

## PSCI 5303: American Political Institutions, Fall 2009

Section 162: Tuesday 6:00–8:30 p.m., Bullock 209

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Hours: MW 10:30-11:00 a.m.; MW 3:00-4:30 p.m.; or by appointment.

This seminar is designed to provide an overview of the institutions of American government and consider the structure of American politics and government from an institutional perspective. In the first few weeks of the course, we will consider theories of institutions—why citizens and politicians choose the institutional structures (rules, procedures, and processes) they do. Then we will turn to the major institutions of American national government and the *linkage institutions* that help connect citizens to governmental processes.

**Prerequisites:** There are no formal prerequisites for this course. However, students should already be familiar with the fundamental features of the United States political system from a course such as PSCI 2305: American National Government, or the equivalent undergraduate course at another institution (such as Texas course equivalency numbers GOVT 2301–2302 or GOVT 2305). Students should also be familiar with basic social scientific research methods (PSCI 3301, PSCI 5321, or equivalent courses in related fields such as sociology, psychology, or economics).

**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.
- ▷ the rational choice and public choice approaches to understanding politics and government.
- ▷ how electoral rules affect the political system.
- ▷ how the major branches of American government operate in theory and in practice.
- ▷ the role of linkage institutions, such as political parties and interest groups, in American governance.

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

- ▷ Kenneth A. Shepsle and Mark S. Bonchek. 1997. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. Norton. ISBN 978-0-393-97107-1.
- ▷ James Buchanan and Gordon Tullock. 1999. *The Calculus of Consent: Logical Foundations of Constitutional Democracy*. Liberty Fund. ISBN 978-0-86597-532-3.
- ▷ Martin Farrell. *Electoral Systems: A Comparative Introduction*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 978-0-333-80162-8.
- ▷ Gary W. Cox and Mathew McCubbins. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*, 2nd ed. Cambridge. ISBN 978-0-521-69409-4.
- ▷ Stephen Skowronek. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*, revised ed. Belknap. ISBN 978-0-674-68937-4.
- ▷ Lawrence Baum. *The Puzzle of Judicial Behavior*. Michigan. ISBN 978-0-472-08335-0.
- ▷ John H. Aldrich. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago. ISBN 978-0-226-01272-8.

These books 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 marked with (R) in the course outline below will be provided for you at the library reserve desk, on the course Angel site, or as handouts in class. Your professor may also assign additional readings over the semester if deemed necessary.

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

Final Exam	35%	Research Design	10%
Research Presentation	5%	Final Research Paper	20%
Article Reviews (2)	10%	Discussion Leading	10%
Class Participation	10%		

The following letter grades will be assigned in this course:

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

\* The grade of “D” is a failing grade in graduate school (in other words, you must retake this course if you want it to count towards your degree), and no more than two “C”s may count for credit towards a master’s degree in any TAMIU graduate program. In addition, you must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA (“B” average) to remain in good standing.

**Exams:** The final exam will be an open-book, in-class examination, consisting of short-answer and essay questions. Per college policy, the final exam is *comprehensive*.

**Research Paper:** The research paper will be approximately 15–18 pages in length. In the paper you will engage in an empirical, quantitative research project on political institutions (either governmental institutions or linkage institutions) in the United States or another democratic political context.

You will turn in the paper topic on or before **Wednesday, September 16th**. 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, which must have appeared in academic journals, conference proceedings, or scholarly books (other sources may also be used, but will not count as items of literature for this requirement);
3. propose a hypothesis (or hypotheses); and
4. explain how this hypothesis (or these hypotheses) will be tested.

This portion of the paper will be due on **Friday, November 20th**. 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 (**Thursday, December 3rd**).

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

<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.

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>2</sup>

You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the opportunity to present your paper at the upcoming Texas A&M University System Pathways to the Doctorate conference, to be held here at TAMIU in November. More details on this conference will be forthcoming from the Dean of Graduate Studies in the coming weeks.

**Class Discussion:** As this course is a graduate class, students are expected to participate regularly in class discussions about the assigned readings. To provide an incentive for regular participation, students will be assigned to be *discussion leaders* for each topic on the syllabus; these students will be expected to be prepared to help shepherd class discussion on the topic—perhaps through the use of prepared questions, an outline of themes, or other means.

**Class Policies:** As this course is a *seminar*, it is your responsibility to have completed the readings prior to class and to be ready to discuss them with your fellow students. I realize that many of you have daytime employment and/or other obligations, but that does not relieve you of the responsibility to devote out-of-class time to this course. While I, as the professor, will sometimes lead the discussion or elaborate on particular readings and themes, you are expected to contribute to the success of the class as well.

As graduate students, you are solely responsible for your performance in the course and attendance. 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 an 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.

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 (provided 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.

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<sup>2</sup>Students majoring in fields other than political science may use the accepted citation style of their major field.

**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.

For appeals regarding your final grade in the course, please consult the Student Handbook and Catalog for procedures.

