
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Political Science 2311: American Government and Politics (Online)
Spring 2018

Instructor: Dr. José D. Villalobos

Office: Benedict Hall 306

Phone: (915) 747-7978

E-mail: jd villalobos2@utep.edu

Website: <http://www.faculty.utep.edu/jdvillalobos2>

Course Registration Number: 27698

Format: 7-Week Online Course

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. Through critical thinking essay assignments, we will also incorporate a deeper exploration of electoral processes and, separately, 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. I look forward to working with you during the course of the semester.

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 Reflective Essays (worth 8% each) and there will also be a total of 12 Chapter Post Tests (worth 7% each) during the seven week session. This online intro course is designed in such a manner that one must actively participate on a daily/weekly basis throughout the short 7-week semester in order to pass and be able to earn an “A.”

Grading/Exams		
Reflective Essays (2 Total)	8% (each)	16% (Total)
Chapter Post Tests (12 Total)	7% (each)	84% (Total)
<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 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 contact me by email and/or 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 Textbook

The course includes one required textbook:

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

<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad-detail-editions.aspx?id=4294994611>

Reflective Essays

I will provide the full details and instructions for these essay 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). 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.

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.

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	3/12	Understanding American Politics <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 1 *Assignment: Purchase required book and read Ch. 1 (No submissions due this first week)
Monday	3/19	The Constitution and the Founding <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 2 *Assignment: Chapter 2 Post-Test (Due by 3/19)
Wednesday	3/21	Federalism <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 3 *Assignment: Chapter 3 Post-Test (Due by 3/23)
Monday	3/26	Civil Liberties <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 4 *Assignment: Chapter 4 Post-Test (Due by 3/28)
Wednesday	3/28	Civil Rights <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 5 *Assignment: Chapter 5 Post-Test (Due by 3/30)

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

Monday	4/2	Public Opinion and the Media <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 6 *Assignment: Chapter 6 Post-Test (Due by 4/4)
Wednesday	4/4	Political Parties <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 7 *Assignment: Chapter 7 Post-Test (Due by 4/6)
Monday	4/9	Elections <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 8 *Assignment: Chapter 8 Post-Test (Due by 4/11) *Assignment: First Reflective Essay (Due by 4/13)

Wednesday	4/11	Interest Groups <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 9 *Assignment: Chapter 9 Post-Test (Due by 4/13)
Friday	4/13	First Reflective Essay Due
Section III: Institutions and Policy Making in the Federal Government		
Monday	4/16	Congress <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 10 *Assignment: Chapter 10 Post-Test (Due by 4/18)
Wednesday	4/18	The Presidency <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 11 *Assignment: Chapter 11 Post-Test (Due by 4/20)
Monday	4/23	The Bureaucracy <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 12 *Assignment: Chapter 12 Post-Test (Due by 4/25) *Assignment: First Reflective Essay (Due by 4/27)
Wednesday	4/25	The Courts <i>American Politics Today</i> , Ch. 13 *Assignment: Chapter 12 Post-Test (Due by 4/27)
Friday	4/27	Final Reflective Essay Due