

POLS 2311: American Government and Politics (live) Syllabus and Schedule/Calendar

CRN: 23631, Section 23

Spring 2023 (16-week live class from January 17 through May 12, 2023)

Class Time/Location: Monday/Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 10:20 a.m. in Room 216, Undergraduate Learning Center, UTEP

Professor: William Corbett, MPA, J.D.

Office Hours Live in Benedict Hall, Room 106, on Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and by appointment

Email: wjcorbett@utep.edu I will endeavor to return your email by the next business day—include your course and section numbers.

Telephone: (575) 522-1372 with voicemail. If you leave a message, provide your name, course and section number; and slowly repeat your telephone number twice. There is no text messaging. I will endeavor to return your email by the next business day.

COURSE INFORMATION: What this class is about and what we will do

COURSE DESCRIPTION

POLS 2311 Catalog Entry: American Government and Politics: [Common Course Number GOVT 2301] 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. Prerequisite: Freshman standing.

This course provides a broad overview of American (U.S.) politics and introduces students to Texas politics. The United States of America is governed under a Constitution that has operated without fundamental change for more than 230 years. This makes the government of the United States one of the most stable and long lasting in human history, and indeed the very first system of popular government covering a large territory to last for a long time. The people who created that government did so very carefully in the belief that good government does not mean simply popular government or well-intentioned government. This course is about a complex structure: what the institutions of government were designed to do, why, and how the people use them to go about managing their community.

I know that most of you are not majoring in Political Science and that many of you would not be taking this class were it not mandated by state law. My goal is to make this class worthwhile for you, the future leaders of the United States and Texas (or our neighbors in Mexico). I hope that by the end of the semester (or at least some day in the future) you will value your experience in this class!

Prerequisites: None.

COURSE OBJECTIVES OR EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. the constitutional principles on which the United States was founded;
2. the three branches of the federal government and the national bureaucracy;
3. the origins and evolution of civil rights and liberties;
4. the electoral and party system;
5. the role of interest groups and the media; and
6. the Constitution and political institutions of the State of Texas.

These learning outcomes are most closely related to the social responsibility goal of the UTEP Edge.

BLACKBOARD

Although our course is 100% live, you will submit your two graded assignment via Blackboard in .pdf format; you will not give hard copies to your professor. You will also take your exams in class online. In addition, the syllabus, schedule, review sheet, and your grades will be uploaded into Blackboard.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Bianco, Michael T., and David T. Canon, *American Politics Today*, 7th Essentials Edition (2021) W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY. ISBN: 978-0-393-42768-4 (paperback)

In addition, spend 15 minutes online daily to review national and Texas political news.

COURSE ORGANIZATION, ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Course Organization and Management

Our course is organized by week, with each week covering a new topic concerning Texas or American national government. Exams are conducted during class time and assignments are submitted via Blackboard. **Each student must have successfully downloaded UTEP's Respondus to their laptop to take the exams in class during class meeting time for each exam.**

Each student needs to be prepared to come to each class (except exam days) with at least three current political news items—these are not submitted to the instructor but presented orally by students called up. Other students may ask questions regarding the topics presented. Avoid crime stories unless they are or of national significance. This will take 5 to 15 minutes each class.

Time permitting, a brief question-and-answer review of the previous class material may be conducted in class.

Then, the class lecture of the week's topic will be conducted for the balance of the class time.

Attendance

The class begins and ends at its schedule times. Significant exam material may be provided by guest speakers and in class lecture, which includes material that is not in the textbooks.

Class attendance, while not part of the student's grade, is vital to success in this course. However, extra credit may be given, per the extra credit guidelines for class attendance. Attendance is also tracked for administrative purposes. Students are expected, by UTEP and the instructor, to attend every class during the semester except for extraordinary circumstances.

Classroom Guidelines

1. Complete Assignments Timely: I ask that students complete the required readings prior to the class that the material is discussed, that students submit their papers on time, and that students not miss exams. It is best to read one week ahead.

2. Maintain a Conducive Learning Environment: I require that students do nothing to disrupt the class. Please do not bring to class or use electronic devices, e.g., headphones, cell phones, IM, iPads, tablets, pagers, PDAs, iPods, etc., in the classroom. You may bring a mobile device only for use in taking notes, referring to the e-textbook, and for use on exam day, provided there is no web surfing, text messaging, or checking email.

Arrive on time for class, do not leave class early—absent medical emergency that you discuss with the instructor immediately after class, and do not enter the classroom if you are late (exception: exam days).

Do not conduct private conversations, use electronic devices (except for mobile devices only to take exams, to refer to an e-textbook, or to take notes—no internet use) in the classroom, including both before class begins and after class ends. When you arrive to class, please review your day's current political stories and our previous class lecture material so that we can begin each class with a current political topics discussion and, time permitting, a short question-and-answer review of the material from the last class.

