

American Government & Politics

Political Science (POLS) 2311 – 025

CRN: 28205

The University of Texas at El Paso

Spring 2016

TR: 1:30 - 2:50pm

Liberal Arts Building 318

Instructor: Dr. Gregory S. Schober

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Office Hours: TR, 11:00am-12:00pm (and by appointment)

Course Description

This course focuses on the politics of the United States. We will examine political foundations, political behavior, political institutions, and key policy areas in American politics. A special emphasis will be placed on identifying the achievements and challenges of democracy in the United States, as well as uncovering how institutions shape the behavior of citizens and politicians. Political behavior and institutions in the state of Texas also will be considered. Through an examination of Texas politics, we will highlight the relationship between the national and state governments.

Throughout the course, the practical applications of key concepts and themes will be discussed. Current events, including the upcoming elections, are not the central focus of the course, but they will be considered to help illustrate key points.

Outcomes (Learning Objectives)

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

- Describe in detail the main institutions and key decision-makers in American politics.
- Communicate how institutions shape the political behavior of citizens and politicians in the United States.
- Understand the challenges posed by democracy, as well as opportunities for citizens to help overcome those challenges.
- Explain the immense influence that politics has on their lives.
- Comprehend the relationship between the national government and the Texas government.
- Recognize the role of civic engagement in American politics and society.

Required Course Books (available at a reduced price as loose leaf bundle at UTEP Bookstore):

- Bianco and Canon, *American Politics Today* (Fourth Essentials Edition)
- Champagne and Harpham, *Governing Texas* (Second Edition)
- ISBN (bundle that includes both books): 978-0-393-28736-3

Course Requirements

- Exam 1: Exam 1 will likely consist of multiple choice questions, and it will cover material from the course readings, lectures, and/or discussion (25% of grade).
- Exam 2: Exam 2 will likely consist of multiple choice questions, and it will cover material from the course readings, lectures, and/or discussion (25% of grade).
- Final Exam: The final exam will likely consist of multiple choice questions, and it will cover material from the course readings, lectures, and/or discussion (25% of grade).
- Civic Engagement Project: Students will have the option of completing community service through the Center for Civic Engagement or writing a research paper on civic engagement (10%).
- Class Attendance and Participation: Students will be able to earn participation points each class session by attending and participating in class discussions (15% of grade).

Attendance and Participation Policies

Attendance is mandatory by university policy, and students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for each class meeting. It is expected of you that you do not miss classes, which will result in a penalty to your grade. More specifically, after two unexcused absences, I will begin to deduct points from your attendance and participation grade for each subsequent unexcused absence. Note that the class participation portion of each student's grade is left solely to the discretion of the instructor.

Here are specific situations of absence and whether or not excuses will be accepted as valid or not:

- If you know you will be unable to attend a class due to a valid university excuse (NCAA sports, religious purposes, other university events, brief military duties) you must notify me ten days in advance by a letter provided by the Dean of Students.
- The instructor reserves the right to accept or not excuses related to medical issues. Naturally, it is not usually feasible to document in advance any time lost due to illness. The exception is planned surgeries and appointments (not normal check-ups). Any class time missed will not be excused without medical or other valid documentation. Documentation from Mexico is permissible. Students with severe medical problems that result in missing a majority of the semester may want to consider a complete withdrawal from the university for medical purposes.
- Absences due to conflicts with work, child care, etc. that make it impossible for you to regularly attend this class are not permitted. If you know you will have scheduling conflicts with this class, then you should make other arrangements or postpone this class until a future semester.

- According to UTEP Curriculum and Classroom Policies, “When, in the judgment of the instructor, a student has been absent to such a degree as to impair his or her status relative to credit for the course, the instructor can drop the student from the class with a grade of W before the course drop deadline and with a grade of F after the course drop deadline.”
- Missed exams due to family hardship or family medical problems may not be accepted by the instructor as valid excuses. For example, helping family members move, picking up at the airport, driving family members to medical appointments when you know they conflict with class, and other such activities, will not be permitted as valid excuses. Emergencies such as deaths in the family must be documented, unfortunately.

Final Exam Policy

The date of the final exam is listed below in the Schedule of Classes. The final exam will be cumulative and is used to evaluate student comprehension and retention of the course subject matter. The final exam will draw from all the readings, lectures, and discussion throughout the semester. Some questions may be repeated from the earlier exams. Students are required to bring their own scantrons and pencils. The final exam is considered over when the instructor is no longer in the room (all other students present have completed the exam), so do not be late. The exam must be taken on this day unless you have a valid university accepted excuse.

Exams 1 and 2 Policies

The dates of Exams 1 and 2 are listed below in the Schedule of Classes. Students are required to bring their own scantrons and pencils. No make-up exam will occur without a student having provided to the instructor valid documentation explaining or excusing the absence. The instructor has the discretion to decide if a make-up exam is allowable outside the university excused absences. If you miss an exam due to an emergency or illness, you must notify me (and confirm with me that I have received your notification attempt) as soon as possible to arrange a make-up exam. A make-up exam may be of a different format than the original exam.

