
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
POLS 2311 CEL: American Government and Politics
Spring 2024

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Course Registration Number: 25552
Classroom: Education Building 303
Date/Time: TR 9am-10:20am

Course Overview

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, its democratic 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. Therein, students will develop a deeper understanding of the U.S. national government, think critically about its development and democratic principles, and what role the public plays in shaping American politics. In conjunction with community engagement activities related to nonpartisan voter awareness and registration, the course will help students build “Empathic Global Citizenship” 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. In line with UTEP’s CEL and Edge missions, the course thereby provides opportunities to address community engagement issues and the prospects for students to engage in their communities to affect positive change – through both face-to-face and remote social media efforts. I look forward to working with you during the course of the semester and I encourage you to be active in our classroom discussions.

***NOTE:** The “CEL” designation for this course stands for “Community Engagement & Leadership” and is part of a special program in the College of Liberal Arts (full details to be provided at the start of the course). The purpose of this CEL course is to strengthen students’ understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and provide an avenue to build 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.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes relevant to Social and Behavior Sciences (SBS) and in line with UTEP's CEL and Edge Missions - 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 inclusive perspective

Grades

Grades will be based on two exams, various class assignments, the CEL component for community engagement and leadership, and attendance/participation. Participation activities will count for 10% of the final grade such that one must actively engage in the course to earn an "A." Below is the full breakdown of the grading format:

Grading/Exams	
Attendance and Participation	10%
Class Assignments (5 Total)	20%
CEL Project	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
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.

Textbooks

This course includes TWO highly recommended textbooks:

1. **Bianco, William T., and David T. Canon. *American Politics Today (Eighth Essentials Edition)*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.**
2. **Champagne, Anthony, Edward J. Harpham, Jason P. Casellas, and Jennier H. Clark. *Governing Texas (Sixth Edition)*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.**

*NOTE: Paperback, loose leaf, and E-book (online) versions of the latest editions of the texts are available directly from the publisher here:

American Politics Today: <https://wwnorton.com/books/9781324040224>

Governing Texas: <https://wwnorton.com/books/9781324035107>

Classroom Policies

- Class attendance and participation in class discussions counts for 10% of the final grade. Accordingly, you must attend and participate in class to earn an “A.” I expect everyone to attend class on the scheduled dates and times. This means coming to class alert, willing to ask and answer questions, and prepared to contribute intellectually to the class discussions. Remember that you are expected to have completed the weekly readings before the class meeting. Coming to the class prepared is important particularly because when calculating your final grade, I will consider your class participation. In addition, exams will cover

material from the readings and the lectures, so doing just one or the other will leave you at a disadvantage. If I consistently detect a pattern of only a few students reading, there will be graded “pop-quizzes,” which will become part of the 10% attendance and participation portion of the 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.

- I will deduct a full letter grade for a late assignment for each day it is late after the due date (including weekends). For example, a “perfect” assignment turned in two days late would receive an 80 out of a 100. If you are late in submitting an assignment, you may also contact me to let me know why and I may consider excusing late point deductions at my discretion in line with UTEP’s university excused policies.
- Make-up exams will only be given if you have a university excused absence and follow university guidelines (see “Excused Absences” section below for more details). If you miss a test day and/or submission date 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 arrange a make-up exam. Note that if you miss an exam day, I expect you to contact me *immediately* afterward (I expect later that day or the following day at the latest). You may contact me by e-mail, telephone, or visit during office hours to arrange a make-up. 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 may be of a different format than the original exam.
- Regarding UTEP’s course drop policy: According to UTEP Catalog, “At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of excessive absences or lack of effort. A grade of “W” will be assigned before the course drop deadline and a grade of “F” after the course drop deadline” (see Policies and Regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excuse absences). I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar’s Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an “F” for the course.

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 Class 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 (20 hours of service worth 20% of the grade).*

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

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 BEFORE starting any activity).
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>. Accordingly, you may share these forms with interested people so they may fill them out and submit them on their own (Please do NOT in any way help fill the forms out yourself unless you are officially trained/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 nonpartisan outreach approach designed to simply share important information and links for individuals to register on their own 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. 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]

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>.

Plagiarism Detecting Software

Some of your course work and assessments may be submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used to review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

Accommodations Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

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.

Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

Student Resources

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Please refer to the QR code below for a listing of campus resources or visit https://www.utep.edu/advising/student_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html.



COVID-19 Precautions and Accommodations

Please stay home if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can work on appropriate accommodations. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you are encouraged to report your results to covidaction@utep.edu, so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communication with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission wear face masks when indoors in groups of people. The best way

that Miners can take care of Miners is to get the vaccine. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit epstrong.org.

