

American Government & Politics

Spring 2019

Department of Political Science

University of Texas at El Paso

POLS - 2311

Instructor – Dr. Todd A. Curry

Lecture – T/Th 10:30am-11:50am – ULC - 116

Office – Benedict Hall 304

Office Hours – Noon-1pm T/Th

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Overview

This course is intended to be an introductory survey in the American National Government. To this end, we will cover basic theories and principles of government, the institutions of government in the American context, and some of the issues that are current to the day. Students are expected to complete this course with an understanding of the general concepts of American democracy and the way in which the branches of government interact and generate policy.

Catalog Description

A survey of contemporary American, national, state, and local political processes and institutions, with emphasis upon the Constitutions of the United States and Texas. This course meets teacher certification requirements for out-of-state graduate students.

Course Objectives

Students can expect to learn the following by the end of this course:

- 1) to understand the underlying constitutional principles upon which the American system of government is established
- 2) to define and understand concepts central to the study of American national government
- 3) to grasp the interplay of the country's formal institutions and structures
- 4) to place current trends and events into the greater governmental and historical context

UTEP Edge

The UTEP Edge is our philosophy that acknowledges the many assets our students bring to the University. We provide a variety of high-impact experiences both in and out of the classroom through work of our faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners that build on these assets and talents. Many of the assignments and discussions in this class will further develop the talents you bring to this class such as developing your communication skills, teamwork, critical thinking, and problem solving. Students will:

- 1) increase their awareness of their community and a larger public context
- 2) identify their role in society and their interest in contributing to a social purpose

3) strengthen their academic performance by engaging in critical thinking and problem-solving

Text

O'Connor, Karen et al. *Revel American Government: Roots and Reform – 2016 Presidential Election, 13e*. Pearson – ISBN-13: 9780134649375

Gibson, Tucker L. et al. *Revel Government and Politics in the Lone Star State, 10e*. Pearson ISBN-13: 9780134628073

Grading

20% - Attendance and Participation

20% - First Exam

20% - Second Exam

20% - Third Exam

20% - Fourth Exam

Policies

Attendance and participation in class will count for the substantial portion of your grade; therefore I expect considerable effort to go into it. This class will exclusively be taught in a lecture format. Students are encouraged to ask questions regarding the materials or current political events. On top of this, you are allowed three absences before I start dropping your attendance grade by 1 percentage point per absence. If attendance becomes a problem I reserve the right to use surprise quizzes to supplement my grading scheme.

Attendance will be taken through a sign-in sheet. It will be available the first 10 minutes of class. It is your responsibility to sign in during this time, if you do not, I will not allow you to sign in after class. It delays leaving the classroom, which is unfair to the individuals coming in after us. Do not sign in for other students: I will submit students that do to the Office of Student Conduct which can result in a 0 for your attendance grade.

Information for the students will be communicated in two ways 1. In class; 2. Through email. The only email address I will use to contact you is your official “utep.edu” account. This means as a requirement of this course you will need to regularly check this account if you do not already. “I did not receive notification,” is not a valid excuse.

Laptops will be banned from the classroom. I will be posting my powerpoint slides (I do not teach from notes) on dropbox the day before class. I hope students will print these out, bring them to class, and take notes in the margin to facilitate better studying habits.

Grading Scale:

The following numerical averages translate into final course grades:

90+: A (4.0)

80-89: B (3.0)

70-79: C (2.0)

60-69: D (1.0)

-60: F (0.0)

Exams

The exams will consist of 50 multiple choice questions, each worth two points. Much of the material on the exams is delivered in class; however, some material from the readings not covered in class is tested on the exams as well. The exam schedule follows:

Exam 1 – February 19

Exam 2 – March 14

Exam 3 – April 11

Exam 4 – May 16 – 10:00am – 12:45pm

Make-Up Exams

It is completely the student's responsibility to take the exams when they are scheduled. As a general rule, make-up exams **will not be** allowed; thus, a missed exam counts as a zero (0) toward the final course grade. Notwithstanding, at the instructor's sole discretion make-ups will be permitted, but only the gravest of reasons will be accepted, **if** documented in writing by the proper authority. Even if there is an acceptable reason for missing the regularly scheduled exam, permission to take a make-up will be granted **only** if the student provides the professor with prompt and proper notification; that is, the student **must** inform the professor of the reason for missing the exam with proper documentation **before** the exam takes place, **and** the reason must be acceptable to the instructor. If a make-up is permitted, both the format and questions can, and likely will, be different from the regularly scheduled exam.

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.*

Course Outline

Theme One – Constitutional Foundations of the U.S. Government

January 22 – Discuss syllabus and course schedule, Chp 1

January 24 - Continue Chp 1

January 29 – Chp 2 – The Constitution

January 31 - Chp 2 - Continued

February 5 – Chp 3 – Federalism

February 7 – Chp 3 – Continued

February 12 – Chp 4 – Civil Liberties

February 14 – Chp 5 – Civil Rights

February 19 – Exam 1

Theme Two - Institutions of Government

February 21 – Chp 6 – Congress

February 26 – Chp – Continued

February 28 – Chp 7 - The Presidency

March 5 – Chp 8 – Bureaucracy

March 7 – Chp 9 – Judiciary

March 12 – Chp 9 – Continued

March 14 - Exam 2

Theme Three – Political Behavior/Public Policy

March 26 – Chp 12 – Elections and Voting

March 28 – Chp 13 – Media and the current context

April 2 – Chp 10 - Public Opinion

April 4 – Chp 10 – Continued

April 9 – Chp 11 – Political Parties

April 11 - Exam 3

Theme Four - Texas Government

April 16 – Chp 2 - The Texas Constitution

April 18 – Chp 5 - The Texas Legislature

April 23 - Chp 6 – The Texas Executive

April 25 – Chp 7 – The Texas Bureaucracy and Policy Implementation

April 30 – Chp 8 - The Texas Judiciary

May 2 – Chp 10 – The Texas Party System

May 7 – Chp 13 – Interest Groups and Political Power in Texas

May 9 – Voluntary Review Session

May 16 – 10:00am – 12:45pm - Final Exam