



EAST TENNESSEE STATE
UNIVERSITY

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Political Science, International Affairs, and Public Administration

PSCI 1120 Introduction to American Government

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 2nd 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:

Assignment	Points
Exam 1	20
Exam 2	20
Final Exam	20
Representation Assignment	15
Academic Article Response	10
Participation	5
Reading Quizzes	10
Total:	100

Grading Policy

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

Office Hours:

Office hours are a designated time I will be in my office available to you to discuss the content of this course. You are welcome to come by during these times to seek help or clarification on the assignments, tests, lectures, or any other material. Please take advantage of this time I have set aside for you; otherwise, I'll be sitting in my office alone probably staring at my computer waiting for you to come in.

Attendance Policy:

It is highly encouraged students attend each class. All quizzes will be administered during class time and no make-up opportunities will be provided. Additionally, material may be covered in lecture that is not in the text that will be on the tests. Extra credit opportunities will also only be available to those students who are present in class. Otherwise, there is no formal attendance policy. You are all adults and can make decisions for yourselves. However, I find that only students with regular

attendance are able to pass. In the past, only 5% of students who have missed a substantial number of days passed and none received a grade above a C. So, if you want to get an A or B in this class, I highly recommend you attend. During class, students will be respectful of others and only speak when appropriate. I will penalize students who are rude or talk over others or are not paying attention. I allow technology in the classroom; however, if I find that you are being distracting to other students I will revoke those privileges. The instructor reserves the right to make these decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Participation:

Participation will be measured by two elements. 1) whether or not you answer questions and speak during discussions and 2) participation in in-class activities. Thus, while attendance is not mandatory there will be in-class activities, both announced and unannounced, throughout the semester that count toward your grade. I will keep track of participation throughout the semester. Grade guidelines are as follows: 5 points will be awarded for excellent participation (almost always involved in discussion, misses less than 10% of activities), 4 points will be awarded for good participation (discusses most days, misses approximately 20% of activities), 3 points will be awarded for adequate participation (discusses occasionally, misses approximately half of activities), 2 points will be awarded for fair participation (discusses rarely, misses most activities), 1 point will be awarded for minimal participation (discusses never, misses almost all activities), 0 points will be awarded for those who never attend class nor participate.

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.

Exam Policy:

Examinations will consist of open-ended questions on the main concepts from the readings and lectures in the following formats: short answers, arguments, and essays. **Study guides** which contain concepts and terms you are responsible for knowing will be distributed one week prior to the exams. **BRING A BLUEBOOK FOR EACH EXAM.**

Exam dates are clearly listed on the course syllabus. Students are responsible for remembering these and arriving on-time and prepared to take all exams as scheduled.

Makeup Exam Policy: Failure to show up and take an exam during the scheduled time will result in an **automatic** zero (0) for that exam, *unless* the student contacts the Professor **PRIOR** to the exam in question. Permission must be requested in advance of the scheduled exam date – AND – the professor must approve the request.

Absolutely no makeup exams will be given to students who fail to follow the above procedures and/or do not present an acceptable reason.

Students may be asked to provide relevant documentation and/or written records justifying their absence (doctors' notes, etc.)

Exam one will cover material from the first four weeks of class. Exam two will cover material from week five through week ten. The final exam will be comprehensive; however, only 20-30% of the content will be from the material covered in the first two exams. The remaining majority of the test will cover the material from the last five weeks of class.

Representation Assignment, DUE 3/7 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 4/18 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.

Reading Quizzes:

Every two weeks students will have a 10-20 question quiz covering the readings of the previous two-week period. These quizzes are intended to measure reading comprehension and subject mastery. Research has shown that regular reading checks such as these improve academic outcomes such as material retention, subject expertise, and exam and course grades. The quizzes will be administered through the D2L class website, on the dates on the syllabus. These quizzes will, in total, be worth 10 points of your final grade. (Syllabus Easter egg 2: The first reading quiz will have an open-ended

OFFICIAL SYLLABUS WILL BE PROVIDED IN THE COURSE

question ask what my favorite type of cereal is the answer is Reese’s Puffs). **Students who inform me of a legitimate reason, prior to the quiz, will be able to make up their reading quiz, up to 2 times. The third quiz missed, regardless, will be scored as a zero. In the case of an unexpected emergency, notification as soon as possible as well as documentation will suffice to allow a make-up. All students who miss quiz day without notifying me prior to their absence will receive a score of 0 regardless.**

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 (outside of the reading 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.

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 zero for that assignment.

Course Schedule:

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

Dates:	Topic	Readings
Week One: Tuesday, January 21 & Thursday, January 23	Engagement/participation & youth voting	Amer. Govt. ch.1
Week Two: Tuesday, January 28 & Thursday, January 30	Constitutional Design, first reading quiz: 1/30	Amer. Govt. ch.2, Fed. 10, 51
Week Three: Tuesday, February 4 & Thursday, February 6	Federalism	Amer. Govt. ch.3
Week Four: Tuesday, February 11 & Thursday, February 13	Civil Liberties, second reading quiz: 2/13	Amer. Govt. ch.4
Week Five: Tuesday, February 18 & Thursday, February 20	Civil Rights, EXAM ONE 2/20	Amer. Govt. ch.5
Week Six: February 25 & Thursday, February 27	Courts, third reading quiz: 2/27	Amer. Govt. ch.13
Week Seven: Tuesday, March 3 & Thursday, March 5	Public Opinion, representation assignment due 3/7	Amer. Govt. ch.6
Week Eight: Tuesday, March 10 & Thursday, March 12	Campaigns and Elections, fourth reading quiz: 3/12	Amer. Govt. ch.7
Week Nine: SPRING BREAK NO CLASS		
Week Ten: Tuesday, March 24 & Thursday, March 26	Political Parties	Amer. Govt. ch.9
Week Eleven: Tuesday, March 31 & Thursday, April 2.	Interest Groups, fifth reading quiz: 4/2	Amer. Govt. ch.10

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Week Twelve: Tuesday, April 7 & Thursday, April 9	Congress, EXAM TWO: 4/9	Amer. Govt. ch.11
Week Thirteen: Tuesday, April 14 & Thursday, April 16	Presidency, sixth reading quiz: 4/16	Amer. Govt. ch.12
Weeks Fourteen: Tuesday, April 21 & Thursday, April 23	Public Administration (Bureaucracy), Journal Article Response due 4/18	Amer. Govt. ch.15
Week Fifteen: Tuesday, April 28 & Thursday, April 30	Domestic and Foreign Policy	Amer. Govt. chs.16-17
Tuesday, May 5 1:20 p.m. -3:20 p.m.	FINAL EXAM	Comprehensive

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