

Meetings

Wednesdays

Room: LART 222

1:30 – 2:50 pm

Professor: Dr. Melissa Baker

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Office: Benedict 301

Office Hours: Wednesday 12-1pm and by appointment

Course Description

A survey of contemporary American, national, state, and local political processes and institutions, with emphasis on the United States and Texas.

This course is designed to serve as an introduction to the political institutions, systems, and processes of the United States. The first half of the course is focused on how political institutions are structured, how they function, and how they have and might evolve. The second half of the course is focused on the electorate, or the people, within the political process including public opinion in politics, voting behavior, and the role of media in politics.

In addition to the broad survey of topics in the lectures and textbooks, weekly activities and podcasts will provide students with an in-depth look at one aspect of the topic. For example, bureaucracy week will include an in-depth look at a bureaucratic institution (the National Institutes of Health) and mass media week will include an in-depth look at the role of social media influencers in political campaigns.

As this is a hybrid course, we will meet once a week (most weeks) and the other 50% of “class time” will be asynchronous activities with a mix of prerecorded lectures, listening to and reflecting on podcasts, and other weekly activities. A tentative course calendar is provided below but is subject to changes.

Textbooks: Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M Berry, Jerry Goldman, Deborah Schildkraut, and Paul Manna. *The Challenge of Democracy: American Government in Global Politics, 15th Edition.* United States, Cengage, 2022.

Kernell, Samuel and Steven S. Smith *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings, 7th Edition.* United States, Sage, 2017.

Evaluation: The final grade will be based on the following:

1. *Quizzes (20%)*. There will be six quizzes over key terms, scheduled roughly every two weeks. Quizzes will be due at 11:59pm on the Sunday after the class it is listed with. These quizzes are meant to be an additional study guide for the midterm and final exams. There will also be a 'Quiz 0' during week 1 that is a syllabus quiz.
2. *Reflections (Activities and Podcasts) (20%)*. Every week there will be 1-2 short reflections due that focus on assigned activities and podcasts. Instructions for each will be posted on Blackboard. These reflections are meant to practice writing about class concepts and to think deeper about class topics.
3. A *Midterm (30%)* and a *Final Exam (30%)*.
 - No collaboration is permitted during the exams.

Extra Credit: Students may complete up to 2 SONA credits to apply to their overall grade. Each credit will be worth its percentage value (e.g., 1 SONA credit = 1% grade bump, meaning an 89% would be increased to a 90%). Instructions on registering for SONA and completing studies will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Policies: This course adheres to policies and procedures that apply to all UTEP courses with regard to accommodations and academic misconduct (individual statements can be found at the end of this document). There is a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism and cheating. All work is expected to be your own, no unoriginal work or work generated by AI will be accepted. For any accommodations related to disability or religious observation, with or without documentation, please speak with the instructor. The Center for Accommodations and Support Services can be reached at cass@utep.edu. More information on UTEP's academic integrity policy can be found in the handbook of operating procedures. To demonstrate you understand these policies, please email the professor what your walk-up song would be if you were in the MLB.

In addition:

- class attendance is expected
- students are expected to come to class on time and ready to participate (having done the readings listed for that day)
- make-up exams will only be offered in justified, special circumstances.

Student Resources: The university provides a range of academic, counseling, medical and administrative student resources and support services. To learn more, please review the resources document on Blackboard.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives:

Goals	Objectives	Assessments
1. Students will have knowledge of questions, theories, and findings about American politics from political science	(a) Students will understand key political terms (b) Students will be able to communicate the importance of political science terms and concepts	Reflections Quizzes Exams
2. Students will be able to apply political science terms and concepts to American politics	(a) Students will be able to explain the structure and process of political institutions (b) Students will be able to understand how to use existing information to make informed predictions about politics (c) Students will be able to critically evaluate political processes	Reflections Exams
3. Students will be able to use modern tools and resources to better understand politics	(a) Students will be able to evaluate credibility of sources (b) Students will be able to gather information about politics through podcasts, social media, and other modern tools	Reflections

Tentative Course Schedule: The tentative course schedule is detailed in the table below.

In the event of a class cancellation, students are expected to continue with readings as originally scheduled. Any assignments scheduled are due at the next class unless other instructions are posted on the course website or otherwise communicated.

Disclaimer: The schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, and/or to ensure better student learning.

Tentative Course Schedule (Subject to Change as Semester Progresses):

Day	Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments	Quiz
01/17	1	Democratic Values	Janda Ch. 1		#0
01/24	2	Models of Democracy	Janda Ch. 3 Kernell 2.1, 2.2, 2.3	Activity: Modern Federalist No. 10 Podcast: Starter Kit: Checks and Balances	
01/31	3	Federalism	Janda Ch. 4 Kernell 3.1, 3.2	Game: Race to Ratify Podcast: Starter Kit: Federalism	#1
02/07	4	Congress	Janda Ch. 11 Kernell 6.1, 6.2, 6.3	Game: People's Pie Podcast: The Fate of the Filibuster	
02/14	5	Presidency	Janda Ch. 12 Kernell 7.1, 7.2, 7.3	Podcast: The President and the 25th Amendment	#2
02/21	6	Bureaucracy	Janda Ch. 13 Kernell 8.1, 8.2	Podcast: What's Up With The U.S. Space Force? Podcast: National Institutes of Health (NIH)	
02/28	7	Courts	Janda Ch. 14 Kernell 9.1, 9.2, 9.3	Podcast: Citizens United	#3
03/06	8	MIDTERM EXAM			
03/13	9	SPRING BREAK			

Day	Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments	Quiz
03/20	10	Interest Groups	Janda Ch. 10 Kernell 1.1, 13.1, 13.2	Podcast: <u>How Donor Opinion Distorts American Parties</u> Podcast: <u>How Labor Unions Impact Inequality</u>	
03/27	11	Political Parties	Janda Ch. 8 Kernell 12.1, 12.2, 12.3	Activity: <u>Perception Gap quiz</u> Podcast: <u>Mind the (Perception) Gap</u>	#4
04/03	12	Texas Government	Yoder (2020)	Game: <u>Run a Texas county government</u>	
04/10	13	Mass Media	Janda Ch. 6 Kernell 14.1, 14.2	Podcast: <u>Digital Media Trends in American Political Campaigns</u> Podcast: <u>Connecting Social Media Influencers with Political Campaigns</u>	
04/17	14	Public Opinion	Janda Ch. 5 Kernell 10.1, 10.2, 10.3	Activity: <u>Believe comic</u> Podcast: <u>How Political Language is Engineered</u>	#5
04/24	15	Participation and Voting	Janda Ch. 7 Kernell 11.1, 11.3	Game: <u>Cast Your Vote</u> Podcast: <u>Why You Should Vote (Even When They Don't Want You To)</u>	
05/01	16	Elections and Campaigns	Janda Ch. 9 Kernell 11.2, 11.4	Activity: <u>Gerrymandering and Texas map</u> Podcast: <u>Primaries and Caucuses</u>	#6
05/08	17	FINAL EXAM			