Further 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.

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.

Students who refuse to follow UTEP's 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

<p>Note: This is a provisional schedule of our course. With advanced notice, I may introduce specific changes based on progress in class.</p>		
Tuesday	1/16	<p>Welcome and Introduction *Course introduction: discuss syllabus, schedule, key requirements, and preview the CEL & EGC components and options.</p>
Thursday	1/18	<p>Understanding American Politics <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 1</p>
Tuesday	1/23	<p>The Constitution and the Founding <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 2</p>
Thursday	1/25	<p>Community Engagement vis-à-vis the Empathic Global Citizenship (EGC) Framework Students will: • Be briefed and trained on expectations concerning the community engagement course components and options. • Go over the paperwork (release form and student contract provided via UTEP’s Center for Community Engagement). Villalobos et al. 2022, Ch. 3 (posted on Blackboard) *Special Presentation and Assignment #1 (“Learning with Empathy: Employing the Empathic Global Citizenship Framework” for CEL and EGC Training)</p>
Tuesday	1/30	<p>Federalism <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 3</p>
Thursday	2/1	<p>Civil Liberties <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 4 *Assignment #1 is due by midnight via Blackboard</p>
Tuesday	2/6	<p>Civil Rights <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 5 *Class Activity and Assignment #2 (“Sugar, Ketchup, and Mustard: Civil Rights Sit-Ins of the 1960s” Empathic Leadership Discussion for EGC Training)</p>
Thursday	2/8	<p>Public Opinion, the Media, and Polling in Politics <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 6</p>

Tuesday	2/13	Political Parties and Interest Groups <i>American Politics Today</i> , Chs. 7 & 9 *Assignment #2 is due by midnight via Blackboard
Thursday	2/15	Elections <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 8
Tuesday	2/20	Documentary Presentation & Assignment (PART I) “Chisholm ’72: Unbought & Unbossed”
Thursday	2/22	Documentary Presentation & Assignment (PART II) “Chisholm ’72: Unbought & Unbossed” *Class Activity and Assignment #3 (Diversity Training)
Tuesday	2/27	Midterm Exam Review *Access to the Midterm Exam opened thereafter
Thursday	2/29	Congress <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 10 *Assignment #3 is due by midnight via Blackboard
Tuesday	3/5	The Presidency <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 11
Thursday	3/7	MIDTERM EXAM DUE (ONLINE – NO CLASS) *No Class, complete and submit the Midterm Exam via Blackboard by midnight
Tuesday	3/12	NO CLASS – Spring Break
Thursday	3/14	NO CLASS – Spring Break
Tuesday	3/19	The Bureaucracy <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 12 *Self-Launch and Self-Assessment Assignment #4 (“Who Are Civil Servants & How Do They Fit In Democracy?” – Policy in Action Training)
Thursday	3/21	The Courts <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 13

Tuesday	3/26	Texas, the Constitution, and Federalism <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 1-3 *Assignment #4 is due by midnight via Blackboard
Thursday	3/28	Political Parties in Texas <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 4
Tuesday	4/2	NO CLASS -- Midwest Political Science Association Conference *Focus this week working on your class projects.
Thursday	4/4	NO CLASS -- Midwest Political Science Association Conference *Continue working on your class projects.
Tuesday	4/9	Elections, Interest Groups, and Lobbying in Texas <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 5 & 6 *Class Discussion (“Who Are We as Texans and How Can We Empathize with Each Other’s Policy and Political Needs?” EGC Training)
Thursday	4/11	The Texas Legislature <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 7
Tuesday	4/16	The Texas Executive Branch <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 8
Thursday	4/18	The Texas Judiciary & Crime Policy <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 9 & 13
Tuesday	4/23	Local Government, Public Finance & Policy Making in Texas <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 10-12 *Self-Launch and Self-Assessment Assignment #5 (“Who Represents Us at the Texas and El Paso Level and How?” – Leadership & Diversity Training)
Thursday	4/25	CEL Project Training & Sharing Session *Instructions for completing the final CEL reflection and cumulative engagement hours report for the CEL Timesheet *Class Discussion (“How Have We Built Empathic Global Citizenship & What Does It Mean To Us?”)
Tuesday	4/30	Final Exam Review *Access to the Midterm Exam opened thereafter *Assignment #5 is due by midnight via Blackboard

Thursday	5/2	NO CLASS, Extended Office Hours in EDUC 303 *Final CEL Reflection and Time Sheet Due via Blackboard by midnight
Final Exam	Online	FINAL EXAM (ONLINE) – Due via Blackboard by no later than midnight on Friday, May 10