

**POLI 3300-110, 80916, Critical Thinking: Politics  
Fall 2021**

Texas A&M University-Central Texas

**COURSE DATES, MODALITY, AND LOCATION**

This Course is **fully online** and does not require any synchronous meeting times. Materials will be found on the A&M-Central Texas Canvas Learning Management System [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>]. Participation/ attendance will be taken based on lecture viewing. For any extenuating circumstances such as medical procedures that prevent or delay participation in online assignments, please notify me to discuss possible accommodations.

**INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

**Instructor:** Dr. John Koehler

**Office:** Heritage Hall 204Q

**Phone:** 254-501-5845

**Email:** [j.koehler@tamuct.edu](mailto:j.koehler@tamuct.edu)

**Office Hours:**

Virtually by appointment (upon request, I will email a link to meet through web-x or Teams). If deemed necessary, in-person appointments can be made.

**Student-instructor interaction:**

University email is the preferred method of communication. Every attempt will be made to respond to emails within 24 hours, however longer response times may take place over weekends and holidays. Students are welcome to come unannounced during office hours but appointments or notice is appreciated.

**WARRIOR SHIELD**

**Emergency Warning System for Texas A&M University-Central Texas**

Warrior Shield is an emergency notification service that gives Texas A&M University-Central Texas the ability to communicate health and safety emergency information quickly via email, text message, and social media. All students are automatically enrolled in Warrior Shield through their myCT email account.

Connect to Warrior Shield by [911Cellular](https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Account/Login) [<https://portal.publicsafetycloud.net/Account/Login>] to change where you receive your alerts or to opt out. By staying enrolled in Warrior Shield, university officials can quickly pass on safety-related information, regardless of your location.

**Fall 2021 Return to Campus Plan.** For the most recent campus information regarding COVID-19 see the Texas A&M University-Central Texas [Fall 2021 Return to Campus Plan](https://www.tamuct.edu/covid19/) [<https://www.tamuct.edu/covid19/>]

## COURSE INFORMATION

### Course Overview and description

Introduces students to political science research tools and the application of critical thinking techniques to politics and political science. Topics include finding reliable sources, critically evaluating sources, identifying political agendas and propaganda, using and critiquing polls, and examining the social-scientific approach to political science.

### Course Objective and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Distinguish between normative and empirical questions in political science
2. Distinguish science from pseudoscience
3. Distinguish between independent and dependent variables, as well as antecedent, intervening, and alternative variables
4. Become proficient at using electronic databases to find data and relevant research on a topic.
5. Distinguish valid and reliable print and online sources from invalid and/or unreliable sources.
6. Identify the most probable political agenda behind a political source, activity, or study.
7. Understand and critique the use of opinion polls in politics and survey research in political science.
8. Break down and critique political arguments emphasizing the relationship between claims and data or evidence
9. Develop and present a critique of a recently published study in political science

### Required Reading and Textbook(s)

Galen Foresman, Peter Fosl, and Jamie Watson. 2016. *The Critical Thinking Toolkit*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell. ISBN: 9780470658697

Articles posted on Canvas

Additional readings such as journal articles can be found through the libraries database or be provided by the instructor.

The book is required and available for purchase at the bookstore. You are under no obligation to purchase a textbook from a university-affiliated bookstore. The same textbook or E-Book version may also be available from an independent retailer, including an online retailer.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Assignment	Points	Percentage	SLO
Academic Scavenger Hunt	100	10%	4
Fact Checking Exercise	100	10%	2, 4, 5, 6
Logic exercises	50	5%	3
Article Critique	200	20%	8, 9
Ideology essay(s)	150	15%	1

Discussion Boards	150	15%	1-9
Final Exam	250	25%	1-9
<b>Total Possible</b>	<b>1000</b>	<b>100%</b>	
895+ = A	795-894=B	695-794=C	595-694=D 594 or lower = F

