
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Political Science 2311: American Government and Politics
Fall 2019

Instructor: Dr. José D. Villalobos

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Office Hours: MW 1:30-2:30pm or by appointment

Course Registration Number: 13148

Classroom: UGLC 116

Date/Time: MW 12pm-1:20pm

Course Overview

This course provides a broad overview and introduction of American government at the national level. More specifically, we will explore the constitutional principles upon which the American political system is founded, the institutions, structures, and policymaking processes that comprise the federal government, and the role that citizens play in national politics through various means of political participation. We will also incorporate an understanding of Texas politics and the relationship between state and federal government entities. The main goal of this course is to develop a deep understanding of the U.S. national government and to think critically about its development, its current form, and what role the public plays in shaping American politics. Therein course assignments and assessments are developed in line with UTEP's "Edge Advantages" goals (see more details below). In line with UTEP's Edge mission, portions of the class will deal with civic engagement issues and the prospects for key policy reforms in the current political environment, as well as provide opportunities for students to engage in their communities to affect change through voter registration efforts or other means. I look forward to working with you during the course of the semester and encourage you to be active in our classroom discussions.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes relevant to Social and Behavior Sciences (SBS) and in line with UTEP's Edge Mission - 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 political participation and other forms of civic engagement (Targeted Edge Advantages: Global awareness, Social 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 (each weighted according to the depth of information covered during a section). There will also be a documentary assignment and short essay assignment (see details further below). Last, in-class attendance and participation will count for 10% of the final grade such that one must actively attend and participate in class to earn an “A.”

Grading/Exams	
In-Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Documentary Assignment	5%
Short Essay Assignment	10%
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Exam	40%
Community Engagement Bonus Points	(Up to 2 Points)
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

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:

Bianco, William T., and David T. Canon. *American Politics Today (Sixth Essentials Edition)*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.

Champagne, Anthony, and Edward J. Harpham. *Governing Texas (Fourth Edition)*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.

***NOTE: Paperback copies of the books are available as a discounted bundle at the UTEP bookstore and may also be available elsewhere 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>

Classroom Policies

- In-class attendance and participation counts for 10% of the final grade. After three absences, I will begin to deduct 10 points from your attendance and participation grade for each absence thereafter. Accordingly, you must attend and participate in class to earn an “A.” Students will be asked to sign an attendance sheet for each class meeting. 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.
- 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 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, 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.

Excused Absences

I will excuse absences only when a student participates in an official university-recognized activity, observes a recognized religious holiday of her/his faith that happens to coincide with a class meeting, is called to and participates in active military service for a reasonably brief period, or confronts extraordinary circumstances, such as a prolonged illness, extended jury duty, or a major personal crisis. Any excused absences must be documented. Please do not ask me to excuse absences for minor illnesses or scheduling conflicts (e.g. sports practices or games, play rehearsals, meetings, conferences, appointments with other professors or advisors, student teaching, doctor's appointments, court dates, jobs, job interviews, having your cable installed, etc.). I am aware that students have other interests and obligations, but you should nevertheless make this class a priority. If you are likely to have recurring conflicts, please take another course.

See academic regulations in UTEP Undergraduate Catalogue for a list of excused absences: <http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=54418>. 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 may 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."

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.

Extra Credit

If, during the semester you have zero absences, three bonus points will be added to your final grade. Having only one absence will earn you two extra points and if you have only two absences, you will get one extra point. If you have more than two absences, you will not receive extra credit points. University-excused absences will not be counted against you, so long as you provide documentation the day you return to class. Again, it is your responsibility to document excused absences in a timely fashion. Other extra credit opportunities may be offered at the sole discretion of the instructor and will be assigned in-class to all students on an equal opportunity basis.

In addition, I will be providing up to 2 bonus points added to the final average for those who complete 2 hours of voter registration or some other approved form of community engagement (check with me if you are unsure! For example, an alternative activity may include the 8/28 and 89/29 "Trauma, Resilience & Resistance" Community Engagement Event Presentations as

already noted in the course schedule). Essentially, you can do 1 hour of a community engagement activity for 1 bonus point or 2 hours for 2 bonus points.

