UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
POLS 2311 (CEL): American Government and Politics
Spring 2021

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Course Overview

In conjunction with community engagement activities related to nonpartisan voter awareness and registration, POLS 2311 (CEL): American Government and Politics will engage students in an overview of American government at the national level and how it translates to political activities at the Texas state and local level. More specifically, students will explore the constitutional principles upon which the American political system is founded, the institutions, structures, and policymaking processes that comprise the federal government, as well as the role that citizens play vis-à-vis various means of political participation. We will also incorporate an understanding of Texas politics and the relationship between state and federal government entities. The course will help build student leadership and communication skills through voter training and community organizing in partnership with UTEP's Center for Community Engagement (CCE) and the El Paso County Elections Department. Therein, students will develop a deeper understanding of the U.S. national government, think critically about its development, and what role the public plays in shaping American politics. In line with UTEP's CEL and Edge missions, key portions of the class will deal with community engagement and leadership issues and therein prospects for key policy reforms in the current political environment, as well as provide nonpartisan voter awareness and registration opportunities for students to engage in their communities to affect change – mainly vis-à-vis remote social media efforts given the ongoing health and security circumstances amid the COVID-19 pandemic.** I look forward to working with you during the course of the semester and encourage you to be active in our classroom discussions.

*NOTE 1: The "CEL" designation for this course stands for "Community Engagement & Leadership" and is part of a new program in the College of Liberal Arts (full details to be provided at the start of the online course). The purpose of this CEL course is to strengthen students' understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and to build the knowledge and competencies that will enable them to be socially responsible and participating community leaders. Accordingly, course assignments and assessments are developed in line with the CEL

program mission in Liberal Arts, as well as within the broader framework and mission of UTEP's "Edge Advantages" goals.

**NOTE 2: Given the restrictions and limitations to in-person interaction and planned community engagement activities amid the ongoing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, outreach efforts will be employed remotely through social media for this course rather than direct face-to-face activities (the safety and health of students is first and foremost!). Please also read the section further below entitled "COVID-19 Precautions and Accommodations" for more general advice and guidance to follow during the pandemic.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

<u>Learning outcomes relevant to Social and Behavior Sciences (SBS) and in line with UTEP's CEL and Edge Missions</u> - Students can expect to learn the following by the end of this course:

(1) to explore and understand constitutional principles upon which the American political system is founded (Targeted Edge Advantages: Communication, Critical thinking, Problem solving, Global Awareness)
(2) to define, understand, and use concepts and terms relevant to the study of the American national government (Targeted Edge Advantages: Communication, Critical thinking, Problem solving)
(3) to identify, formulate, and answer complex questions related to the institutions, structures, and processes that comprise the federal government (Targeted Edge Advantages: Critical thinking, Problem solving, Global Awareness)
(4) to develop ideas about the role that citizens play in national politics through various means of skill-building in political participation, including in-person and/or online social media communication, interpersonal teamwork, and change-making skills, which lend themselves broadly to leadership in community engagement (Targeted Edge Advantages: Global awareness, Social Responsibility, Change-Making Skills, Initiative and Responsibility)
(5) to apply knowledge and general theories from the literature to evaluate the current events and conditions related to American national government (Targeted Edge Advantages: Critical thinking, Problem solving, Leadership, Confidence, Social Responsibility)

Objectives for Good Citizenship

As a member of this classroom it is vital that you to adhere to the following principles of professionalism:

- interpret the consequences of one's own actions (unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the university)
- have responsible civic engagement—that is,
    - respect different points of view and different cultures
    - work effectively as a member of the classroom
    - articulate the value to society and the workplace of a diverse and global perspective

Grades

Grades will be based on two exams, a class paper essay assignment, the CEL component for community engagement and leadership (pick one of two project options), and participation activities. Participation activities will count for 10% of the final grade such that one must actively attend and participate in class to earn an "A."

Grading/Exams	
Participation Activities	10%
Class Paper Essay Assignment	15%
CEL Project (choose between "VOTE" vs. "PASS" options)	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Total	*100%*

Final grades are based on accumulated weighted points, rounded to the 2nd decimal:

Final Grade Scale
≥ 89.50% = A
89.49 – 79.50% = B
79.49 – 69.50% = C
69.49 – 59.50% = D
≤ 59.49% = F

I will not change grades. You have the opportunity to earn extra credit in this class so there is no reason to consider grade changes. If you are concerned about your grade, please come and see me during my office hours. This is particularly important if your grade on the first exam is not what you expected. I will not change the grade, but I can give you feedback and suggestions on how to improve your performance in the class.