Civic Engagement Project

Students are to choose one of the following two options for the civic engagement project:

- **Option 1:** Complete a minimum of 10 hours of community service coordinated by the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE). We will have an in-class session to have class members registered and trained on how to do the project and another session where students will have an opportunity to share and discuss the activities they accomplished during the semester. You must submit your documentation verifying the hours of community service to the CCE by April 28 at 5:00pm to receive credit (further details and instructions will be provided in class).
- **Option 2:** Write a research paper (minimum 10 pages - maximum 15 pages) on current efforts to increase civic engagement among college students in the United States. What are the names of five groups or centers that try to increase civic engagement among college students? How do these groups attempt to increase civic engagement? How are their efforts similar (and how are they different)? Which groups and efforts do you think are most effective, and why? How could the groups be more successful at

engaging college students in the community? You should refer to relevant scholarly work as well as the official websites of the groups or centers that you are researching for the paper (minimum of 10 scholarly and official website sources). Students who choose this option will also have an opportunity to share and discuss their project with other class members during a class session. You must submit your paper to me via email by April 28 at 5:00pm to receive credit (further details and instructions will be provided in class).

Other Course Policies and Expectations

- Debate and discussion are important in the critical evaluation of politics. It is expected that students will treat the instructor and other students with respect, including refraining from disparaging remarks, personal insults, derogatory comments, and other unprofessional behavior, in person or electronically. Any problem related to rude conduct, or any threats to violence, etc., likely will result in the student being dropped from the course by the instructor.
- Outside work and other non-class related activities are not permitted in our classroom.
- If you engage in behaviors that distract others or create a disturbance, you will be asked to leave the class. If you refuse to leave class, university police will be contacted.
- Cell phone/smart phone/PDA usage is not permitted during exams or at other times when it might pose a class disturbance. Laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices used for note-taking are permissible, but students using such must not engage in any activities that disturb other students.

Email Protocol

When emailing me, please put the course and section number in the subject line. In the body of your email, clearly state your question. At the end of your email, be sure to put your first and last name. Please do not email me about information you can obtain from the syllabus. I generally do not answer substantive material from lectures or readings via email, as it is not an effective means of communicating. If there is class material you are confused about, please come see me during my office hours.

Academic Integrity and Dishonesty

Model integrity and ethical behavior! Students who copy exams or steal ideas and quotations without citations in their writing will be subject to discipline. Read <http://sa.utep.edu/osccr/academic-integrity/>

UTEP Statement for Each Syllabus: “Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another person's as ones' own. And, collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Violations will be taken seriously and will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions.

Academic dishonesty is an assault upon the basic integrity and meaning of a University. Cheating, plagiarism, and collusion in dishonest activities are serious acts which erode the University's educational and research roles and cheapen the learning experience not only for the perpetrators, but also for the entire community. It is expected that UTEP students will understand and subscribe to the ideal of academic integrity and that they will be willing to bear individual responsibility for their work. Materials (written or otherwise) submitted to fulfill academic requirements must represent a student's own efforts. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Violations will be referred to the Dean of Students Office for possible disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions."

Students with Different Abilities

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

The Student is responsible for presenting to the instructor any CASS accommodation letters and instructions before arrangements need to be made for exams or other needs.

Schedule of Classes

Part 1: The Foundations of American Government and Politics		
Tuesday	1/19	Introduction to the Course
Thursday	1/21	Understanding American Politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Politics Today (APT), Ch. 1 • Presentation by the Center for Civic Engagement
Tuesday	1/26	The Constitution and the Founding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 2
Thursday	1/28	Civic Engagement Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training by the Center for Civic Engagement (Option 1) • Details and Discussion of Research Paper (Option 2)
Tuesday	2/2	Federalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 3
Thursday	2/4	Civil Liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 4
Tuesday	2/9	Civil Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 5

Part 2: Politics (Political Behavior)		
Thursday	2/11	Public Opinion and the Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 6
Tuesday	2/16	Political Parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 7
Thursday	2/18	Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 8
Tuesday	2/23	Exam Review
Thursday	2/25	Exam 1
Tuesday	3/1	Interest Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 9 (first half of chapter)
Thursday	3/3	Elections in Comparative Perspective <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 9 (second half of chapter)
Tuesday	3/8	No Class: Spring Break
Thursday	3/10	No Class: Spring Break
Part 3: Institutions		
Tuesday	3/15	Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 10
Thursday	3/17	The Presidency <p style="text-align: center;">APT, Ch. 11</p>
Tuesday	3/22	The Bureaucracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 12
Thursday	3/24	The Courts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 13
Tuesday	3/29	Economic Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 14 (pp. 410-434)
Thursday	3/31	Social Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 14 (pp. 435-451)
Tuesday	4/5	Exam Review
Thursday	4/7	Exam 2
Tuesday	4/12	Foreign Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APT, Ch. 15
Part 4: Texas Government and Politics		
Thursday	4/14	Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing Texas (GT), Ch. 1
Tuesday	4/19	Political Parties in Texas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT, Ch. 4
Thursday	4/21	Election in Texas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT, Ch. 5
Tuesday	4/26	Interest Groups and Lobbying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GT, Ch. 6

Thursday	4/28	Civic Engagement Project <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflection and Discussion Session on Project Experiences• Civic Engagement Project (Options 1 and 2) due by 5pm
Tuesday	5/3	Public Policy in Texas <ul style="list-style-type: none">• GT, Ch. 12
Thursday	5/5	Exam Review
Thursday	5/12	Final Exam: 1pm-3:45pm