and

tasks:

- Weekly reading quizzes (20%): Students are expected to complete a short reading quiz (3-5 multiple choice questions) every week. These quizzes are due before class on Thursday every week and will be based on the textbook chapters and/or other readings set to be completed for that week (Tuesday & Thursday classes). I will drop each student's lowest weekly reading quiz score when calculating final grades.
- Class participation (20%): Most class periods will include an active learning activity, such as a class discussion or small group task. Students are expected to engage in and equitably contribute to these activities. If the class collectively demonstrates continued lack of preparation for class, I reserve the right to administer "pop quizzes," which will contribute to this portion of your grade.
- Exams (60%): During the course of the semester, students will be administered three in-class exams. Exams will consist of identification questions, short answer questions, and essays. Exams are not cumulative, though knowledge from earlier parts of the class may be useful in answering questions on exams later in the class.
- Extra credit (?): I reserve the right to provide opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. Extra credit opportunities may consist of finding current events examples of class concepts, offering responses to supplemental readings, and attending civic engagement events on campus or remotely. The value of each extra credit opportunity towards students' final grades will be provided in writing when each opportunity is announced (or shortly thereafter).

Final grades will be assigned according to the following cutoffs:

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
≥ 94	A	≥ 83	B	≥ 73	C	≥ 60	D
≥ 90	A-	≥ 80	B-	≥ 70	C-	< 60	F
≥ 87	B+	≥ 77	C+	≥ 65	D+		

Course Policies

- A link to the current version of the course syllabus will be posted on my website and on the course's D2L page. Please refer to the most current version of the syllabus for information about the course schedule, course policies, etc.
- Core course readings will come from the required textbook (Krutz and Waskiewicz's *American Government*), which is [available on OpenStax](#). All other course readings will be made available through either the course syllabus and/or the course D2L page at least one week in advance of the class for which they are expected to be completed.

- We will often refer to contemporary political events both in lectures and class activities. In order to participate fully, I strongly encourage you to spend at least 10 minutes each day familiarizing yourself with recent news about American politics. You may consult the news source(s) of your choice; recommended sources (in no particular order) include [The New York Times](#), the [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#), [NPR](#), [CBS](#), [NBC](#), [ABC](#), and the [BBC](#).
- All readings, reading quizzes, and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day specified on the course syllabus and/or by the instructor in class. Late quizzes and assignments will be accepted, but will be assessed a 10% penalty for each 24 hour period the assignment is late.
- *Communication Outside of Class*
 - I encourage you to contact me to discuss topics we are covering in class, concerns about the course, or other related issues outside of class. The primary mode of communication outside of class will be email. When you email me, please include the course code in the subject line. I will do my best to reply to emails within 24 hours, and I will *not* respond to emails about problem sets or exams sent less than 24 hours before they are due.
 - Office hours scheduling will take place via Calendly. If you would like to come to office hours, please [visit my Calendly schedule](#) and reserve an available time for us to meet. If there are no available appointments or if you are not able to see me during office hours, please contact me so that we can find an alternative time to meet.
- *Technology*
 - Phone use is strictly prohibited without prior approval of the instructor. Please be sure to silence your phones before class begins and keep them stored for the duration of class in order to facilitate an environment conducive to learning.
 - I strongly encourage students to limit use of their laptops during class sessions unless otherwise directed (i.e. during a group activity). While I understand that some students are accustomed to taking notes with their laptops, they can be distracting to me, you, and your fellow students. Further, several recent academic studies suggest that students who take notes by hand process and retain information better than students who use their laptops to take notes.¹
 - If any students would like to record lectures, please speak with me in advance to obtain permission.
- *Academic Integrity*: Students are expected to abide by the ETSU Honor Code and to act with honor, integrity, and civility in all matters. The course instructor has the primary responsibility for maintenance of academic integrity. Students guilty of academic misconduct, either directly or indirectly, through participation or assistance, are

¹ E.g. Mueller, Pam A. and Oppenheimer, Daniel M. 2014. "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking." *Psychological Science*, 25(6), 1159-1168.

immediately responsible to the course instructor. Any form of academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) is subject to disciplinary action. Sanctions for a violation may vary with the severity of the offense. The instructor may reduce a grade up to and including assignment of an “F” or a zero (“0”) for the exercise/examination or an “F” in the course. If a sanction is imposed then the instructor must begin the academic misconduct procedures and notify both the student and the Dean/Designee. Students may appeal a grade assignment associated with a finding of academic misconduct, as distinct from a student disciplinary or grade appeals process, through the University’s Academic Misconduct Procedures. The student will not be subjected to any form of pressure to coerce admission of guilt or information about his/her conduct or that of others. For more information, please consult ETSU’s [Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy](#).

- *COVID-19*: The course will abide by all current ETSU COVID-19 guidelines. For the most up-to-date information, [please visit ETSU’s COVID-19 Dashboard](#).
 - *Face Coverings*: 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 contacting Disability Services by telephone at 423-439-8346 or by email at littleme@etsu.edu to request an accommodation. A link to the policy may be found [here](#).