Required Textbooks

The course includes TWO required textbooks (please be sure to obtain the correct editions!):

1. **Bianco, William T., and David T. Canon. *American Politics Today (Sixth Essentials Edition)*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.**
2. **Champagne, Anthony, and Edward J. Harpham. *Governing Texas (Fourth Edition)*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.**
   *NOTE: Paperback copies of the two Political Science books (with E-book and supplemental material access) should be available at the UTEP bookstore and may also be available elsewhere as new, used, or as rentals. Otherwise, paperback, loose leaf, and E-book (online) versions of the texts are also available directly from the publisher here:
   American Politics Today: https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393679946
   Governing Texas: https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393680119

General Classroom Policies

Given the circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, our course will meet at the regularly scheduled time online (rather than face-to-face as previously planned). As such, online class participation is critical for passing the course. You must actively participate in all online class activities to complete key components and I expect everyone to keep up with our course schedule dates and times for readings and assignments that are due. This includes logging into the online class regularly, being alert, willing to ask and answer questions, and being prepared to contribute intellectually to the online class discussions/submissions. If I consistently detect a pattern of only a few students participating or completing the assignments, there may be additional "pop-quizzes" assigned at random, which will become part of the overall final grade. Note that the class participation portion of each student's grade is non-negotiable and left solely to the discretion of the instructor.

Make-up work for time missed from the online course activities will only be allowed if you have a university excused absence and follow university guidelines. If you miss a deadline due to an emergency or illness, or if you have a university-approved excuse ahead of time, you must notify me *as soon as possible* to make any necessary arrangements. Note that if you will miss the final exam deadline, I expect you to contact me *immediately* of your emergency situation in order to make arrangement, which may include an incomplete "I" for the course. If you miss a test and do not have a university acceptable excuse, you will receive a "0" on the test. Keep in mind that a make-up exam or assignment may be of a different format than the original exam or assignment.

Online etiquette is particularly important for this course, please note the separate, detailed section below:

Online Etiquette and Effective Communication

It is essential that the utmost respect and professionalism be adhered in all exchanges between class members. This is a political science course and we will be discussing at times sensitive and controversial topics. Avoid any unnecessary arguments with other class members, such as political polemical arguments (e.g., negative partisan talking points targeting those of opposing ideological perspectives or particular political figures) or, even worse, personal attacks on others for having different views. No inappropriate behavior will be tolerated. Unprofessional conduct will be dealt with swiftly through the university and it is at the professor's full discretion to have a student dropped from the course for any inappropriate behavior.

Please carefully read the following rules for online etiquette and effective communication:

Language: Given the absence of face-to-face clues, written text can easily be misinterpreted. Avoid the use of strong or offensive language, all capital letters, and the excessive use of exclamation points. If you feel particularly strongly about a point, it may be best to write it first as a draft and then to review it, before posting it, in order to remove any strong language.

Respect: A Web-based classroom is still a classroom, and comments that would be inappropriate in a regular classroom are likely to be inappropriate in a Web-based course as well. Treat your professor and your fellow students with respect. Remember that members of the class and I will be reading any postings.

Be Forgiving: If someone states something that you find offensive, mention this directly to the professor. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion is also new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may quite possibly have been unintended and can best be cleared up by the professor.

This is Permanent: Think carefully about the content of your message before contributing it. Once sent to the group, there is no taking it back. When reacting to someone else's message, address the ideas, not the person. Post only what anyone would comfortably state in a face-to-face situation.

Edit Your Work: The grammar, spelling, and punctuation of a message are part of the grading criteria – you should not expect your professor and peers to decode misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences. It is a good practice to compose and check your comments in a word-processor before posting them.

Test for Clarity: Messages may often appear perfectly clear to you as you compose them, but turn out to be perfectly obtuse to your reader. One way to test for clarity is to read your message aloud to see if it flows smoothly. If you can read it to another person before posting it, even better.

