

POLI 2311 – AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

MWF: 10:30 – 11:20am in UGLC 126

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Rebecca Reid
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OFFICE: 307 Benedict Hall
OFFICE HOURS: MWF 11:30am-1:20 pm, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to the politics of the American system of government. The class will employ methods that are both traditional (lecture-based) and non-traditional (such as simulations and projects) to enable students to explore and analyze institutions and interactions between individuals throughout the American political system.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Over the course of the semester students will have:

- An understanding of the key elements of American politics, including the Constitution, federalism, civil rights, civil liberties, political participation (voting, interest groups, parties), institutions (Congress, the courts, the president), and public opinion.
- Become familiar with basic social science theories—for instance, that political actors are strategic in their pursuit of various personal and policy goals—and be able to apply theoretical perspectives to explain political behavior and processes
- Developed and enhanced the skills necessary to understand contemporary political problems as well will have learned to think critically about political issues and articulate arguments.
- Developed their own active citizenship skills.

REQUIRED READING

- Barbour, Christine, and Gerald Wright. 2014. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, Seventh Edition. CQPress.

RECOMMENDED READING

- Graham, Bob. 2010. *America, The Owner's Manual: Making Government Work for You*. Washington, DC: CQPress.
- Kernell, Samuel and Steven S. Smith, eds. 2013. *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classis and Contemporary Readings*, 5th Edition. Los Angeles: CQPress.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Evaluation in this course will be based on the following components:

Attendance/Participation in Class	10%
First Midterm Examination	15%
Second Midterm Examination	20%
Third Midterm Examination	25%
Final Examination	30%

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
59 and below	F

Examinations: There will be 4 examinations during the course, three midterms and a final. The exams are closed book. All exams are **cumulative** and will cover material learned in the class lectures and the assigned reading. As a general rule, **make up exams will NOT be offered**; although make up exams will be permitted only under the gravest of circumstances, and I reserve the right to determine whether a make up exam is offered to individuals based upon their situation and timely request, and I reserve the right to alter the questions for make up exams. **Grade challenges must be in written form and submitted within one week of taking the exam.**

Participation: At various points during the semester I will pass around a sign-up sheet to see who is attending class or will have sign-in sheets at the door which are to be signed upon entering class. If you are absent when these sheets are passed out or fail to sign in, you will receive no points for your participation score. I expect students to come to class prepared to intelligently discuss the material. I will rely on a modified Socratic method and classes will consist of a series of questions, which the students are expected to answer. Other times, I will choose specific individuals to answer questions. Students will be graded according to their willingness to participate and their responses. If you are absent from class when your name is called, you will receive no participation points. All quizzes, class assignments, and homework assignments will contribute to participation scores. **Late assignments will receive no credit.**

SPECIAL NEEDS

If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu, or visit their office located in UTEP Union East, Room 106. For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass. *CASS' Staff are the only individuals who can validate and if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.* Additionally, students with special needs **must** contact me in order to arrange appropriate accommodations.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. The University of Texas at El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence. In all matters of intellectual pursuit, UTEP faculty and students must strive to achieve excellence based on the quality of

work produced by the individual. In the classroom and in all other academic activities, students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any form of scholastic dishonesty is an affront to the pursuit of knowledge and jeopardizes the quality of the degree awarded to all graduates of UTEP. It is imperative, therefore, that the members of this academic community understand the regulations pertaining to academic integrity and that all faculty insist on adherence to these standards.

Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts. Proven violations of the detailed regulations, as printed in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) and available in the Office of the Dean of Students and the homepage of The Dean of Students at www.utep.edu/dos, may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing a grade on the work in question, to a failing grade in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. You will be held responsible for all material covered in the textbooks, articles, videos, and the class discussions. If you miss a class, you are still responsible for the content of that day's information. I will not tolerate disruptive behavior, including (but not limited to) reading newspapers, talking during lectures, using cell phones or pagers, and disrespecting classmates or the instructor. Additionally, I expect all students to attend class prepared and to show up on time. It is disrespectful to the instructor and the other students when individuals show up late or are not prepared to participate in the class discussion. I allow the use of laptops for note-taking purposes only; however, should laptop usage become disruptive, I reserve the right to prohibit laptops and other electronic devices.