Children, those not registered in the course, and pets (except UTEP-approved service animals) are not permitted in the classroom. Please address your instructor as "Professor" or "Mr. Corbett."

3. Do Not Engage in Academic Misconduct: Students may not cheat on exams, submit written work that is not their own, or keep examination material. Copying material from another source (printed material, electronic material, Internet, another student, etc.) without proper reference is academic misconduct. This and any other form of cheating, such as misconduct during a test,

looking at someone else's exam, allowing another student to copy your work, copying exams, etc., will result in a zero for that assignment or test and referral to the university's disciplinary system. Do not engage in plagiarism or submitting papers that are not 100% your own work product

Guidelines for Interaction: No one has all the answers and all of us have something important to contribute to the learning process. To foster development of a healthy class, I will expect you to conduct yourself in a professional, respectful, courteous manner in all your interactions throughout the course. You should welcome the open expression of opinions/attitudes/beliefs, embrace the legitimacy of respectful dissent, and value honest questioning. Comments should be relevant and constructive, and should you disagree with a fellow learner, please express that disagreement in a way that is neither confrontational nor demeaning. Respect the contributions of others.

GRADED ITEMS

Examinations

There will be three 50-question, closed-book exams that will consist of true-false and multiple-choice questions. Some exam questions are derived from the assigned readings and not covered in lecture. Reading the textbook and attending class is essential for success in this class. In addition, some exam questions are derived from material in the lecture not covered in the textbook. Please bring your laptop loaded with UTEP's version of Respondus to each exam. The exams are timed, and you won't be able to access the exams if you don't have Respondus installed. . You'll have up to 75 minutes to complete the exam—however, the exam automatically closes at the end of our class period.

Assignments: Courtroom Observation and Public Meeting Papers

There are two assignments, each worth 50 points. Assignments are to be uploaded to Blackboard on or before the due date; assignments uploaded late and on the first calendar day after the due date can get up to 50% credit; assignments uploaded thereafter will receive no credit.

Assignment 1: Public Meeting Paper

The best way to understand democracy and public policy making is to see our government in action. Each student is required to attend a regular Texas public meeting of a city council; school board, or county commission. A regular meeting in which the full legislative body is attending and voting is conducted or policy is debated is required. Seeing a public speaker give a presentation, a political rally, a committee meeting, or a special or working session is not a public meeting appropriate for this course.

Only if the public meetings are closed to the public due to Covid, may view a live video of the meeting from this semester. Contact the public entity you choose for details. **If the meetings are open to the public, you must attend in person and during our semester.**

Each student is to submit a four-page (no more, no less), typed report with an additional page as a cover sheet (listing the course, student name, date, and Public Meeting Paper). The four-page paper should detail the time and place of the meeting, how long you were there (at least one hour), who spoke, what the issues were, how the issues were resolved, and what your impressions of the meeting were.

Please use MS Word's default margins, double space your paper with at least three paragraphs per page, use page numbers (but not for the cover sheet), and use 12-point Times New Roman font. This assignment is worth 50 points. Please research and select which meeting you will attend during the first week of class, since meetings are not conducted each week. The public meeting paper is due during the final week of class but begin this assignment the first week of class. Save your paper in .pdf format, use page numbers 1-4 for the four pages of content—the cover page has no page number—page 1 begins with your discussion of the meeting, and give a word count. Provide exactly 4 full pages of content plus a cover sheet and use more than one paragraph per page. Save your paper in .pdf format. Upload your paper in Blackboard; do not email the paper to your instructor.

The deadline for the student papers is listed in the course schedule.

Assignment 2: Texas State District Court or Federal District Courtroom Observation

Paper: Criminal law is most meaningful when not viewed in the abstract. Each student is to attend Texas District Court or Federal District Court criminal proceedings anywhere in Texas. Save in .pdf format, provide exactly 4 full pages of content, use more than one paragraph per page, and use page numbers 1-4. In addition to these four pages, provide a cover sheet that does not have a page number. This assignment is worth 50 points. Submit a cover sheet and then exactly four full pages of text, no more, no less.

The observations could be part of a criminal trial, a motion to suppress, reduce bail, etc., arraignments, or sentencing hearings. You should spend at least two hours observing in state or federal district court observing criminal matters. Do not attend a civil matter—only criminal matters count for this assignment. **You must attend in person and during our semester.**

You will submit exactly four-pages (four full pages plus a cover sheet), double spaced, 12-pt. Times New Roman font, one-inch margin paper that details where you were, the dates and beginning and ending times of each of your observations, which court you observed, who the judge was, who the attorneys were (if you can find out), the names of the defendants, and what type of crime was at issue. Further, please detail what you saw, what was the outcome, and what reaction (impression) you had as to the proceedings. On the last page of your paper, provide three (3) paragraphs—one paragraph with your impressions of the court proceedings; one paragraph describing how courts contribute to the legal foundation of criminal justice; and one paragraph discussing the importance of due process in criminal proceedings.