Follow the Parameters/Stick to the Point: Follow the posting requirements and parameters set up by your professor. Contributions to a discussion should have a clear subject header, and you need to stick to the subject. Do not waste others' time by going off on irrelevant tangents. Also keep in mind that no credit will be received for yes/no answers. Posts should justify positions and provide specific examples. Students must demonstrate that they have read the assignment and their classmates' comments carefully and thoughtfully.

Read First, Write Later: Do not add your comments to a discussion before reading the comments of other students unless the assignment specifically asks you to. Doing so is tantamount to ignoring your fellow students and is rude. Comments related to the content of previous messages should be posted under them to keep related topics organized, and you should specify the person and the particular point you are following up on.

E-mail Protocol

When e-mailing me, please put the course and section number in the subject line. In the body of your e-mail clearly state your question. At the end of your e-mail, be sure to put your first and last name and UIN (University Identification Number). Please do not e-mail me about information you can obtain from the syllabus. I do not answer substantive material from lectures

or readings via e-mail as it is not an effective means of communicating. If there is class material you are confused about, please come and see me during my office hours.

CEL "VOTE" Project (Blackboard Getting Started Tips)

When you log into our Blackboard course page, you will see a section folder with the full instructions and forms to help you get started on and complete your CEL Voter Awareness & Registration Community Engagement Project or simply CEL "VOTE" Project for short (worth 20% of the grade for 20 hours of community engagement activities).*

*These activities will be done in partnership with UTEP's Center for Community Engagement (CCE) and the El Paso County Elections Department.

*As mentioned above, given the restrictions and limitations to face-to-face interaction and planned community engagement activities amid the ongoing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, outreach efforts will be employed remotely through social media for this course rather than direct face-to-face activities (the safety and health of students is first and foremost!).

*For those who prefer an alternative and/or are simply unable to do the CEL "VOTE" Project, an alternative project called the CEL "PASS" Project will also be offered that will count for the same amount of work (20 hours) and percentage (20%) of the grade (see the next section below for basic info).

Getting Started:
For this, you will need to follow a few key step-by-step instructions to get started and complete the work (see the full folder on Blackboard for the more detailed steps and downloadable forms):
1. Fill out and submit to me (a) the student contract form and (b) the UTEP release form (send both to me BEFORE starting any activity). I can submit these to the UTEP Center for Community Engagement office on your behalf.
2. For the portion of your activities related to voter registration, here is a link where people can check their status and download an online application to mail in their voter registration: https://www.votetexas.gov/register-to-vote/where-to-get-an-application-2.html (this link will be especially helpful given the current COVID-19 social distancing guidelines and other limitations/restrictions that highly limit or do not allow for in-person activities). Accordingly, you may share these forms online with interested people so they may fill them out and submit them on their own (Please note: do NOT fill the forms out yourself unless you are trained and deputized to do so, which then requires that you submit the forms on their behalf by a certain deadline. This should not apply or be of concern given our avoidance of face-to-face interactions amid the pandemic. However, if you have questions about this or alternative options you would like to be considered for credit, please contact the professor). Unless you are already willingly trained, deputized, and ready to do the actual paperwork/submissions yourself, I strongly suggest you take the more cautious route of directing people to registration forms and letting people know that they can easily fill out and submit the forms themselves to the elections office.
Note 1: For those of you who are local to El Paso, here are two additional helpful links – one to general voter registration information provided by the El Paso County Elections Office and a second link to the printable official Voter Registration Application for El Paso residents:

https://epcountyvotes.com/voter_information/voter_registration
https://el-paso-county-elections.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/files/000/000/800/original/EL_Paso_2016_VR17.pdf?1462227051

Note 2: If you are from outside of the El Paso/Paso Del Norte region, feel free to contact me if you have difficulty finding the same type of information and application forms for your location – I will be glad to help you!

3. Read through the UTEP Volunteer Tip Sheet (Reminders for conducting your activity, no submission required for this).

4. Once you have completed each of your activities, fill out (a) the student time sheet (Note: For voter awareness and registration activities, please make sure to keep track of the number of hours you served, the number of people you came in contact with, and the number of individuals you helped get registered to vote [you can include it right next to your number of hours] so I can keep records for UTEP, thank you!) and (b) reflection sheets, and then send them to me via email scan. Once I record your activities for the course, I will also report the data to the UTEP Center for Community Engagement. We will have a final due date towards the end of the semester when all forms and documentation must be submitted in order to officially get credit for your work.

