UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
POLS 5315/PAD 5310: Seminar in American Institutions and Public Policy Processes
Spring 2025

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Date/Time: Tuesdays 6-8:50pm

Course Overview

POLS 5315/PAD 5310 focuses on the institutional approach to studying the executive, legislative, and judicial institutional branches of government in the United States and public policy processes therein. 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. We will also consider the development of the mass media as an institution and its impact on the three branches of government and public policy processes, as well as other factors that have an influence on U.S. institutions and their development. During the semester, the course will also include discussions on key public/community issues and the prospects for key policy and ethics reforms in the current political environment. 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 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 political participation

***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 in-class attendance with active participation, two projects, and two exams, with each component worth 20% of the grade:

Grading/Exams	
In-Class Attendance & Active Participation	20%
Community Engagement & Leadership Project	20%
Institutional Entity Portfolio Project	20%
Midterm Essay Exam	20%
Final Essay Exam	20%
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
≤ 59.50% = 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).

Classroom Policies

- Class attendance and participation in class discussions counts for 20% of the final grade. Accordingly, you must attend and participate in class to earn an "A" or "B." 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 20% 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. If you are late in submitting an assignment, you may also contact me to let me know why and I may consider excusing late point deductions at my discretion in line with UTEP's university excused policies.
- 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.
- Regarding UTEP's course drop policy: According to UTEP Catalog, "At the discretion of the instructor, a student can be dropped from a course because of excessive absences or lack of effort. A grade of "W" will be assigned before the course drop deadline and a grade of "F" after the course drop deadline" (see Policies and Regulations in the UTEP Undergraduate Catalog for a list of excuse absences). I will not drop you from the course. However, if you feel that you are unable to complete the course successfully, please let me know and then contact the Registrar's Office to initiate the drop process. If you do not, you are at risk of receiving an "F" for the course.

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.

Plagiarism Detecting Software
Some of your course work and assessments may submitted to SafeAssign, a plagiarism detecting software. SafeAssign is used review assignment submissions for originality and will help you learn how to properly attribute sources rather than paraphrase.

Accommodations Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students who become pregnant may also request reasonable accommodations, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations and University policy. Accommodations that constitute undue hardship are not reasonable. To make a request, please register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact CASS at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

ADA Statement

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination 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 require specific accommodations and support services, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Please keep in mind that accommodations need to be requested at least two weeks (or a month if advance planning, such as the acquisition of books-on-tape, is

required) prior to the beginning of the semester. Here is the contact information for CASS: web: http://sa.utep.edu/cass/; phone: (915) 747-5148; fax: (915) 747-8712; e-mail: cass@utep.edu; location: UTEP Union Building East Room 106.

Student Pregnancy and Parenting Nondiscrimination Policy

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Students who become pregnant or have parenting responsibilities may also request reasonable accommodations. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. The UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) will process requests for accommodations based on a disability, pregnancy, or parenting. Contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu, or apply for accommodations online via the CASS portal.

Student Resources

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support. Please refer to the QR code below for a listing of campus resources or visit https://www.utep.edu/advising/student_resources/student-success-resource-hub.html.

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, 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.

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. 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.

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.

Software Requirements

You will need the following software on your computer to efficiently work in this course (your computer may already have some of these programs installed):

- Adobe Acrobat Reader. To get this program, go to https://acrobat.adobe.com/us/en/products/pdf-reader.html and follow the instructions.
- Adobe Flash Player. To get this program, go to https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/ and follow the instructions.
- QuickTime Player. To get this program, go to http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/ and follow the instructions.

Microsoft Office. If you do not have a word-processing software, go to https://my.apps.utep.edu. Using My.Apps interface, UTEP students can access most software offered in student computer labs (including Microsoft Office) from their personal computing devices. Students can use any laptop, tablet, or smartphone with an Internet connection and use the software from anywhere at any time. For more information, go to http://admin.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=73740 and follow the instructions.

UTEP Technical Support

UTEP provides a variety of student services and support:

Technology Resources

- Help Desk: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

Academic Resources

- UTEP Library: Access a wide range of resources including online, full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- University Writing Center (UWC): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- Math Tutoring Center (MaRCS): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- History Tutoring Center (HTC): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- RefWorks: A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and Fact Sheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources

- Military Student Success Center: Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- Center for Accommodations and Support Services: Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.

