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**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO**  
**Political Science 5315 (CEL): Seminar in American Institutions and Processes**  
**Fall 2021**

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Course Registration Number: 19666

Classroom: UGLC 338

Date/Time: Mondays 6-8:50pm

### **Course Overview**

POLS 5315 (CEL)\* focuses on the institutional approach to studying the executive, legislative, and judicial institutional branches of government in the United States. The aim of this course is to develop a deep understanding of the U.S. government’s institutional development, the manner in which institutions contribute to the policy making process, and the overall role that each branch of government plays in shaping American politics and society, particularly within a system of checks and balances. Therein, we will also consider the development of the mass media as an institution and its impact on the three branches of government, as well as other factors that have an influence on U.S. institutions and their development. In addition, the course will also deal with community engagement issues and the prospects for key policy reforms in the current political environment, as well as provide nonpartisan voter awareness and registration opportunities for students to engage in their communities to affect change – through both face-to-face and remote social media efforts given the ongoing health and security circumstances amid the COVID-19 pandemic.\*\* 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 1:** The “CEL” designation for this course stands for “Community Engagement & Leadership” and is part of a new certificate program in the College of Liberal Arts (full details to be provided at the start of the online course). The purpose of this CEL course is to strengthen students’ understanding of their role in society as engaged citizens and to build the 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.

**\*\*NOTE 2:** Given the possible restrictions and limitations to in-person interaction and planned community engagement activities amid the ongoing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, outreach efforts may also be employed remotely through social media for this course in addition to (or instead of) by direct face-to-face activities (the safety and health of students is first and foremost!). Please also read the section further below entitled “COVID-19 Precautions and Accommodations” for more general advice and guidance to follow during the pandemic.

## **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 institutional development of the American political system
- (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 various institutional actors as well as environmental factors play in national politics and how it affects societal conditions
- (5) to apply knowledge and general theories from the literature to evaluate past, current, and overtime events and conditions related to American national government
- (6) 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: Communication, Critical thinking, Problem solving, Leadership, Confidence, Change-Making Skills, Global Awareness, and 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 worth 20% of the final grade), a class research design paper worth 20% of the final grade, and a CEL Voter Outreach Project that includes 20 hours of community engagement worth 30% of the grade. In addition, in-class attendance and participation will count for 10% of the final grade such that one must attend and participate with weekly talking point submissions for class discussions to earn an “A” grade at minimum. Participation will be based largely on in-class discussions derived from weekly talking points and also any off campus class-related activities can factor into it as well (I may likely offer some extra credit bonus points for the latter).

<b>Grading/Exams</b>	
In-Class Attendance/Weekly Talking Points	10%
Class Project Paper	20%
CEL Voter Outreach Project	30%
Midterm Essay Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

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

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

### **Required Texts**

The course does not require a textbook for purchase. Instead, I will assign key book chapters and journal articles that will serve as the primary required readings. These readings will be made available electronically by the instructor on a weekly basis, for which only class members will have access for instructional purposes. The journal articles are also immediately available through J-Stor ([www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)).

### **Classroom Policies**

- In-class attendance and participation with weekly talking point submissions for 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 and to submit weekly talking points, which will be due by noon on the day of our corresponding class meetings. 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.
- 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.

### **Weekly Talking Points**

Starting with the second week of class, each student will need to submit one talking point each **Monday (due via e-mail by 12pm MT on the day of the lecture)** in response to the assigned readings for that evening’s class session. The talking points will be utilized to help shape our weekly seminar discussions, so they should be the most interesting questions or arguments that the student has identified based on the week’s readings. In turn, I will incorporate these talking points into the lecture (time permitting) in an effort to actively engage each member of class, directly answer questions of interest, and, more generally, provide additional guidance on how to interpret and follow the readings. The talking points should be submitted in the form of a short paragraph outlining your question or argument. Each talking point should refer to one or more specific sections of the weekly readings (with page references where appropriate). Talking points should be about 100-200 words (those that fall under 75 words and/or are submitted late will not be accepted).