[Targeted Edge Advantages: Communication, Leadership, Global awareness, Social Responsibility, Change-Making Skills, Initiative and Responsibility]

CEL "PASS" Project (Alternative to CEL "VOTE" Project)

For those who prefer an alternative version of the CEL "VOTE" Project, you may sign up instead for the CEL "PASS" Project that will be administered by my Teaching Assistant, Ethan Roski (erroski@miners.utep.edu), of the Academic Student Success Program. Full details of this alternative CEL PASS project options will be given in class at the start of the semester (worth the same 20% of the grade for 20 hours of work to count for the CEL project portion of the course).

Academic Dishonesty and Misconduct

Academic integrity and standing require a respect and adherence to the grading policies and rules against cheating, collusion, and plagiarism. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student and possessing unauthorized materials during a test. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. *One example of collusion is signing in for another person (or having someone sign for you) on the class attendance sheet.* As commonly defined, plagiarism consists of passing off as one's own the ideas, words, writings, etc., which belong to another. In accordance with the definition, you are committing plagiarism if you copy the work of another person and turn it in as your own, even if you should have the permission of the person. Plagiarism is one of the worst academic sins, for the plagiarist destroys the trust among colleagues without which research cannot be safely communicated.

I encourage students to study together and work collectively; however, working together to write any part of a written assignment, research paper, and/or exam is plagiarism. If you are unsure whether a citation is required, err on the side of caution and provide one. A document detailing different forms of plagiarism is provided on Blackboard. Here is an informative webcast on plagiarism: http://www.plagiarism.org/resources/webcasts

Be aware, just as the internet has made it easier to find material, it has also made it easier to trace the source of any written work. All written work submitted for this course will be checked by the instructor for originality via *Turnitin*—an online originality checking service made available by UTEP (http://www.turnitin.com/en_us/features/originalitycheck).

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 subject to disciplinary action. Students may be suspended or expelled from UTEP for such actions. For further information, please refer to http://studentaffairs.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=4386.

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: http://sa.utep.edu/cass/; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: cass@utep.edu; location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

COVID-19 Precautions and Accommodations

Even though our course is 100% online, students may still go to campus to visit the library or other services. Therefore, please read the information below about COVID-19 precautions and accommodations very carefully. Here is an informative video on COVID-19 and a student training video prepared by UTEP. Check out UTEP's COVID-19 website for updates and announcements.

COVID-19 Precautions
You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu.

For each day that you attend campus—for any reason—you must complete the questions on the UTEP screening website (screening.utep.edu) prior to arriving on campus. The website will

verify if you are permitted to come to campus. Under no circumstances should anyone go to campus when feeling ill or exhibiting any of the known COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let the University know as soon as possible, and alternative instruction will be provided. Students are advised to minimize the number of encounters with others to avoid infection.

Wear face coverings when in common areas of campus or when others are present. You must wear a face covering over your nose and mouth at all times in classrooms. If you choose not to wear a face covering, you may not enter the classroom. If you remove your face covering, you will be asked to put it on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear a face covering and follow preventive COVID-19 guidelines will be dismissed from the class and will be subject to disciplinary action according to Section 1.2.3 *Health and Safety* and Section 1.2.2.5 *Disruptions* in the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures.

Please note that if COVID-19 conditions deteriorate in the City of El Paso, all course and lab activities may be transitioned to remote delivery.

COVID-19 Accommodations
Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure, or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus but have face-to-face classes, you should contact your professors as soon as possible so necessary and appropriate accommodations can be arranged.

Students who are considered high risk according to CDC guidelines and/or those who live with individuals who are considered high risk may contact Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) to discuss temporary accommodations for on-campus courses and activities.

Copyright Statement for Course Materials
The course materials used in this course are copyrighted. By course materials, I mean all materials generated for this class, which include but are not limited to syllabi, quizzes, exams, lecture notes and PowerPoint slides, in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets. This also includes any information posted on the course webpage. Because these are copyrighted, you do not have the right to distribute the course materials, unless I expressly grant permission.