Except for the additional cover sheet, number your pages of text (pages 1-4). Submit a cover sheet and then exactly four full pages of text, no more, no less. Please include a cover sheet (with your name, the course and section, the date, and Courtroom Observation Paper) with your paper.

Save your paper in .pdf format and upload your paper into Blackboard. Do not collaborate with anyone else in writing your paper. You are encouraged to attend court with a classmate or friend, but you may not collaborate on your papers.

The deadline for student papers is listed on the course schedule.

Assignment Observation Paper Grading Rubric (total possible points: 50 points per assignment for Assignment 1 and Assignment 2)

	Excellent (Points)	Satisfactory (Points)	Unsatisfactory (Points)
Asg 1 Attend a public legislative public meeting for at least 2 hours; Asg 2: Attend State or Federal District Criminal Courts for at least 2 hours;	15-20 Attended the correct court or public meeting for the requisite time and obtained sufficient relevant info	5-14 Did attend the correct court or the public meeting, but did not stay at least 2 hours or get sufficient info	0-4 Did not attend correct court or a public meeting
Content of Courtroom Observation or Public Meeting Paper	15-20 Very well-organized; clear presentation of events and impressions	5-14 Some problems with organization, presentation of events, and impressions	0-4 Poor organization; unclear presentation of events and impressions
Follow Syllabus Directions re Length and Format and Use Proper Grammar, Punctuation, etc.	8-10 All syllabus directions followed; grammar, punctuation, etc., have virtually no problems	5-7 Moderate problems re: following the syllabus directions and using appropriate grammar, etc.	0-4 Significantly failed to follow syllabus directions and use appropriate grammar, etc.

Course Grade. The course grade is based on three writing assignments and three exams.

GRADING POLICY: This course will NOT utilize a Fractional Grading System.

Grading Scale:

This course consists of a total of 250 points. Final course letter grades will be assigned on the basis of the total points earned, as follows:

Exam 1	50 points
Public Meeting Paper	50 points
Exam 2	50 points
Courtroom Observation Paper (state or federal court)	50 points
Exam 3	<u>50 points</u>
Total Possible Points	250 points

The grading scale is as follows:

224 – 250 pts. (90%-100%)	= A
199 – 223 pts. (80%-89%)	= B
174 – 198 pts. (70%-79%)	= C
149 – 173 pts. (60%-69%)	= D
0 – 148 pts. (0%-59%)	= F

An S grade is a grade satisfactory from the professor and is normally equivalent to the letter grade of C or higher. A course for which only CR, but no letter grade, is given and a course in which an S or PR grade is earned may be counted toward graduation but is not computed in the grade-point average. In computing the overall grade-point average, the total credits in which grades of A, B, C, D, or F have been assigned is divided into the total number of grade points earned.

Extra Credit: There are no individual extra credit or extra credit assignments for our course. However, **there is an extra credit possibility for the class as a group.** If 60% of the class attended every class up to Exam One, all in the class will received 8 extra credit points.

This will be repeated for the class attendance after Exam One up to the day of Exam Two and will be repeated for the class attendance after Exam Two up to the day of Exam Three.

Class attendance is vital to your success in our course. We'll not only study the "free rider" problem in political movements, but we'll experience it with our group class attendance or nonattendance.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Ensure your UTEP e-mail account is working and that you have access to the Web and a stable web browser. Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox are the best browsers for Blackboard; other browsers may cause complications. When having technical difficulties, update your browser, clear your cache, or try switching to another browser.

You will need to have access to a computer/laptop and scanner. You will need to download or update the following software: Microsoft Office and Adobe Acrobat Reader, Check that your computer hardware and software are up-to-date and able to access all parts of the course. You will need to bring a laptop to class on the exam days and **you will need to have UTEP's version of Respondus successfully loaded onto your laptop** so that you can take the exam in class on the exam days. There is no makeup for computer or Respondus issues on exam days.

If you do not have a word-processing software, you can download Word and other Microsoft Office programs (including Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook and more) for free via UTEP's Microsoft Office Portal. Click the following link for more information about [Microsoft Office365](#) and follow the instructions.

