

# PSCI 4320: Political System of the United States, Spring 2010

Section 201: MW 12:00–1:15 p.m., 104 Bullock Hall

Dr. Christopher N. Lawrence <[christopher.lawrence@tamiu.edu](mailto:christopher.lawrence@tamiu.edu)>

Office: 313 Lamar Bruni Vergara Science Center (LBVSC)

Hours: MW 1:20-2:50 p.m., Tu 3:20-4:20 p.m., or by appointment.

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, public law, and policy and administration, 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 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.
- ▷ the techniques used by political scientists and others who study political behavior and linkage institutions.

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

- ▷ Herbert Asher. 2007. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 7th ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-0-87289-340-5.
- ▷ Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley. 2008. *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 978-0-87289-304-7.
- ▷ Russell 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.

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	20%	Research Paper	20%
Final Exam	20%	Attendance/Participation/Quizzes	15%
Discussion Papers	15%	Group Presentation	10%

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*.

**In-Class Reading Quizzes:** A part of your participation and attendance grade will be based on your performance on these quizzes. Quizzes will begin *promptly* at the scheduled time for the class to begin. Your professor may decide to announce some quizzes in advance, but not all quizzes will be pre-announced. Students who regularly arrive late for class may not be permitted to take quizzes, at the discretion of the professor.

**Group Presentation:** Early in the semester, students will be assigned to a group of four to six students who will work together on presenting the key idea(s) embodied in an assigned research article or chapter related to a particular topic on the syllabus. Each group should briefly meet with the professor at least a week before their assigned presentation date during his scheduled office hours to help prepare their presentation.

A recommended generic outline for the presentation will be provided early in the semester. The presentations *may not use any form of projection* (PowerPoint, overhead slides, etc.) or visual aids. Instead, I recommend that each group use the generic outline as the basis for a brief, one-page handout that provides a summary of their assigned reading for the benefit of their fellow students and places it in the context of the broader course; this handout could also be used as an outline for their oral presentation to the class.

**Discussion Papers:** Over the course of the semester, students will be expected to write several out-of-class essays based on the class readings. Each paper will be expected to be about two pages in length and will be a response to a question about one or more readings. For these papers, a separate title page is not required.

**Research Paper:** There will be a research paper of approximately 8–10 pages in length, including a proper title page; further details on the requirements for this paper assignment will be given in class and posted on Angel later in the semester.

**General Paper Requirements:** Your papers must be individual efforts; 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 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> The first page of your paper should include your name, the date, and an appropriate title for the assignment.

Papers must consistently use a widely-accepted citation style in the social and behavioral sciences; examples of acceptable styles include those included in the style manuals of the American Political Science Association (APSA), the American Sociological Association (ASA), the American Psychological Association (APA), or the Modern Language Association (MLA); “Chicago” or “Turabian” style is also acceptable (and is in fact similar to APSA style). All papers that make use of sources must include a list of works cited and include properly cited quotations or paraphrases of the material used. Papers should also be written in standard English with coherent use of prose and grammar.

Copies of all out-of-class written assignments must be submitted **both** in paper (hard copy) format to 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**.

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 will not grade any assignment not received in a timely fashion in *both* formats.

**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.

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.

**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 'F' 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. 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 "F" in the course, and the matter should be referred to the Honor Council. Under no circumstances should a student who deserves an "F" 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** Students who are unable to complete a course should withdraw from the course before the final date for withdrawal and receive a "W." To qualify for an "incomplete" and thus have the opportunity to complete the course at a later date, a student must meet the following criteria:

1. The student must have completed 90% of the course work assigned before the final date for withdrawing from a course with a "W", and the student must be passing the course;
2. The student cannot complete the course because an accident, an illness, or a traumatic personal or family event occurred after the final date for withdrawal from a course;
3. The student must sign an "Incomplete Grade Contract" and secure signatures of approval from the professor and the college dean.
4. The student must agree to complete the missing course work before the end of the next long semester; failure to meet this deadline will cause the "I" to automatically be converted to a "F"; extensions to this deadline may be granted by the dean of the college.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Withdrawal Deadlines:** The last day to drop the course without it appearing on your transcript is Wednesday, February 3. The withdrawal deadline (last day for a "W") is Friday, April 16.

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

**Jan 25: Defining Political Parties and Interest Groups** What are political parties? What do they do in the American system?  
Reading: Hershey, ch. 1.

**Jan 27: The Two-Party System** Why *two* parties? Why just one party in Laredo?  
Reading: Hershey, ch. 2.

**Feb 1, 3: Party Organizations** Local, state, and national party organizations; party activists; parties and interest groups.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 3–5.

**Feb 8, 10: The Party in the Electorate** Party identification; party change and realignment; voting and political parties.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 6–8.

**Feb 15, 17: Campaigns and Elections** The nomination process; general election campaigns; campaign finance, interest groups and political campaigns.  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 9–12.

**Feb 22, 24: The Party in Government** Legislative parties; parties in the judiciary and executive branch; the goal of a “responsible party system.”  
Readings: Hershey, ch. 13–16.

**Mar 1 Midterm Exam**

**Mar 3, 8, 10: 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; Asher, ch. 1.

**Mar 15, 17 No Class: Spring Break**

**Mar 22, 24: The Origins of Public Opinion** Political socialization and the mass media; attitude consistency.  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 2–4; Asher, ch. 2–3.

**Mar 29, 31; Apr 5: The Nature of Belief Systems** Ideology and ideological constraint; the “pluralistic roots” of public opinion; attitude change and value change.  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 5–6; Dalton, ch. 2, 5–6.

**Apr 5, 7: Surveys and the Mass Public** How surveys are conducted; polling and elections; understanding opinion polls.  
Readings: Asher, ch. 4–8.

**Apr 12: Public Support for Democratic Norms** Political knowledge and attentiveness; civil liberties and civil rights.  
Readings: Clawson and Oxley, ch. 7–9.

**Apr 14: Political Participation** Forms of political participation; who participates?  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 3–4; review Hershey, ch. 8.

**Apr 19, 21, 26: Voting Behavior** Elections and political parties; class voting and other social group models of voting.  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 7–10; review Hershey, ch. 2, 6–7.

**Apr 28: Representation and Voting** Forms of correspondence; “party government.”  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 11; Clawson and Oxley, ch. 11; review Hershey, ch. 15.

**Research Paper Due, April 28th**

**May 3, 5: Citizens and the Democratic Process** Mass political support for the political system.  
Readings: Dalton, ch. 12; Clawson and Oxley, ch. 10; Asher, ch. 9.

**Wednesday, May 12, 11 a.m.–2 p.m. Final Exam**