**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.

**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.

**Plagiarism and Cheating** Plagiarism is the presentation of someone else's work as your own. 1) When you borrow someone else's facts, ideas, or opinions and put them entirely in your own words, you must acknowledge that these thoughts are not your own by immediately citing the source in your paper. Failure to do this is plagiarism. 2) When you also borrow someone else's words (short phrases, clauses, or sentences), you must enclose the copied words in quotation marks as well as citing the source. Failure to do this is plagiarism. 3) When you present someone else's paper or exam (stolen, borrowed, or bought) as your own, you have committed a clearly intentional form of intellectual theft and have put your academic future in jeopardy. This is the worst form of plagiarism.

Here is another explanation from the 2010, sixth edition of the Manual of The American Psychological Association (APA):

Plagiarism: Researchers do not claim the words and ideas of another as their own; they give credit where credit is due. Quotations marks should be used to indicate the exact words of another. Each time you paraphrase another author (i.e., summarize a passage or rearrange the order of a sentence and change some of the words), you need to credit the source in the text.

The key element of this principle is that authors do not present the work of another as if it were their own words. This can extend to ideas as well as written words. If authors model a study after one done by someone else, the originating author should be given credit. If the rationale for a study was suggested in the Discussion section of someone else's article, the person should be given credit. Given the free exchange of ideas, which is very important for the health of intellectual discourse, authors may not know where an idea for a study originated. If authors do know, however, they should acknowledge the source; this includes personal communications. (pp. 15-16)

Consult the Writing Center or a recommended guide to documentation and research such as the Manual of the APA or the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers for guidance on proper documentation. If you still have doubts concerning proper documentation, seek advice from your instructor prior to submitting a final draft.

**Penalties for Plagiarism:** Should a faculty member discover that a student has committed plagiarism, the student will receive a grade of "M"<sup>3</sup> in that course and the matter will be referred to the Honor Council for possible disciplinary action. The faculty member, however, has the right to give freshmen and sophomore students a "zero" for the assignment and to allow them to revise the assignment up to a grade of "F" (50%) if they believe that the student plagiarized out of ignorance or carelessness and not out of an attempt to deceive in order to earn an unmerited grade.

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<sup>3</sup>A new grade to denote academic dishonesty is now available, an "M" for "Academic Misconduct." It has the same effect as an "F" but will indicate on the transcript that the failure was due to academic misconduct.

This option is not available to juniors, seniors, or graduate students, who cannot reasonably claim ignorance of documentation rules as an excuse.

**Penalties for Cheating:** Should a faculty member discover a student cheating on an exam or quiz or other class project, the student will receive a “zero” for the assignment and not be allowed to make the assignment up. The incident must be reported to the chair of the department and to the Honor Council. If the cheating is extensive, however, or if the assignment constitutes a major grade for the course (e.g., a final exam), or if the student has cheated in the past, the student should receive an “M” in the course, and the matter should be referred to the Honor Council. Under no circumstances should a student who deserves an “M” in the course be allowed to withdraw from the course with a “W.”

**Student Right of Appeal:** Faculty will notify students immediately via the student’s TAMIU e-mail account that they have submitted plagiarized work. Students have the right to appeal a faculty member’s charge of academic dishonesty by notifying the TAMIU Honor Council of their intent to appeal as long as the notification of appeal comes within 3 business days of the faculty member’s e-mail message to the student. The Student Handbook provides details.

**UConnect, TAMIU E-Mail, and Dusty Alert** Personal Announcements sent to students through TAMIU’s UConnect Portal and TAMIU E-mail are the official means of communicating course and university business with students and faculty—not the U.S. Mail and not other e-mail addresses. Students and faculty must check UConnect and their TAMIU e-mail accounts regularly, if not daily. Not having seen an important TAMIU e-mail or UConnect message from a faculty member, chair, or dean is not accepted as an excuse for failure to take important action. Students, faculty, and staff are encouraged to sign-up for Dusty Alert (see [www.tamtu.edu](http://www.tamtu.edu)). Dusty Alert is an instant cell phone text-messaging system allowing the university to communicate immediately with you if there is an on-campus emergency, something of immediate danger to you, or a campus closing.

**Copyright Restrictions** The Copyright Act of 1976 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 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.

**Students with Disabilities** Texas A&M International University seeks to provide 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 education opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to register with the Director of Student Counseling and to contact the faculty member in a timely fashion to arrange for suitable accommodations.

**Incompletes** The College policy for “Incompletes” discourages them. They are appropriate, however, when the following requirements are met:

- ▷ The student cannot complete the class because of a severe illness to self or immediate family member at the very end of the semester (after the date for withdrawal from class) or because of a traumatic event in the student’s life (e.g., death of or serious injury or illness to an immediate family member) at the end of the semester, AND
- ▷ The student is passing the class at the time he or she cannot complete the semester, AND
- ▷ The student has completed either 85–90% of the course requirements or is missing only major assignments due after the final date for withdrawal from class and after the onset of the illness or traumatic event (e.g., assignments such as the final exam for the course or a research paper), AND, finally,
- ▷ The faculty member must have the approval of the department chair before giving an Incomplete.

**Student Responsibility for Dropping a Course** It is the responsibility of the STUDENT to drop the course before the final date for withdrawal from a course. Faculty members, in fact, may not drop a student from a course.

