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**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**  
**Political Science 2311: American Government and Politics**  
**Spring 2017**

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Instructor: Dr. José D. Villalobos

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Office Hours: MW 3-4pm

Course Registration Number: 24152

Classroom: UGLC 116

Date/Time: MW 1:30pm-2:50pm

### **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, as well as 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. government and to think critically about its development, its current form, and what role the public plays in shaping American politics. In addition, a significant portion of the class discussion will revolve around civic engagement issues and the prospects for key policy reforms in the current political environment. 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**

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
- (2) to define, understand, and use concepts and terms relevant to the study of the American national government
- (3) to identify, formulate, and answer complex questions related to the institutions, structures, and processes that comprise the federal government
- (4) to develop ideas about the role that citizens play in national politics through various means of political participation
- (5) to apply knowledge and general theories from the literature to evaluate the current events and conditions related to American national government

## 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 an 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%
Class Essay Assignment	10%
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Exam	40%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

Final Grade Scale
$\geq 89.50\% = A$
$89.49 - 79.50\% = B$
$79.49 - 69.50\% = C$
$69.49 - 59.50\% = D$
$\leq 59.49\% = F$

I will not change grades. You will 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 (Fifth Essentials Edition)*. W.W. Norton & Company Inc.

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

**NOTE: Hard copies of the books are available as a discounted bundle at the UTEP bookstore (ISBN: 9780393638370). Otherwise, alternative hard copy and E-book (online) versions of the texts are also available directly from the publisher here:**

*American Politics Today (Fifth Edition)*:

<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad-detail-editions.aspx?id=4294993773>

*Governing Texas (Second Edition)*:

<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad-detail-editions.aspx?id=4294993787>

## Documentary Assignment and Short Essay

I will provide the full details and instructions for these assignments on the day they are assigned.

*Important Note:* 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](http://www.turnitin.com/en_us/features/originalitycheck)). You are free to use this service to check/confirm the originality of your work. For more information on **Turnitin** and to access training materials, you can visit <https://www.turnitin.com/static/training/student.php>. Refer to the section “Academic Misconduct and Dishonesty” below for plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity, and the consequences of such actions.

## 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.

### **Attendance 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 (leading up to the October 11 deadline). Essentially, you can do 1 hour 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](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

Wednesday	1/18	<b>Welcome and Introduction!</b> *Course introduction: discuss syllabus, schedule, key requirements, and bonus point opportunities.
Monday	1/23	<b>Understanding American Politics</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 1
Wednesday	1/25	<b>The Constitution and the Founding</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 2
Monday	1/30	<b>Federalism</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 3
Wednesday	2/1	<b>Civil Liberties</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 4
Monday	2/6	<b>Civil Rights</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 5

### Section II: The Role of Citizens & Public Opinion in Politics

Wednesday	2/8	<b>Public Opinion and the Media</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 6
Monday	2/13	<b>Political Parties and Interest Groups</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Chs. 7 & 9
Wednesday	2/15	<b>Elections (Part I: Electoral College)</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 8
Monday	2/20	<b>Elections (Part II: 2016 Electoral Results)</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 8
Wednesday	2/22	<b>Midterm Exam Review</b>

Monday	2/27	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>
Wednesday	3/1	<b>Documentary Presentation &amp; Assignment (Part I)</b> “Chisholm ’72: Unbought & Unbossed” *Due by 3/8
Monday	3/6	<b>Documentary Presentation &amp; Assignment (Part II)</b> “Chisholm ’72: Unbought & Unbossed” *Due by 3/8
<b>Section III: Institutions and Policy Making in the Federal Government</b>		
Wednesday	3/8	<b>Congress</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 10 <b>DUE: Documentary Assignment</b>
Monday	3/13	<b>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS</b>
Wednesday	3/15	<b>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS</b>
Monday	3/20	<b>The Presidency</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 11
Wednesday	3/22	<b>The Bureaucracy</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 12
Monday	3/27	<b>The Courts</b> <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 13
<b>Section IV: Texas Government and Politics</b>		
Wednesday	3/29	<b>Texas, the Constitution, and Federalism</b> <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 1-3
Monday	4/3	<b>Political Parties in Texas</b> <i>Governing Texas</i> , Ch. 4
Wednesday	4/5	<b>Elections, Interest Groups, and Lobbying in Texas</b> <i>Governing Texas</i> , Chs. 5 & 6



Monday	4/10	<b>The Texas Legislature</b> <i>Governing Texas, Ch. 7</i>
Wednesday	4/12	<b>SWPSA CONFERENCE – NO CLASS</b>
Monday	4/17	<b>The Texas Executive Branch</b> <i>Governing Texas, Ch. 8</i>
Wednesday	4/19	<b>The Texas Judiciary &amp; Crime Policy</b> <i>Governing Texas, Chs. 9 &amp; 13</i>
Monday	4/24	<b>Local Government in Texas</b> <i>Governing Texas, Ch. 10</i>
Wednesday	4/26	<b>Public Finance &amp; Policy Making in Texas</b> <i>Governing Texas, Chs. 11 &amp; 12</i>
Monday	5/1	<b>Final Exam Review</b>
Wednesday	5/3	<b>DUE: Class Essay Assignment</b>
	TBA	<b>FINAL EXAM</b> <b>UGLC 116 @ 4pm-6:45pm</b>