
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Political Science 2311: American Government and Politics
Spring 2014

Instructor: Dr. José D. Villalobos
Office: Benedict Hall 306
Phone: (915) 747-7978
E-mail: jdwillalobos2@utep.edu

Course Registration Number: 26319
Classroom: UGLC 116
Date/Time: TR 10:30-11:50am

Website: <http://www.faculty.utep.edu/jdvillalobos2>
Office Hours: Thursdays 3-5pm (or by appointment)

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. That said, I look forward to working with you during the course of the semester and I 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 of multiple-choice questions and short-answer essays (each weighted according to the amount of information covered during a section). There will also be a class project (see section below). Last, in-class attendance and participation will count for 10% of the final grade such that one must attend and participate in class to earn an “A.”

Grading/Exams	
In-Class Attendance and Participation	10%
Class Project	15%
Midterm Exam	35%
Final Exam	40%
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

Required Texts

The course includes one required textbook:

O’Connor, Karen, Larry J. Sabato, Alixandra B. Yanus, L. Tucker Gibson, Jr., & Clay Robinson. *American and Texas Government: Prepared for Dr. José D. Villalobos POLS 2311* (2013 Custom Edition with MyPolisciLab). Pearson Custom Library.

- ISBN-13 978-1-269-24525-8
- ISBN-10 1-269-24525-2

Class Project

I will provide the full details and instructions for this project on the day it is assigned.

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 are at the sole discretion of the instructor and will be assigned in-class.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity and standing require a respect and adherence to the grading policies, rules against cheating, and plagiarism. 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.

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>.

On Cheating and Complicity

Cheating includes looking at another student's examination, using cheat sheets or other unauthorized notes during an exam, having others conduct research or prepare work that you turn in as your own (includes the use of commercial term paper companies, buying answer sets from a tutoring company, or obtaining answers from other unauthorized sources). Complicity, meanwhile, refers to any collaboration for aiding others in the act of cheating, including allowing others to cheat off of your paper, taking an exam for another student, or providing another student's signature in their absence for in-class assignments or attendance sheets. You may also not submit work for this class that you did for another class without my expressed consent.

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		
Tuesday	1/21	Course Introduction Discuss syllabus, course schedule, and class project
Thursday	1/23	American Government: Roots, Context, and Culture <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 1
Tuesday	1/28	The Constitution <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 2
Thursday	1/30	The Federal System <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 3
Tuesday	2/4	Civil Liberties <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 4
Thursday	2/6	Civil Rights <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 5
Section II: The Role of Citizens & Public Opinion in Politics		
Tuesday	2/11	Public Opinion and the News Media <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 10
Thursday	2/13	Political Parties and Interest Groups <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 11
Tuesday	2/18	Elections, Campaigns, and Voting <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 12 Class discussion on current events and the role of civic engagement *Discuss “Civic Engagement” extra credit assignment
Thursday	2/20	Midterm Exam Review
Tuesday	2/25	MIDTERM EXAM
Section III: Institutions and Policy Making in the Federal Government		
Thursday	2/27	Social and Economic Policy <i>American and Texas Government</i> , Ch. 13

Tuesday	3/4	Foreign and Defense Policy <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 14</i>
Thursday	3/6	Congress <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 6</i>
Tuesday	3/11	Spring Break (No Class)
Thursday	3/13	Spring Break (No Class)
Tuesday	3/18	The Presidency <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 7</i>
Thursday	3/20	The Executive Branch and the Federal Bureaucracy <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 8</i>
Section IV: Texas Government and Politics		
Tuesday	3/25	The Judiciary <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 9</i>
Thursday	3/27	Texas Constitution <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 15</i>
Tuesday	4/1	The Party System in Texas <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 16</i>
Thursday	4/3	Midwestern Political Science Association Conference (No Class) Assignment: *Work on your class projects!
Tuesday	4/8	Elections, Campaigns, and Political Behavior in Texas <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 17</i> ***Class Project Due Finish and turn in a hard copy during the scheduled class time (Please DO NOT e-mail it to me).
Thursday	4/10	The Texas Legislature <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 18</i>
Tuesday	4/15	The Texas Executive <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 19</i>
Thursday	4/17	Western Political Science Association Conference (No Class) *Civic engagement reminder!

Tuesday	4/22	The Bureaucracy and Policy Implementation in Texas <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 20</i>
Thursday	4/24	The Judicial System in Texas <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 21</i>
Tuesday	4/29	Local Government in Texas <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 22</i>
Thursday	5/1	Contemporary Public Policy Issues in Texas <i>American and Texas Government, Ch. 23</i>
Tuesday	5/6	Civic Engagement in Local Politics ***Extra Credit for the civic engagement volunteer work is due Must have all documents submitted to the Center for Civic Engagement (Benedict Hall Rm. 101) by 5pm to receive extra credit.
Thursday	5/8	Final Exam Review
Thursday	5/15	FINAL EXAM UGLC 116 @ 10am-12:45pm