### Grading Criteria Rubric and Conversion

- Assignments will be turned in through Canvas by midnight of the due date. Any late assignments will be deducted one letter grade each day late.
- Discussion boards will appear on canvas each week and will require a short response to a prompt
- Exams will contain a mixture of question types such as short answer and multiple-choice questions, the final exam is cumulative.
- **Ideology Essay:** Write a ~4 page essay responding to the following two prompts (each prompt should get about 2 pages each).
  - 1. Identify an issue position that you support and convince the reader of your position using a mixture of empirical and ideological arguments
  - 2. Critique an issue position from the other side of the ideological spectrum (if you are liberal, critique the conservative position on something) using both empirical and ideological arguments
- Academic Scavenger Hunt: see instructions
- Fact Checking Exercise/ Source Evaluations: see instructions
- Logic Exercises: A worksheet will be given for you to complete, like a take home quiz
- Article critique: See instructions

### Posting of Grades

Grades will be posted on Canvas within **7 days** of each assignment.

### Grading Policies

Some assignments such as discussion boards or assignments that expire within Canvas cannot be completed late. Other assignments such as papers may be turned in late but may be subject to a penalty of one letter grade (10 points) per day late. No exam will be made up without an excused absence. Make up exams are scheduled at the instructor's convenience.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND CALENDAR

### Complete Course Calendar

	Title	Readings	Assignments
<b>Aug 23</b>	Ideological Agendas I: Varieties of Conservatism		

<b>Aug 30</b>	Ideological Agendas II: Political Liberalism		
<b>Sept 6</b>	Finding and Retrieving Academic Sources		
<b>Sept 13</b>	Persuasion, Propaganda, and Bullshit	Canvas Readings: <i>Lies, Incorporated</i>	<b><i>Essays in Support and Opposition to Political Stance</i></b>
<b>Sept 20</b>	Arguments, Theories, and Hypotheses	TK Ch 1-2	
<b>Sept 27</b>	Foundations of Social Science	TK Ch 9	<b><i>Academic Scavenger Hunt</i></b>
<b>Oct 4</b>	Evaluating Stories	TK Ch 10	
<b>Oct 11</b>	Critical Thinking About Polls	Canvas Readings	<b><i>Fact Checking Exercise</i></b>
<b>Oct 18</b>	Deductive Reasoning	TK Ch 3-4	
<b>Oct 25</b>	Informal Fallacies	TK Ch 5	<b><i>Logic Exercises</i></b>
<b>Nov 1</b>	Induction	TK Ch 6	
<b>Nov 8</b>	Empiricism	TK Ch 7	<b><i>Article Critique Due</i></b>
<b>Nov 15</b>	Beliefs and Emotions	TK Ch 8	
<b>Nov 22</b>	Critical Thinking About Conspiracy Theories	TK Ch 10	
<b>Nov 29</b>	Critical Thinking About Politics		

Dec 6	Overview and <b>FINAL EXAM</b>
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## Important University Dates

<https://www.tamuct.edu/registrar/academic-calendar.html>

## Technology Requirements

This course will use the A&M-Central Texas Instructure Canvas learning management system. **We strongly recommend the latest versions of Chrome or Firefox browsers. Canvas no longer supports any version of Internet Explorer.**

Logon to A&M-Central Texas Canvas [<https://tamuct.instructure.com/>] or access Canvas through the TAMUCT Online link in myCT [<https://tamuct.onecampus.com/>]. You will log in through our Microsoft portal.

Username: Your MyCT email address. Password: Your MyCT password

## Canvas Support

Use the Canvas Help link, located at the bottom of the left-hand menu, for issues with Canvas. You can select “Chat with Canvas Support,” submit a support request through “Report a Problem,” or call the Canvas support line: 1-844-757-0953.

For issues related to course content and requirements, contact your instructor.

## Online Proctored Testing

A&M-Central Texas uses Proctorio for online identity verification and proctored testing. This service is provided at no direct cost to students. If the course requires identity verification or proctored testing, the technology requirements are: Any computer meeting the minimum computing requirements, plus web camera, speaker, and microphone (or headset). Proctorio also requires the Chrome web browser with their custom plug in.

## Other Technology Support

For log-in problems, students should contact Help Desk Central 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Email: [helpdesk@tamu.edu](mailto:helpdesk@tamu.edu)

Phone: (254) 519-5466

[Web Chat](http://hdc.tamu.edu): [<http://hdc.tamu.edu>]

*Please let the support technician know you are an A&M-Central Texas student.*

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## UNIVERSITY RESOURCES, PROCEDURES, AND GUIDELINES

### Drop Policy

If you discover that you need to drop this class, you must complete the [Drop Request](#) Dynamic

Form through Warrior Web.

