

# PSCI 4320: Political System of the United States, Spring 2009

Section 201: MW 4:30–5:45 p.m., 223 Bullock Hall

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Hours: M 5:50–7:30 p.m., TuTh 10:50 a.m.–1:00 p.m., or by appointment

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The purpose of this course is to explore in greater depth the impact of both *political behavior* and *linkage institutions* on the political process of the United States. As most of the upper division courses in American politics at TAMIU focus on political institutions and constitutional law, this course is designed to “fill in the gaps” left by those courses with in-depth coverage of political parties, interest groups, public opinion, political participation, and voting behavior.

**Student Learning Objectives:** Ideally, at the conclusion of this course, you will have a greater understanding of

- ▷ the distinctions between political institutions and political behavior and their importance in understanding the American political process.
- ▷ how political processes in the United States compare with those of other advanced industrial democracies.
- ▷ the importance of political parties and interest groups as *linkage institutions* that communicate citizens’ policy preferences to government.
- ▷ the *political socialization* process (how individuals learn the essential features of the political process and become citizens)
- ▷ how citizens form and articulate opinions about government.
- ▷ how citizens participate in the political process through voting and other means.

**Required Materials:** There are **four** books required for this course:

- ▷ Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley. 2008. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-0-87289-304-7.
- ▷ Russel J. Dalton. 2008. *Citizen Politics: Public Opinion and Political Parties in Advanced Industrial Democracies*, 5th ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-0-87289-537-9.
- ▷ Marjorie Randon Hershey. 2009. *Party Politics in America*, 13th ed. New York: Pearson/Longman. ISBN 978-0-205-61963-4.
- ▷ Mark J. Rozell, Clyde Wilcox, and David Madland. 2008. *Interest Groups in American Campaigns: The New Face of Electioneering*, 2nd ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 0-978-1-93311-624-2.

These textbooks should be available, new and used, at the TAMIU Bookstore in the Student Center; you may also be able to order them on-line at a discount.

Additional readings may be assigned at the discretion of the professor and will be provided for you at the library reserve desk, on the course Angel site, or as handouts in class.

**Assignments and Grading:** Your grade in this course will be based on the following elements:

Midterm Exam	25%	Research Design for Paper	5%
Final Exam	25%	Research Paper	20%
Class Participation	10%	Reading/Lecture Quizzes	15%

Your final grade in the course will be assigned based on this scale:

Final Average	≥ 90.0	≥ 80.0	≥ 70.0	≥ 60.0	< 60.0
Grade	A	B	C	D	F
Grade Points	4.0	3.0	2.0	1.0	0.0

**Exams:** The exams will be closed-book, in-class examinations, consisting of an appropriate mixture of multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions. The midterm exam will cover topics covered up to that point in the course; per college policy, the final exam is *comprehensive*.

**Research Paper:** The research paper will be approximately 12–15 pages in length in which you will engage in an empirical, quantitative research project in American political behavior and/or linkage institutions.

You will turn in the paper topic on or before **Wednesday, February 11**. After selecting an appropriate topic, you will write a research design paper in which you:

1. explain the relevance of the topic;
2. conduct a literature review critiquing *at least ten* items of previous literature on (or directly related to) the topic, the majority of which must have appeared in academic journals or scholarly books;
3. propose a hypothesis (or hypotheses); and
4. explain how this hypothesis (or these hypotheses) will be tested.

The research design will be due on **Friday, March 29**. You will then complete the research paper by:

1. conducting an original analysis of the data;
2. presenting and discussing the results of the data analysis; and
3. describing the conclusions you arrive at based on the outcome of your analysis.

This paper will be due on the last day of the semester (**Friday, May 1**).

Your paper must be an individual effort; you may consult with me, the TAMIU Writing Center, other faculty members, or other students, but the writing and research must be substantially your own work. The paper will be due on the last day of the course.

The body of your paper should be double-spaced and written using a proportional typeface (either 11 point or 12 point), with one-inch margins and including page numbers.<sup>1</sup> You should include a title page with the date, title, and appropriate identifying information.

The paper must consistently utilize the citation style of the [American Political Science Association](#), include a full bibliography listing the works cited in your paper, and be written in standard English using coherent prose and acceptable grammar. Please refer to *The Style Manual for Political Science* published by the APSA for a complete guide to the proper use of APSA style.