This class is designed to provide information and challenge students with new, sometimes controversial, ideas, and arguments. This class is designed to be a safe, open environment to express ideas, arguments, and opinions for learning purposes. This class is designed to initiate an open discussion based upon the required readings, encourage critical thinking and application to current events, and enable students to digest difficult material through these discussions. This class DOES NOT give you knowledge—i.e. knowledge and understanding is not transfused to students by simply sitting in class. **Learning is an interactive process and one that is the primary responsibility of each student.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a list of topics to be covered at each class meeting, and the readings which should be completed in order to fully participate in class that day. I ***require*** you to read the material prior to the class since you will be expected to participate in the discussion. Articles will be provided in Blackboard whenever possible. Exam material will consist of assigned readings and information covered during assignments and the class discussion. Finally, while I give specific days on which certain topics will be discussed, the calendar is subject to change. Any alterations to the course schedule will be clearly announced. (As a general rule the course will follow this order of topics, regardless of date changes, unless otherwise announced.)

January	20	Distribute Syllabus and Introduction
	22	Politics: Who Gets What, and How? <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 1 (pp 1-30)
	25	The Logic of American Politics (Chapter 1 continued)
	27	American Citizens and Political Culture <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 2 (pp 31-60)
	29	Politics of the American Founding <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 3 (pp 61-90)
February	1	Federalism and the U.S. Constitution <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 4 (pp 91-130)
	3	The Constitution (Chapter 4 continued)
	5	Federalism (Chapter 4 continued)
	8	Review for Midterm I
	10	Midterm Exam I
	12	Fundamental American Liberties <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 5 (pp 131-178)
	15	Civil Liberties (Chapter 5 continued)
	17	No Class
	19	The Struggle for Equal Rights <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 6 (pp 179-230)
	22	Civil Rights (Chapter 6 continued)
	24	Review Midterm II
	26	Midterm Exam II

	29	Congress <i>Readings: Barbour and Wright Chapter 7 (pp 231-278)</i>
March	2	Congress (Chapter 7 continued)
	4	The Presidency <i>Readings: Barbour and Wright Chapter 8 (pp 279-322)</i>
	7-11	Spring Break (NO CLASSES)
	14	The Presidency (Chapter 8 continued)
	16	The Bureaucracy <i>Readings: Barbour and Wright Chapter 9 (pp 323-358)</i>
	18	The Bureaucracy (Chapter 9 continued)
	21	The American Legal System and the Courts <i>Readings: Barbour and Wright Chapter 10 (pp 359-396)</i>
	23	The Federal Judiciary (Chapter 10 continued)
	25	No class
	28	Review Midterm III
	30	Midterm Exam III
April	1	Public Opinion <i>Readings: Barbour and Wright Chapter 11 (pp 397-432)</i>
	4	Public Opinion (Chapter 11 continued)
	6	NO CLASS (MPSA)—subject to change
	8	NO CLASS (MPSA)
	11	NO CLASS (MPSA)—subject to change
	13	Political Parties

		<i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 12 (pp 433-470)
	15	Political Parties (Chapter 12 continued)
	18	Interest Groups <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 13 (pp 471-508)
	20	Interest Groups (Chapter 13 continued)
	22	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 14 (pp 509-552)
	25	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections (Chapter 14 continued)
	27	The Media <i>Readings:</i> Barbour and Wright Chapter 13 (pp 553-590)
	29	The Media (Chapter 13 continued)
May	2	Texas Politics
	4	Texas Politics
	6	Review for Final Exam (Last Day of Class)
	9-13	Final Exam Week