
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO
Political Science 5315: Seminar in American Institutions and Processes
Spring 2018

Instructor: Dr. José D. Villalobos
Office: Benedict Hall 306
Phone: (915) 747-7978
E-mail: jdvillalobos2@utep.edu

Course Registration Number: 28415
Classroom: Benedict 205 (Cook)
Date/Time: Wednesdays 6-8:50pm

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

Course Overview

This course 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. 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 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

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 25% of the final grade, as well as a project presentation worth 15% of the final grade. In addition, in-class attendance and participation will count for 20% of the final grade such that one must attend and participate with weekly talking point submissions for class discussions to earn an “A” or “B” grade at minimum. Participation will be based largely on in-class discussions derived from weekly talking points.

Grading/Exams	
In-Class Attendance/Weekly Talking Points	20%
Class Project Presentation	15%
Class Project Paper	25%
Midterm Essay Exam	20%
Final 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

- In-class attendance and participation with weekly talking point submissions for 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 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.

Class Project Paper

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

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.

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>	
1/17	<p>Introduction Syllabus and class introduction <i>Reading Material:</i> March, J.G., and Olsen, J.P. 1984. "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," <i>American Political Science Review</i> 78 (3): 734-749.</p>
1/24	<p>Presidential Power amid Institutional Constraints <i>Reading Material:</i> Neustadt, R.E. 1990. <i>Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents</i>. New York: Free Press, Chs. 1 & 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>
1/31	<p>Management of the Institutional Presidency <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&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>
2/7	<p>The Presidency & the Electoral College <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>
2/14	<p>Congress: Playing Partisan Politics & Making Law <i>Reading Material:</i> 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. 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>

2/21	<p>Congress: Playing Partisan Politics & Making Law (Continued) <i>Reading Material:</i> Krehbiel, K. 1993. "Where's the Party?" <i>British Journal of Political Science</i> 23 (2): 235-266. 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) *Midterm Essay Exam Distributed – Due 2/28 by no later than midnight (MT)</p>
2/28	*Midterm Essay Exams – Due by midnight (MT)
3/7	<p>The Judiciary: Institutional Appointments and Policy Making <i>Reading Material:</i> 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. 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. *Paper proposals due in class (with topic, abstract and reference list)</p>
3/14	Spring Break – No Class
3/21	<p>Congress & the Presidency: Allegiance and Rivalry <i>Reading Material:</i> Edwards, G.C. III. 2000. "Building Coalitions," <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 30 (1): 47-78. 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>
3/28	<p>Congress & the Presidency: Allegiance and Rivalry (Continued) <i>Reading Material:</i> Mayhew, D.R. 1991. "High-Publicity Investigations," In <i>Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-1990</i>, D.R. Mayhew. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press: 8-33. Fisher, L. 2000. "War Powers after World War II," In <i>Congressional Abdication on War & Spending</i>, L. Fisher. College Station: Texas A&M Press: 34-73.</p>
4/4	<p>The "Fourth Branch" of Institutional Government <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>
4/11	<p>Congress & the Bureaucracy: Control and Oversight</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>
4/18	<p>"Fifth Branch"? The Institutionalized Media & its Political Influence</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>
4/25	<p>Paper Project Presentations</p> <p>Individual student presentations and discussion</p>
5/2	<p>Class Paper Projects Due Date</p> <p>*Turn in via email by no later than midnight (MT)</p> <p>Final Exam – handouts and instructions</p>
TBA	<p>FINAL EXAM – Due Date</p> <p>*Turn in via email by no later than midnight (MT)</p>