<sup>1</sup>Proportional typefaces include Times New Roman, Arial, Calibri, Garamond, etc. “Typewriter-style” (constant-width) typefaces such as Courier New are **not acceptable**.

**Class Discussion:** As this course is an upper-division class, students are expected to participate regularly in class discussions about the assigned readings. If you have other commitments that preclude regular class attendance, this portion of your grade will suffer and there are no “make-ups” for missed class discussions.

**Class Policies:** I make it a general policy to treat all students as adults. While this affords you, the student, greater freedom than you may have had in high school, it also means that you must take a greater personal responsibility for your performance in the course. I am always happy to meet with students to discuss their concerns about the course, but I will not necessarily assume that you are in difficulty simply because you perform poorly on a homework assignment or disappear from class for a few days.

Please provide a respectful learning environment for your fellow students. Repeated tardiness, cell phone disruptions, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as the student newspaper), and abuse of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing/texting during class) during class will adversely affect your grade; per university policy, repeated disruptive behavior may result in your involuntary withdrawal from the course.

Please arrive at class *on time* and mute (or switch off) all pagers, cell phones, and alarms during class.

Make-up examinations must be scheduled two weeks in advance in the case of an **unavoidable** planned or reasonably-foreseeable absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or emergency that is properly **documented**. Please refer to the [student absence policy](#) posted on the TAMIU website for examples of absences that will ordinarily be excused by the professor and specific documentation that is acceptable. Should you have three final exams scheduled for one day, please consult with me to arrange an alternative time to take your final.

I do not provide lecture notes for students under any circumstances. You will have to rely on the generosity of a classmate or make use of any materials provided on the textbook website or the textbook’s study guide (if applicable). Students with disabilities who require notes or other learning environment accommodations should consult with the Student Disability Services office for assistance.

Copies of all out-of-class written assignments must be submitted **both** in paper (hard copy) format to the professor and in the appropriate TurnItIn.com “drop box” on the TAMIU Angel E-Learning website. In the event that the timeliness of an assignment is in question, the time submitted to Angel will be used as the definitive record of when the assignment was received, as long as the hard copy is substantially identical. The professor reserves the right to not grade any assignment not received in a timely fashion in *both* formats.

Any extra-credit opportunities offered by the professor will be offered to **all** students on an equal basis. Please do not ask the professor for individualized extra credit opportunities.

This syllabus is subject to revision by the professor.

**Grade Appeals:** If you wish to dispute a grade on a particular assignment for any reason other than an obvious arithmetic error on my part, you will need to type a one-page explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, *at least one week after* the assignment is returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered. Please refer to the Student Handbook for policies regarding appeals of *final letter grades*.

**University and College Policies:** The following policies of the TAMIU College of Arts and Sciences and Texas A&M International University are reproduced here for your information; you may already be familiar with them from other courses, but please review them.

**STUDENT EMAIL ADDRESS:** All students must obtain a TAMIU email address and have access to the Angel E-Learning system. Students should check their TAMIU email on a regular basis.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR DROPPING A COURSE:** It is the student's responsibility to drop the course before the designated drop date. Faculty are not responsible for dropping students who stop attending class.

**OFFICE HOURS:** Your professor will keep regular office hours, as posted above, and appointments can be made to accommodate students' schedules. The door will be open for all students on a "first-come, first-served" basis when no appointment has been previously scheduled.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Texas A&M International University seeks to promote reasonable accommodations for all qualified persons with disabilities. This University will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with the Student Disability Services office and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

**CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR:** The College of Arts and Sciences encourages classroom discussion and academic debate as an essential intellectual activity. It is essential that students learn to express and defend their beliefs, but it is also essential that they learn to listen and respond respectfully to others whose beliefs they may not share. The College will always tolerate diverse, unorthodox, and unpopular points of view, but it will not tolerate condescending or insulting remarks. When students verbally abuse or ridicule and intimidate others whose views they do not agree with, they subvert the free exchange of ideas that should characterize a university classroom. If their actions are deemed by the professor to be disruptive, they will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, which may include being involuntarily withdrawn from the class.

**COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS:** The Copyright Act of 1976, as amended by the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, grants to copyright owners the exclusive right to reproduce their works and distribute copies of their work. Works that receive copyright protection include published works such as a textbook. Copying a textbook without permission from the owner of the copyright may constitute a copyright infringement. Civil and criminal penalties may be assessed for copyright infringement. Civil penalties include damages up to \$100,000; criminal penalties include a fine up to \$250,000 and imprisonment.

**PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:** Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as one's own work. Recently the internet has complicated the issue. Taking from the internet and presenting it as one's own work is still plagiarism. Copying another student's paper or a portion of the paper is called "copying." Neither plagiarism nor copying will be tolerated. Should a faculty member discover that a student committed plagiarism, the student will receive a grade of "F" in that course and the matter will be referred to the TAMIU Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. Per university policy, you have the right to appeal any such penalty according to procedures published in the faculty and student handbooks.

**INCOMPLETES:** Incompletes are discouraged and are assigned only under extenuating circumstances. College policy mandates 70% of course requirements must be met before an "I" can be considered. In fairness to those students who complete the course as scheduled, under no circumstances will an incomplete ("I") be changed to an "A" unless the student has experienced a death in the immediate family or has a written medical excuse from a physician.

**Course Outline:** Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course calendar and in Angel. We will not necessarily read books in the order they appear on the syllabus; please be sure you read the correct chapters *in advance of* the designated class dates.

While the professor may periodically remind students of upcoming scheduled events, it is **your responsibility** to be familiar with this schedule and any changes to it.

**Jan 12: Introduction** Introduction to the course; what are linkage institutions and political behavior?

**Jan 14: Defining Political Parties and Interest Groups** What is a political party? What are interest groups? What do they do in the American system?  
Reading: Hershey, ch. 1; Rozell, Wilcox, and Madland, ch. 1.

**Jan 19 Martin Luther King Holiday: No Class**

**Jan 21: The Two-Party System** Why *two* parties? Why just one party in Laredo?  
Reading: Hershey, ch. 2.

**Jan 26, 28: Party Organizations** Local, state, and national party organizations; party activists; parties and interest groups.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 3–5; Rozell, Wilcox, and Madland, ch. 2.

**Feb 2, 4: The Party in the Electorate** Party identification; party change and realignment; voting and political parties.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 6–8.

**Feb 9, 11: Campaigns and Elections** The nomination process; general election campaigns; campaign finance; interest groups and political campaigns.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 9–12; Rozell, Wilcox, and Madland, ch. 3–5.

**Feb 16, 18: The Party in Government** Legislative parties; parties in the judiciary and executive branch; the “responsible party system.”  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 13–16.

**Feb 23 Midterm Exam**

**Feb 25, Mar 2 (part): Public Opinion and Democracy** What role should public opinion play in the policymaking process? How public opinion differs in the U.S. and other democracies. The measurement of public opinion.  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 1, Appendix (p. 349–); Dalton, ch. 1.

**Mar 2 (part), 4: The Origins of Public Opinion** Political socialization and the mass media; attitude consistency.  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 2–4.

**Mar 9, 11: The Nature of Belief Systems** Ideology and ideological constraint; the “pluralistic roots” of public opinion.  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 5–6; Dalton, ch. 2.

**Mar 16–21 Spring Break: No Class**

**Mar 23, 25: Public Support for Democratic Norms** Political knowledge and attentiveness; civil liberties and civil rights.  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 7–9.

**Mar 30; Apr 2: Public Opinion and Democratic Governance** Trust in government; do policy preferences get translated into policy?  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 10–12.

**Apr 6: Political Participation** Forms of political participation; who participates?  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 3–4; review Hershey, ch. 8.

**Apr 8: Political Orientations** Ideology, attitude change, and value change.  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 5–6; review Clawson and Oxley, ch. 4.

**Apr 9 Drop Date**

**Apr 13, 15: Voting Behavior I** Elections and political parties; class voting and other social group models of voting.  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 7–8; review Hershey, ch. 2, 7.

**Apr 20, 22: Voting Behavior II** Party identification and voting (the “funnel of causality”); issue and candidate voting.  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 9–10; review Hershey, ch. 6.

**Apr 27: Representation and Voting** Forms of correspondence; “party government.”  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 11; review Hershey, ch. 15; Clawson and Oxley, ch. 11.

**Apr 29: Citizens and the Democratic Process** Mass political support for the political system.  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 12; review Clawson and Oxley, ch. 10.

**Monday, May 4, 5:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. Final Exam**