### **Class Project Paper**

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

### **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 30% 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.

\*As mentioned above, given the restrictions and limitations to face-to-face interaction and planned community engagement activities amid the ongoing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, outreach efforts may be employed remotely through social media for this course rather than solely by direct face-to-face activities (the safety and health of students is first and foremost!).

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 to me BEFORE starting any activity). I can submit these to the UTEP Center for Community Engagement office on your behalf.
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> (this link will be especially helpful given the current COVID-19 social distancing guidelines and other limitations/restrictions that highly limit or do not allow for in-person activities). Accordingly, you may share these forms online with interested people so they may fill them out and submit them on their own (Please note: do NOT fill the forms out yourself unless you are trained and

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 avoidance of face-to-face interactions amid the pandemic. However, if you have questions about this or alternative options you would like to be considered for credit, please contact the professor). Unless you are already willingly trained, deputized, and ready to do the actual paperwork/submissions yourself, I strongly suggest you take the more cautious route of directing people to registration forms and letting people know that they can easily fill out 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://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](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 via email scan. 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]

### **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). 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.

### **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.

### **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](mailto: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](http://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](http://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](mailto: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.

## 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>	
8/23	<p><b>Introduction</b>            Syllabus, course and class introductions, and beginning discussions.            *UTEP COVID-19 precautions and accommodations.            *No readings or talking points required ahead of meeting for this first day.</p>
8/30	<p><b>Presidential Power amid Institutional Constraints</b>  <i>Reading Material:</i>            Neustadt, R.E. 1990. <i>Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents</i>. New York: Free Press, Chs. 1 &amp; 3.            Howell, W.G. 2006. "Power Without Persuasion: Rethinking Foundations of Executive Influence," In <i>Readings in Presidential Politics</i>, G.C. Edwards III. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, Ch. 4.</p>
9/6	<p><b>Labor Day Holiday (University Closed)</b>  <b>Community Engagement Training (To be provided via email)</b>            Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be briefed and trained on expectations concerning the CEL community engagement course component.</li> <li>• Go over the paperwork (release form and student contract) required for engaging in voter awareness and registration efforts (provided via UTEP's Center for Community Engagement CCE).</li> </ul>
9/13	<p><b>Management of the Institutional Presidency</b>  <i>Reading Material:</i>            Pfiffner, J.P. 1999. "Can the President Manage the Government?" In <i>The Managerial Presidency</i>, J.P Pfiffner (ed.). College Station: Texas A&amp;M University Press: 3-20.            Vaughn, J.S., and Villalobos, J.D. 2010. "White House Staff," In <i>New Directions in the American Presidency</i>, L.C. Han (ed.). New York: Routledge, 120-135.</p>
9/20	<p><b>The Presidency &amp; the Electoral College</b>  <i>Reading Material:</i>            Slonim, S. 1986. "The Electoral College at Philadelphia: The Evolution of an Ad Hoc Congress for the Selection of a President," <i>The Journal of American History</i> 73 (1): 35-58.            Edwards, G.C. III. 2004. "The Electoral College and Political Equality," In <i>Why the Electoral College is Bad for America</i>, G.C. Edwards III (ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 31-54.</p>