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 antidiscrimination 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 believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the university regarding services for students with disabilities.

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.

Course Schedule

Note: This is a provisional schedule of our course. With advanced notice, I may introduce specific changes based on progress in class.

Section I: The Constitutional Foundations of the U.S. Government

Monday	8/26	<p>Welcome and Introduction: Understanding American Politics *Course introduction: discuss syllabus, schedule, key requirements, and community engagement bonus point opportunities. <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 1 *Details provided for the 8/28 and 8/29 TRR Community Engagement Event Presentations (Flyer will be posted/emailed; see also below). **Please order/buy your required textbooks to have in hand ahead of next week (and be sure to read the first assigned chapter by then if you have not already done so).</p>
Wednesday	8/28	<p>NO CLASS – Conference (Extra Credit Options) “Trauma, Resilience & Resistance” UTEP Program, Community Engagement Event Presentations (DAY 1) 9am-7pm @ UTEP Blumberg Auditorium <i>*Attendance earns CE hour credits</i> Dr. Villalobos presentation “Seeing us in Them: Love and Empathy in Times of Hate” @ 9am-10am for those who wish to attend for CE credit.</p>
Thursday	8/29	<p>NO CLASS – Conference (Extra Credit Options) “Trauma, Resilience & Resistance” UTEP Program, Community Engagement Event Presentations (DAY 2) 9am-7pm @ UTEP Blumberg Auditorium <i>*Attendance earns CE hour credits</i></p>
Monday	9/2	<p>NO CLASS – Labor Day (Holiday)</p>
Wednesday	9/4	<p>The Constitution and the Founding <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 2</p>
Monday	9/9	<p>Federalism <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 3</p>
Wednesday	9/11	<p>Civil Liberties <i>American Politics Today</i>, Ch. 4</p>

Monday	9/16	Civil Rights <i>American Politics Today, Ch. 5</i>
Section II: The Role of Citizens & Public Opinion in Politics		
Wednesday	9/18	Public Opinion and the Media <i>American Politics Today, Ch. 6</i>
Monday	9/23	Political Parties and Interest Groups <i>American Politics Today, Chs. 7 & 9</i>
Wednesday	9/25	Elections <i>American Politics Today, Ch. 8</i>
Monday	9/30	Midterm Exam Review
Wednesday	10/2	MIDTERM EXAM
Section III: Institutions and Policy Making in the Federal Government		
Monday	10/7	Congress <i>American Politics Today, Ch. 10</i>
Wednesday	10/9	The Presidency <i>American Politics Today, Ch. 11</i>
Monday	10/14	NO CLASS – International Organization of Social Sciences and Behavioral Research (IOSSBR) Conference
Wednesday	10/16	Documentary Presentation & Assignment (PART I) “Chisholm ’72: Unbought & Unbossed” *Due by 10/23
Monday	10/21	Documentary Presentation & Assignment (PART II) “Chisholm ’72: Unbought & Unbossed” *Due by 10/23
Wednesday	10/23	The Bureaucracy <i>American Politics Today, Ch. 12</i> DUE: Documentary Assignment

Monday	10/28	The Courts <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 13
Section IV: Texas Government and Politics		
Wednesday	10/30	Texas, the Constitution, and Federalism <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 1-3
Monday	11/4	Political Parties in Texas <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 4
Wednesday	11/6	Elections, Interest Groups, and Lobbying in Texas <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 5 & 6
Monday	11/11	The Texas Legislature <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 7
Wednesday	11/13	The Texas Executive Branch <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 8
Monday	11/18	The Texas Judiciary & Crime Policy <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 9 & 13
Wednesday	11/20	Local Government in Texas <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 10
Monday	11/25	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Wednesday	11/27	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
Monday	12/2	Public Finance & Policy Making in Texas <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 11 & 12
Wednesday	12/4	Final Exam Review
Friday	12/13	FINAL EXAM UGLC 116 @ 1pm-3:45pm