[<https://dynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com/casAuthentication.ashx?InstID=eaed95b9-f2be-45f3-a37d-46928168bc10&targetUrl=https%3A%2F%2Fdynamicforms.ngwebsolutions.com%2Fsubmit%2FForm%2Fstart%2F53b8369e-0502-4f36-be43-f02a4202f612>].

Faculty cannot drop students; this is always the responsibility of the student. The Registrar's Office will provide a deadline on the Academic Calendar for which the form must be completed. Once you submit the completed form to the Registrar's Office, you must go into Warrior Web and confirm that you are no longer enrolled. If you still show as enrolled, FOLLOW-UP with the Registrar's Office immediately. You are to attend class until the procedure is complete to avoid penalty for absence. Should you miss the drop deadline or fail to follow the procedure, you will receive an F in the course, which may affect your financial aid and/or VA educational benefits.

### **Academic Integrity**

Texas A&M University-Central Texas values the integrity of the academic enterprise and strives for the highest standards of academic conduct. A&M-Central Texas expects its students, faculty, and staff to support the adherence to high standards of personal and scholarly conduct to preserve the honor and integrity of the creative community. Any deviation by students from this expectation may result in a failing grade for the assignment and potentially a failing grade for the course. All academic misconduct concerns will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. When in doubt on collaboration, citation, or any issue, please contact your instructor before taking a course of action.

For more [information regarding the Student Conduct process](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html),  
[<https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct.html>].

If you know of potential honor violations by other students, you may [submit a report](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout_id=0),  
[[https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout\\_id=0](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout_id=0)].

### **Academic Accommodations**

At Texas A&M University-Central Texas, we value an inclusive learning environment where every student has an equal chance to succeed and has the right to a barrier-free education. The Office of Access and Inclusion is responsible for ensuring that students with a disability receive equal access to the university's programs, services and activities. If you believe you have a disability requiring reasonable accommodations, please contact the Office of Access and Inclusion, WH-212; or call (254) 501-5836. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

For more information, please visit our [Access & Inclusion](https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717) Canvas page (log-in required)  
[<https://tamuct.instructure.com/courses/717>]

### **Important information for Pregnant and/or Parenting Students**

Texas A&M University-Central Texas supports students who are pregnant and/or parenting. In accordance with requirements of Title IX and related guidance from US Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Dean of Student Affairs' Office can assist students who are

pregnant and/or parenting in seeking accommodations related to pregnancy and/or parenting. Students should seek out assistance as early in the pregnancy as possible. For more information, please visit [Student Affairs](https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/pregnant-and-parenting-students.html) [https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/pregnant-and-parenting-students.html]. Students may also contact the institution's Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to read more about these [requirements and guidelines](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf) online, please visit the website [http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.pdf].

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender—including pregnancy, parenting, and all related conditions. A&M-Central Texas is able to provide flexible and individualized reasonable accommodation to pregnant and parenting students. All pregnant and parenting students should contact the Associate Dean in the Division of Student Affairs at (254) 501-5909 to seek out assistance. Students may also contact the University's Title IX Coordinator.

### **Tutoring**

Tutoring is available to all A&M-Central Texas students, on a remote online basis. Visit the Academic Support Community in Canvas to view schedules and contact information. Subjects tutored on campus include Accounting, Advanced Math, Biology, Finance, Statistics, Mathematics, and Study Skills. Student success coaching is available online upon request.

If you have a question regarding tutor schedules, need to schedule a tutoring session, are interested in becoming a tutor, success coaching, or have any other question, contact Academic Support Programs at (254) 501-5836, visit the Office of Student Success at 212F Warrior Hall, or by emailing [studentsuccess@tamuct.edu](mailto:studentsuccess@tamuct.edu).

Chat live with a tutor 24/7 for almost any subject from on your computer! Tutor.com is an online tutoring platform that enables A&M-Central Texas students to log in and receive online tutoring support at no additional cost. This tool provides tutoring in over 40 subject areas except writing support. Access Tutor.com through Canvas.