Information and Resources for Students

- *Inclusive Learning Environment*: East Tennessee State University recognizes that the pursuit of knowledge and understanding is enriched by an environment in which people of diverse backgrounds learn together and from each other, and participate in free and genuine exchange of views. It recognizes that all members of the University community benefit from diversity and that the quality of learning, research, scholarship and creative activities is enhanced by a campus climate of inclusion, understanding, and appreciation of differences and the full range of human experience. ETSU must prepare students to function successfully in a diverse society. A university diverse in its people, curricula, scholarship, research, and creative activities expands opportunities for intellectual inquiry and engagement, helps students develop critical thinking skills, and prepares students for social and civic responsibilities.

ETSU aspires to be an institution that celebrates diversity by welcoming all students, faculty, administrators and staff as respected and valued participants in the University's

educational mission. Therefore, ETSU welcomes people of different races, ethnicities, religions, creeds, national origins, genders, sexual orientations, physical abilities, ages, veteran status, and social, economic, or educational backgrounds. ETSU is particularly committed to welcoming groups that have been traditionally underrepresented or excluded. The University also supports and encourages the promotion of diversity in its curricula, programs, faculty research, scholarship, and creative activities.

- *Disability Resources:* 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, note taking assistance, exam time adjustment or seating placement, should meet with Disability Services. Faculty accommodation forms are provided to eligible students and should be shared with the instructor as early in the semester as possible. Disability Services can be reached via telephone at 423-439-8346, or on [its website](#).
- *Accommodations Based Upon Sexual Assault:* East Tennessee State University is committed to fostering a safe learning environment. Sexual misconduct and/or gender-based discrimination of any kind is prohibited. ETSU investigates cases of sexual misconduct (including, but not limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking) and may take steps to protect the parties involved from harassment, retaliation, or negative impacts from the incident or complaint.

Complaints may be made directly to ETSU's Title IX Coordinator, Garrison Burton, via email burtong@etsu.edu, or phone at 423-439-8544, or by filing a Report of Discrimination, Harrassment and/or Retaliation. All sexual misconduct complaints are handled by the Office of Compliance.

If you wish to speak confidentially about an incident of sexual misconduct, contact the ETSU Counseling Center at 423-439-3333. After hours calls may be directed to Bucs Press 2 by dialing the same number and then "pressing 2." ETSU encourages anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct to talk to someone about what happened so they can get the support they need.

If you would like to learn more about sexual misconduct or how to report an incident please visit the university's [Title IX Office](#). Click [here](#) to review the ETSU Student Sexual Misconduct policy.

- *Bias Reporting:* The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University's Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu

- *Mental Health:* The ETSU Counseling Center provides many counseling services to serve student needs. The Counseling Center currently offers both in-person and online Single Session Therapy and Let's Talk consultations. Please visit the [Counseling Center's website](#) for the most up-to-date information on the availability of these programs. BucsPress2, a 24/7/365 telephone mental health helpline, can be reached by calling 423-439-4841 (then press "2"). All of the above services are free to ETSU students.

Syllabus Attachment

- To review other applicable university policies, please see ETSU's [syllabus attachment](#).

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to make modifications to this information throughout the semester. In the event of a conflict between syllabus versions, the most recent version will always supersede previous versions.

Preliminary Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments²

DATE	LECTURE TOPIC	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
August 24	Introductory Session Fundamentals of Political Science	N/A
August 26	Fundamentals of Political Science	N/A
August 30	Founding & the Constitution	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 2
September 2	Founding & the Constitution	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 2 “Founders Chic” (The Atlantic) WEEKLY READING QUIZ
September 7	Federalism & Separation of Powers	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 3
September 9	Federalism & Separation of Powers	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 3 “Congress can’t do much...” (The Conversation) WEEKLY READING QUIZ
September 14	The Presidency	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 12
September 16	The Presidency	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 12 “How a Stronger Presidency...” (WaPo) WEEKLY READING QUIZ
September 21	The Bureaucracy	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 15
September 23	The Bureaucracy	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 15 “Biden can’t instruct...” (WaPo) WEEKLY READING QUIZ

² All readings and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified.

September 28	Congress	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 11 “Members of Congress are...” (3Streams)
September 30	Congress	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 11 WEEKLY READING QUIZ
October 5	EXAM 1 REVIEW	
October 7	EXAM 1	
October 12	FALL BREAK (NO CLASS)	
October 14	Political Parties	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 9 WEEKLY READING QUIZ
October 19	Public Opinion	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 6 “The Less Americans Know...” (WaPo)
October 21	Elections	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 7 WEEKLY READING QUIZ
October 26	Groups and Interests	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 10
October 28	Groups and Interests	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 10 “Here’s the evidence...” (3Streams) WEEKLY READING QUIZ
November 2	EXAM 2 REVIEW	
November 4	EXAM 2	
November 9	The Media	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 8
November 11	VETERANS DAY (NO CLASS)	
November 16	The Courts	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 13 “The Supreme Court...” (WaPo)
November 18	The Courts	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 8

**WEEKLY READING
QUIZ**

November 23	Civil Liberties **REMOTE CLASS**	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 4
November 25	THANKSGIVING (NO CLASS)	
November 30	Civil Rights	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 5
December 2	FINAL EXAM REVIEW	
December 9 (8AM-10AM)	FINAL EXAM	