9/27	<p><b>Congress: Playing Partisan Politics &amp; Making Law</b></p> <p><i>Reading Material:</i></p> <p>Cox, G.W., and McCubbins, M.D. 2002. "Agenda Power in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1877-1986." In <i>Parties, Procedure, and Policy: Essays on the History of Congress</i>, Brady, D.W., and McCubbins, M.D. (eds.). Stanford University Press.</p> <p>Jones, C.O. 2005. "Making Laws," In <i>The Presidency in a Separated System</i>, C.O. Jones (ed.). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press: 254-283. (Part I)</p>
10/4	<p><b>Congress: Playing Partisan Politics &amp; Making Law (Continued)</b></p> <p><i>Reading Material:</i></p> <p>Krehbiel, K. 1993. "Where's the Party?" <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> 23 (2): 235-266.</p> <p>Jones, C.O. 2005. "Making Laws," In <i>The Presidency in a Separated System</i>, C.O. Jones (ed.). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press: 284-338. (Part II)</p> <p><b>*Midterm Essay Exam Distributed – Due 2/28 by no later than midnight (MT)</b></p>
10/11	<p><b>*Midterm Essay Exams – Due by midnight (MT)</b></p>
10/18	<p><b>The Judiciary: Institutional Appointments and Policy Making</b></p> <p><i>Reading Material:</i></p> <p>Moraski, B.J., and Shipan, C.R. 1999. "The Politics of Supreme Court Nominations: A Theory of Institutional Constraints and Choices," <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 43 (4): 1069-1095.</p> <p>Segal, J.A., Spaeth, H.J., and Benesh, S.C. 2005. "Judicial Policy Making," In <i>The Supreme in the American Legal System</i>, J.A. Segal, H.J. Spaeth, and S.C. Benesh. New York: Cambridge University Press: 3-18.</p> <p><b>*Paper proposals due in class (with topic, abstract and reference list)</b></p>
10/25	<p><b>Congress &amp; the Presidency: Allegiance and Rivalry</b></p> <p><i>Reading Material:</i></p> <p>Edwards, G.C. III. 2000. "Building Coalitions," <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 30 (1): 47-78.</p> <p>Brady, D.W., and Volden, C. 2006. "The Origins of Revolving Gridlock," In <i>Revolving Gridlock: Politics and Policy from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush</i>, D.W. Brady and C. Volden. Boulder, CO: Westview Press: 1-11.</p>
11/1	<p><b>Congress &amp; the Presidency: Allegiance and Rivalry (Continued)</b></p> <p><i>Reading Material:</i></p> <p>Mayhew, D.R. 1991. "High-Publicity Investigations," In <i>Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-1990</i>,</p>

	<p>D.R. Mayhew. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: 8-33.</p> <p>Fisher, L. 2000. "War Powers after World War II," In <i>Congressional Abdication on War &amp; Spending</i>, L. Fisher. College Station: Texas A&amp;M Press: 34-73.</p>
11/8	<p><b>The "Fourth Branch" of Institutional Government</b></p> <p><i>Reading Material:</i></p> <p>Cook, B.J. 1996. "Public Administration as Instrument and Institution," In <i>Bureaucracy and Self-Government: Reconsidering the Role of Public Administration in American Politics</i>, B.J. Cook. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press: 1-23.</p> <p>Meier, K.J., and O'Toole, L.J. 2006. "Governance and the Bureaucracy Problem," In <i>Bureaucracy in a Democratic State: A Governance Perspective</i>, K.J. Meier, and L.J. O'Toole. Johns Hopkins University Press: 1-20.</p>
11/15	<p><b>Congress &amp; the Bureaucracy: Control and Oversight</b></p> <p>McCubbins, M.D., and Schwartz, T. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 28 (1): 165-179.</p> <p>Huber, J.D., and Shipan, C. R. 2000. "The Costs of Control: Legislators, Agencies, and Transaction Costs." <i>Legislative Studies Quarterly</i> 25: 25-52.</p>
11/22	<p><b>THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY (NO CLASS)</b></p> <p><b>***Assignment: Continue working on your CEL Projects, paper projects and presentations, and any make-up work due.</b></p>
11/29	<p><b>"Fifth Branch"? The Institutionalized Media &amp; its Political Influence</b></p> <p><i>Reading Material:</i></p> <p>Callaghan, K., and Schnell, F. 2001. "Assessing the Democratic Debate: How the News Media Frame Elite Policy Discourse," <i>Political Communication</i> 18: 183-212.</p> <p>Xenos, M.A. and Becker, A.B. 2009. "Moments of Zen: Effects of the Daily Show on Information Seeking and Political Learning," <i>Political Communication</i> 26(3): 317-332.</p>
12/5	<p><b>CLASS PROJECTS DUE</b></p> <p><b>Class Papers: Final Due via email by 12/5 @ 11:59pm (MT)</b></p> <p><b>CEL Class Project Docs: Final Due via email by 12/5 @ 11:59pm (MT)</b></p>
TBD	<p><b>FINAL EXAM – Due Date</b></p> <p><b>*Turn in via email by no later than midnight (MT)</b></p>