Seminar in American Institutions and Process – POLS 5315
Department of Political Science
University of Texas at El Paso
Thursday, 6:00pm-8:50pm, 205 Benedict Hall
Syllabus – Spring 2015

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Office Hours: Thursday 4-6pm

Course Description:
This is a graduate seminar designed as an introduction to American political institutions. This is not a class about how government should work or theories about how government should work. We will examine various institutions of government and how they interact.

Required Texts:

Required Readings
Other readings (unless otherwise noted) are can be accessed from JSTOR or Heinonline. Access is free on UTEP campus or at home via proxy.

Evaluation
This is a graduate seminar, and as such, will only be as successful as the preparation of its participants. You are expected to do all the readings for the week before our class meeting on Tuesdays to facilitate a discussion from all participants involved.

Weekly reaction papers: 30% total
Final exam: 50%
Participation: 20%

Reaction Papers: Each week, beginning Week 2, you are responsible for turning in a reaction paper. These are to be no more than 1 page, single spaced, at 12pt. font. They are due at 5pm the day BEFORE class (5pm on Wednesday). No late papers accepted. Please email me these assignments as an attachment. The purpose of these papers is to teach to how to develop a single argument in a concise, articulate fashion. Content wise, this assignment if pretty flexible. They can be an alternative research idea, different explanation than what is claimed, a critique of the theory work, or other such reactions. They need to concern the readings of the week, and the best papers will address one issue or question from the current readings, as well as connect them to previous readings. The reason they are due the day before our class meeting is so they will allow me to structure the class, steering the discussion to what each of you found interesting. Understand, these papers are NOT summaries of the readings. They should critically engage the readings.

Academic Honesty and Integrity:
Per UTEP policy: 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.
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.*

Week 1. Jan. 22
Introductions
No Readings

Week 2. Jan. 29
Foundational Theories of American Politics
Dahl All

Week 3. Feb. 5
Why Institutions? Formal and Informal Institutions
North All

Week 4. Feb. 12
Institutional Birth – The Party System in America
Aldrich - All

Week 5. Feb 19.
Interest Groups
Olson All

Week 6. Feb 26
Congress
Cox and McCubbins All

Week 7. March 5
Congress, cont
Krehbiel All

Week 8. March 19
Presidency
Neustadt All

Week 9. March 26
Presidency, cont
Peterson All
Week 10. April 9
Bureaucracy


Week 11. April 16
Judicial Selection
Collins and Ringhand All

Week 12 April 23
Judicial Behavior
Maltzman all

Week 13 April 30
Media – Finals Distributed


**Week 14. May 7**
**No Class**

**Final Exam Due Thursday, May 14th by 9:00 pm.**