Software Requirements
You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed):
- Adobe Acrobat Reader. To get this program, go to https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html and follow the instructions.
- Adobe Flash Player. To get this program, go to https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/ and follow the instructions.
- QuickTime Player. To get this program, go to http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/ and follow the instructions.

Microsoft Office. If you do not have a word-processing software, go to https://my.apps.utep.edu.
Using My.Apps interface, UTEP students can access most software offered in student computer
labs (including Microsoft Office) from their personal computing devices. Students can use any
laptop, tablet, or smartphone with an Internet connection and use the software from anywhere at
any time. For more information, go to http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740 and
follow the instructions.

UTEP Technical Support

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources
- Help Desk: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software,
  etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via
  phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

Academic Resources
- UTEP Library: Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands
  of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- University Writing Center (UWC): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and
  formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- Math Tutoring Center (MaRCS): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math
  resources.
- History Tutoring Center (HTC): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from
  a tutor and explore other history resources.
- RefWorks: A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and
  Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources
- Military Student Success Center: Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their
  educational goals.
- Center for Accommodations and Support Services: Assists students with ADA-related
  accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
Counseling and Psychological Services: Provides a variety of counseling services including
individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

Course Schedule

Note: This is a provisional schedule of our course. With advanced notice, I may introduce specific changes based on progress in class.		
Monday	1/18	**Martin Luther King Holiday – NO CLASS**
Wednesday	1/20	**Welcome and Introduction** *Course introduction: discuss syllabus, schedule, key requirements, and preview the community engagement component and options. **Please order/buy your required textbooks as soon as possible if you have not already done so, thanks!
Monday	1/25	**Community Engagement & Leadership Training** Students will: • Be briefed and trained on expectations concerning the CEL community engagement course component and options (choose between CEL "VOTE" versus "PASS" Project options). • Go over the paperwork (release form and student contract) required for the community engagement and leadership components (provided via UTEP's Center for Community Engagement CCE).
Wednesday	1/27	**Understanding American Politics** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 1
Monday	2/1	**The Constitution and the Founding** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 2
Wednesday	2/3	**Federalism** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 3
Monday	2/8	**Civil Liberties** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 4
Wednesday	2/10	**Civil Rights** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 5 *Borders*, Ch. 3
Monday	2/15	**President's Day/Online Conference Event – NO CLASS**
Wednesday	2/17	**Public Opinion Polling in Politics** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 6

Monday	2/22	**Political Parties and Interest Groups** *American Politics Today*, Chs. 7 & 9
Wednesday	2/24	**Elections (Part I: The Electoral College)** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 8
Monday	3/1	**Elections (Part II: The 2020 Elections)** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 8 (continued)
Wednesday	3/3	**Midterm Exam Review**
Monday	3/8	**MIDTERM EXAM**
Wednesday	3/10	**Congress** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 10
Monday	3/15	**Spring Break – NO CLASS**
Wednesday	3/17	**Spring Break – NO CLASS**
Monday	3/22	**The Presidency** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 11
Wednesday	3/24	**The Bureaucracy** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 12
Monday	3/29	**The Courts** *American Politics Today*, Ch. 13
Wednesday	3/31	**Texas, the Constitution, and Federalism** *Governing Texas*, Chs. 1-3
Monday	4/5	**Political Parties in Texas** *Governing Texas*, Ch. 4
Wednesday	4/7	**Elections, Interest Groups, and Lobbying in Texas** *Governing Texas*, Chs. 5 & 6
Monday	4/12	**The Texas Legislature** *Governing Texas*, Ch. 7

Wednesday	4/14	**The Texas Executive Branch** *Governing Texas*, Ch. 8
Monday	4/19	**The Texas Judiciary & Crime Policy** *Governing Texas*, Chs. 9 & 13
Wednesday	4/21	**Local Government in Texas** *Governing Texas*, Ch. 10
Monday	4/26	**Public Finance & Policy Making in Texas** *Governing Texas*, Chs. 11 & 12
Wednesday	4/28	**Community Engagement & Training Review/Discussions** *Instructions for completing the final CEL reflection and cumulative engagement hours report for CEL Timesheet, final due by 5/3
Monday	5/3	**CEL Project Class Reflections & Sharing Session** *Final CEL reflection and timesheet due
Wednesday	5/5	**Final Exam Review**
TBD	TBD	**FINAL EXAM**