**Independent Study Course** Independent Study (IS) courses are offered only under exceptional circumstances. Required courses intended to build academic skills may not be taken as IS (e.g., clinical supervision and internships). No student will take more than one IS course per semester. Moreover, IS courses are limited to seniors and graduate students. Summer IS courses must continue through both summer sessions.

**Grade Changes & Appeals** Faculty are authorized to change final grades only when they have committed a computational error, and they must receive the approval of their department chairs and the dean to change the grade.

As part of that approval, they must attach a detailed explanation of the reason for the mistake. Only in rare cases would another reason be entertained as legitimate for a grade change. A student who is unhappy with his or her grade on an assignment must discuss the situation with the faculty member teaching the course. If students believe that they have been graded unfairly, they have the right to appeal the grade using a grade appeal process in the Student Handbook and the Faculty Handbook.

**Final Examination** The final examination must be comprehensive and must contain a written component. The written component should comprise 20% of the final exam grade. Exceptions to this policy must receive the approval of the department chair and the dean at the beginning of the semester.

**Withdrawal Deadlines:** The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Wednesday, September 9. The withdrawal deadline (last day for a “W”) is Friday, November 6.

**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 materials *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.

**Aug 25: Introduction** An overview of the course; why political institutions matter.

Readings: Shepsle and Bonchek, ch. 1–2; Buchanan and Tullock, ch. 1.

**Sep 1: Rational Choice and Majority Rule** The theoretical basis of constitutional democracy and political institutions.

Readings: Shepsle and Bonchek, ch. 3–5; Buchanan and Tullock, ch. 2–8; Madison, *Federalist* 39 (R).

**Sep 8: Voting and Elections from an Institutional Perspective** How electoral systems work in theory and practice; effects of first-past-the-post elections on American democracy.

Readings: Shepsle and Bonchek, ch. 6–7; Farrell, all; Buchanan and Tullock, ch. 9–15.

**Sep 15: Rationality and the Collective Action Problem** “Free riding” and its consequences; solutions.

Readings: Shepsle and Bonchek, ch. 8–10; Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons” (R); Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (selections, R).

**Sep 22: Legislatures, Part I** Readings: Shepsle and Bonchek, ch. 11–12; Buchanan and Tullock, ch. 16–17; Cox and McCubbins, pp. 1–126; McCubbins and Schwartz “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms” (R); Sinclair, *Unorthodox Lawmaking* (selections, R).

**Sep 29: Legislatures, Part II** Readings: Cox and McCubbins, pp. 126–258; Krehbiel, “Where’s the Party?” (R); Aldrich and Rohde, “The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee” (R); Binder, “The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice” (R); Polsby, “The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives” (R); Jenkins and Nokken, “Partisanship, the Electoral Connection, and Lame-Duck Sessions of Congress, 1877–2006” (R).

**Oct 6: Legislatures, Part III** Readings: Fenno, “U.S. House Members in their Constituencies” (R); Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections* (selections, R); Mayhew, “Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals” (R); Jacobson, “The Marginals Never Vanished” (R); Fiorina, “The Case of the Vanishing Marginals” (R); Ansolabehere et al., “The Marginals Never Vanished?” (R).

**Oct 13: Executives, Part I** Readings: Shepsle and Bonchek, ch. 13–14; Skowronek, ch. 1–5; King, “The Methodology of Presidential Research” (R); Petrocik, “Issue Ownership in Presidential Elections” (R); Kernell, “Explaining Presidential Popularity” (R).

**Oct 20: Executives, Part II** Readings: Skowronek, ch. 6–8; Neustadt, “The Power to Persuade” (R); Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies” (R); Baum and Kernell, “Has Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television?” (R); Canes-Wrone, “The President’s Legislative Influence from Public Appeals” (R); Ragsdale and Theiss, “The Institutionalization of the American Presidency, 1924–92” (R).

**Oct 27: Courts, Part I** Readings: Shepsle and Bonchek, ch. 15; Baum, all.

**Nov 3: Courts, Part II** Readings: Dahl, “Decision-Making in a Democracy” (R); Casper, “The Supreme Court and National Policy-Making” (R); Segal and Spaeth, “The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices” (R); Franklin and Kosaki, “Republican Schoolmaster” (R); Moraski and Shipan, “The Politics of Supreme Court Nominations” (R).

**Nov 10: Parties and Organized Interests, Part I** Readings: Madison, *Federalist* 10 (R); Aldrich, ch. 1–5; Buchanan and Tullock, ch. 18–20.

**Nov 17: Parties and Organized Interests, Part II** Readings: Aldrich, ch. 6–9; Schattschneider, “The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System” (R); Schlozman, “What Accent the Heavenly Chorus?” (R); Caldeira and Wright, “Organized Interests and Agenda-Setting in the U.S. Supreme Court” (R); Walker, “The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America” (R); Mitchell and Munger, “Economic Models of Interest Groups” (R).

**Nov 24: Paper Presentations**

**Dec 1: Paper Presentations** Review for final exam.

**Tuesday, December 8, 5 p.m.** Final Exam.