Counseling and Psychological Services: Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

Course Schedule

Note: This is a provisional schedule of our course. With advanced notice, I may introduce specific changes based on progress in class.	
1/21	**Course Introduction** Go over syllabus, schedule, and key requirements *Begin general discussion on American institutions and policy processes
1/28	**Presidential Power amid Institutional Constraints** *Reading Material*: Neustadt, R.E. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*. New York: Free Press, Chs. 1 & 3. Howell, W.G. 2006. "Power Without Persuasion: Rethinking Foundations of Executive Influence," In *Readings in Presidential Politics,* G.C. Edwards III. Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth, Ch. 4.
2/4	**Management of the Institutional Presidency** *Reading Material*: Pfiffner, J.P. 1999. "Can the President Manage the Government?" In *The Managerial Presidency*, J.P Pfiffner (ed.). College Station: Texas A&M University Press: 3-20. Vaughn, J.S., and Villalobos, J.D. 2010. "White House Staff," In *New Directions in the American Presidency*, L.C. Han (ed.). New York: Routledge, 120-135.
2/11	**The Presidency & the Electoral College** *Reading Material*: Slonim, S. 1986. "The Electoral College at Philadelphia: The Evolution of an Ad Hoc Congress for the Selection of a President," *The Journal of American History* 73 (1): 35-58. Edwards, G.C. III. 2004. "The Electoral College and Political Equality," In *Why the Electoral College is Bad for America*, G.C. Edwards III (ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 31-54.
2/18	**Congress: Playing Partisan Politics & Making Law** *Reading Material*: Cox, G.W., and McCubbins, M.D. 2002. "Agenda Power in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1877-1986." In *Parties, Procedure, and Policy: Essays on the History of Congress*, Brady, D.W., and McCubbins, M.D. (eds.). Stanford University Press. Jones, C.O. 2005. "Making Laws," In *The Presidency in a Separated System*, C.O. Jones (ed.). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press: 254-283. (Part I)

2/25	**Congress: Playing Partisan Politics & Making Law (Continued)** *Reading Material*: Krehbiel, K. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23 (2): 235-266. Jones, C.O. 2005. "Making Laws," In *The Presidency in a Separated System,* C.O. Jones (ed.). Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press: 284-338. (Part II) *Midterm Exam instructions provided and Midterm Exam Distributed – Due 3/4 via email by no later than 11:59pm midnight (MT)
3/4	**Midterm Essay Exam (NO CLASS)** Work on Midterm Essay Exam *Due 3/4 via email by no later than 11:59pm midnight (MT)
3/11	**NO CLASS – Spring Break**
3/18	**The Judiciary: Institutional Appointments and Policy Making** *Reading Material*: Moraski, B.J., and Shipan, C.R. 1999. "The Politics of Supreme Court Nominations: A Theory of Institutional Constraints and Choices," *American Journal of Political Science* 43 (4): 1069-1095. Segal, J.A., Spaeth, H.J., and Benesh, S.C. 2005. "Judicial Policy Making," In *The Supreme in the American Legal System,* J.A. Segal, H.J. Spaeth, and S.C. Benesh. New York: Cambridge University Press: 3-18.
3/25	**Congress & the Presidency: Allegiance and Rivalry** *Reading Material*: Edwards, G.C. III. 2000. "Building Coalitions," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 30 (1): 47-78. Brady, D.W., and Volden, C. 2006. "The Origins of Revolving Gridlock," In *Revolving Gridlock: Politics and Policy from Jimmy Carter to George W. Bush,* D.W. Brady and C. Volden. Boulder, CO: Westview Press: 1-11.
4/1	**NO CLASS – Southwestern Political Science Association Pre-Conference and Conference** *Assignment: Work on the class projects
4/8	**Congress & the Presidency: Allegiance and Rivalry (Continued)** *Reading Material*: Mayhew, D.R. 1991. "High-Publicity Investigations," In *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-1990,* D.R. Mayhew. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: 8-33. Fisher, L. 2000. "War Powers after World War II," In *Congressional Abdication on War & Spending,* L. Fisher. College Station: Texas

	A&M Press: 34-73.
4/15	**The "Fourth Branch" of Institutional Government** *Reading Material*: Cook, B.J. 1996. "Public Administration as Instrument and Institution," In *Bureaucracy and Self-Government: Reconsidering the Role of Public Administration in American Politics*, B.J. Cook. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press: 1-23. Meier, K.J., and O'Toole, L.J. 2006. "Governance and the Bureaucracy Problem," In *Bureaucracy in a Democratic State: A Governance Perspective*, K.J. Meier, and L.J. O'Toole. Johns Hopkins University Press: 1-20.
4/22	**"Fifth Branch"? The Institutionalized Media & its Political Influence** *Reading Material*: Callaghan, K., and Schnell, F. 2001. "Assessing the Democratic Debate: How the News Media Frame Elite Policy Discourse," *Political Communication* 18: 183-212. Xenos, M.A. and Becker, A.B. 2009. "Moments of Zen: Effects of the Daily Show on Information Seeking and Political Learning," *Political Communication* 26(3): 317-332.
4/29	**Class Projects Sharing & Discussion Session**
5/6	**Final Essay Exam** *Instructions provided and Final Essay Exam Distributed – Due on 5/13 **All Class Projects Final Due
5/13	**FINAL EXAM** 7pm to 9:45pm (same room – Quinn Hall #203) *Turn in via email by no later than 5/13 @ 11:59pm (MT)