### **University Writing Center**

University Writing Center: Located in Warrior Hall 416, the University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University—Central Texas (A&M—Central Texas) is a free service open to all A&M—Central Texas students. For the Fall 2021 semester, the hours of operation are from 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday in Warrior Hall 416 (with online tutoring available every hour as well) with satellite hours available online only Monday thru Thursday from 6:00-9:00 p.m. and Saturday 12:00-3:00 p.m.

Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will assist students in developing more effective composing practices. By providing a practice audience for students' ideas and writing, our tutors highlight the ways in which they read and interpret students' texts, offering guidance and support throughout the various stages of the writing process. In addition, students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs the Microsoft Office suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting our resources on writing, including all of the relevant

style guides. Whether you need help brainstorming ideas, organizing an essay, proofreading, understanding proper citation practices, or just want a quiet place to work, the UWC is here to help!

Students may arrange a one-to-one session with a trained and experienced writing tutor by making an appointment via WCOline at <https://tamuct.mywconline.com/>. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) if you have any questions about the UWC, need any assistance with scheduling, or would like to schedule a recurring appointment with your favorite tutor by making an appointment via WCOline at <https://tamuct.mywconline.com/>. In addition, you can email Dr. Bruce Bowles Jr. at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) if you have any questions about the UWC, need any assistance with scheduling, or would like to schedule a recurring appointment with your favorite tutor.

### **University Library**

The University Library provides many services in support of research across campus and at a distance. We offer over 200 electronic databases containing approximately 400,000 eBooks and 82,000 journals, in addition to the 96,000 items in our print collection, which can be mailed to students who live more than 50 miles from campus. Research guides for each subject taught at A&M-Central Texas are available through our website to help students navigate these resources. On campus, the library offers technology including cameras, laptops, microphones, webcams, and digital sound recorders.

Research assistance from a librarian is also available 24 hours a day through our online chat service, and at the reference desk when the library is open. Research sessions can be scheduled for more comprehensive assistance, and may take place virtually through WebEx, Microsoft Teams or in-person at the library. Assistance may cover many topics, including how to find articles in peer-reviewed journals, how to cite resources, and how to piece together research for written assignments.

Our 27,000-square-foot facility on the A&M-Central Texas main campus includes student lounges, private study rooms, group work spaces, computer labs, family areas suitable for all ages, and many other features. Services such as interlibrary loan, TexShare, binding, and laminating are available. The library frequently offers workshops, tours, readings, and other events. For more information, please visit our [Library website](http://tamuct.libguides.com/index) [<http://tamuct.libguides.com/index>].

### **A Note about Sexual Violence at A&M-Central Texas**

Sexual violence is a serious safety, social justice, and public health issue. The university offers support for anyone struggling with these issues. University faculty are mandated reporters, so if someone discloses that they were sexually assaulted (or a victim of Domestic/Dating Violence or Stalking) while a student at TAMUCT, faculty members are required to inform the Title IX Office. If you want to discuss any of these issues confidentially, you can do so through Student



Wellness and Counseling (254-501-5955) located on the second floor of Warrior Hall (207L).

Sexual violence can occur on our campus because predators often feel emboldened, and victims often feel silenced or shamed. It is incumbent on ALL of us to find ways to actively create environments that tell predators we don't agree with their behaviors and tell survivors we will support them. Your actions matter. Don't be a bystander; be an agent of change. For additional information on campus policy and resources visit the [Title IX webpage](https://www.tamuct.edu/compliance/titleix.html) [https://www.tamuct.edu/compliance/titleix.html].

### **Behavioral Intervention**

Texas A&M University-Central Texas cares about the safety, health, and well-being of its students, faculty, staff, and community. If you are aware of individuals for whom you have a concern, please make a referral to the Behavioral Intervention Team. Referring your concern shows you care. You can complete the [referral](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout_id=2) online [https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?TAMUCentralTexas&layout\_id=2].

Anonymous referrals are accepted. Please see the [Behavioral Intervention Team](https://www.tamuct.edu/bit) website for more information [https://www.tamuct.edu/bit]. If a person's behavior poses an imminent threat to you or another, contact 911 or A&M-Central Texas University Police at 254-501-5800.