

Professor: Dr. Melissa Baker

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Office: Benedict 301

Office Hours (in-person): Thursday 3-4pm and by appointment

Office Hours (zoom): 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 an online course, "class time" will be asynchronous lectures (prerecorded), listening to and reflecting on podcasts, and other weekly activities. A tentative course calendar is provided below but is subject to changes. You should expect to listen to a recorded lecture every week unless otherwise announced by the instructor on Blackboard.

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.

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.

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

1. *Quizzes (20%)*. There will be six (online) quizzes over key terms, scheduled roughly every two weeks. Quizzes will be due at 11:59pm on the Monday after the week they are listed with in the course calendar. For example, Quiz 2 will be due by 11:59pm on September 30th. There will also be a 'Quiz 0' during week 1 that is a syllabus quiz.
2. *Reflections (Activities and Podcasts) (30%)*. 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 and how they apply to modern politics. Podcasts and outside activities are linked in the course schedule.
3. *Midterm (30%)*. For the midterm, each student will write a midterm exam for the course. The exam should include multiple choice questions, an answer key for multiple choice questions, and a short answer question with a response provided. Additionally, for each question, a page number or other indicator (e.g., podcast name) of where you got the information to create and answer each question will be required. Guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.
4. *Final Project (20%)*. The final project will be a Concept Assignment. The assignment will require you to explain a concept from the course to a general audience. More details and guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.

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).

In addition:

- 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. Academic misconduct will be reported.
- 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.
- Late work will not be accepted unless late submission has been cleared by the professor *before* the deadline
- To demonstrate you understand these policies, please email the professor what your walk-up song would be if you were in the MLB.

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.

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.

Day	Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments	Quiz
08/26	1	Democratic Values	Janda Ch. 1	Activity: Syllabus Annotation Assignment: Introduction Assignment	#0
09/02	2	Models of Democracy	Janda Ch. 3 Kernell 2.1, 2.2, 2.3	Activity: Modern Federalist No. 10 Podcast: <u>Starter Kit: Checks and Balances</u>	
09/09	3	Federalism	Janda Ch. 4 Kernell 3.1, 3.2	Game: <u>Race to Ratify</u> Podcast: <u>Starter Kit: Federalism</u>	#1
09/16	4	Congress	Janda Ch. 11 Kernell 6.1, 6.2, 6.3	Game: <u>People's Pie</u> Podcast: <u>The Fate of the Filibuster</u>	
09/23	5	Presidency	Janda Ch. 12 Kernell 7.1, 7.2, 7.3	Podcast: <u>The President and the 25th Amendment</u> Activity: Information Environment	#2
09/30	6	Bureaucracy	Janda Ch. 13 Kernell 8.1, 8.2	Podcast: <u>What's Up With The U.S. Space Force?</u> Podcast: <u>National Institutes of Health (NIH)</u>	
10/07	7	Courts	Janda Ch. 14 Kernell 9.1, 9.2, 9.3	Podcast: <u>Citizens United</u> Podcast: <u>How Donor Opinion Distorts American Parties</u>	#3
10/14	8	Interest Groups	Janda Ch. 10 Kernell 1.1, 13.1, 13.2	Podcast: <u>How Labor Unions Impact Inequality</u> Podcast: <u>Mind the (Perception) Gap</u>	
10/21	9	Political Parties	Janda Ch. 8 Kernell 12.1, 12.2, 12.3	Activity: <u>Perception Gap quiz</u> Activity: <u>Election Madness</u>	#4
10/28	10	Texas Government	Yoder (2020)	Game: <u>Run a Texas county government</u> Assignment: Midterm	
11/04	11	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>	
11/11	12	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
11/18	13	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>	
11/25	14	THANKSGIVING BREAK			
12/02	15	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
12/09	16	FINALS WEEK		Concept Assignment Due December 11th	