IMPORTANT: If you encounter technical difficulties beyond your scope of troubleshooting, please contact the UTEP [Help Desk](#) as they are trained specifically in

assisting with technological needs of students. Please do not contact me for this type of assistance. The HelpDesk is much better equipped than I am to assist you!

COURSE COMMUNICATION: How we stay in touch with each other.

Office Hours: Live in Benedict Hall, Room 301, on Mondays from 10:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., and via telephone (575) 522-1372 with voicemail, no text messaging, and via UTEP email anytime: include your name, course, section number, and item of concern in the email's subject line.

Communication Response Policy: I will do my best to provide to reply to emails and voicemails the next business day.

EXCUSED ABSENCES AND/OR COURSE DROP POLICY

It is the student's responsibility to drop or withdraw from the course. I do not drop nonattending or failing students.

MAKE-UP/LATE WORK (applies to making up assignments and exams; there is no provision for submitting graded work early)

Absent the listed documented emergencies and instructor approval, there are no makeups for the assignments and exams.

If a student has a truly exceptional circumstance or an "authorized absence," a makeup assignment or exam may be possible, at the instructor's discretion, provided the student notifies the instructor by email or in person before the relevant due date, makes up the work on the first day in which he or she is physically able, and the reason for the late submission is documented in writing, scanned, and emailed to the instructor with appropriate supporting documentation:

1. By the student in the event of the death of a parent, spouse, sibling, grandparent, or child, including the obituary.
2. By a doctor in the event of a student's medical emergency or hospitalization. Illnesses resulting in a request to submit late work or take a makeup exam not accompanied by a visit to the doctor or hospital would not be sufficient for a makeup opportunity. The dates of the medical disability must be included in the doctor's note.
3. By the appropriate university representative in the event of a mandatory university-sponsored activity.
4. By the student in the event of an instructor-approved truly exceptional, unpreventable, emergency.

Note: Job, travel, work conflicts, visiting, caring, or providing transportation for other people or pets, computer hardware or software problems, ISP problems, or caring for others are not exceptional circumstances that would allow a makeup quiz, test, or exam.

Any approved makeup assignment is to be upload the first day the student is able to attend class and any approved makeup exam is to be taken the first day the student returns to class.

At that time (or before), documentation regarding the absence must be provided to the instructor via hard copy or scanned email attachment in order to take, if approved, an exam or submit a written assignment. For medical or psychological documentation, the beginning and ending period in which a student was medically unable to participate in a 100% online course must be provided on letterhead by the licensed health care provider.

Examples of absences in which a makeup may be possible:

Attending a documented funeral of a family member (provide the obituary, memorial program, or prayer card and explain how the student is related to the decedent);
Visiting a doctor or hospital in the event of a medical emergency or hospitalization involving the student and documentation is provided;
Attending a mandatory university-sponsored activity and documentation is provided by the sponsor on letterhead; and
Extraordinary circumstances beyond a student's control if documented and approved by the instructor.

Examples of absences in which a makeup will not be possible:

Failure to provide documentation for an authorized makeup or not having the textbook;
Missing to fulfill a work, moving, vacation, or job commitment—even an unexpected one;
Missing to transport, supervise, visit, or care for someone, including family members and pets;
Missing due to a failure of transportation;
Missing for a permissible reason and failing to provide documentation immediately upon returning to class; and
Computer hardware, software, or ISP issues/problems.

If you are experiencing difficulties submitting your work through the course website, please contact the UTEP Help Desk.

INCOMPLETE GRADE POLICY

Incomplete grades may be requested only in exceptional circumstances after you have successfully completed at least half of the course requirements. However, I rarely grant incomplete grades and suggest that one drop or withdraw from the course instead of relying on obtaining an incomplete grade.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and auxiliary services to students, staff, faculty, job applicants, applicants for admissions, and other beneficiaries of University programs, services and activities with documented disabilities in order to provide them with equal opportunities to participate in programs, services, and activities in compliance with sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008. Reasonable accommodations will be made unless it is determined that doing so would cause undue hardship on the University. Students requesting an accommodation based on a disability must register with the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS). Contact the Center for Accommodations and

Support Services at 915-747-5148, email them at cass@utep.edu or apply for accommodations online via the [CASS portal](#).

COVID-19 Accommodations

Students are not permitted on campus when they have a positive COVID-19 test, exposure or symptoms. If you are not permitted on campus, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can arrange necessary and appropriate accommodations.

For classes with on-campus meetings: Students who are considered high risk according to CDC guidelines and/or those who live with individuals who are considered high risk may contact [Center for Accommodations and Support Services \(CASS\)](#) to discuss temporary accommodations for on-campus courses and activities.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

You must STAY AT HOME and REPORT if you (1) have been diagnosed with COVID-19, (2) are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, or (3) have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Reports should be made at screening.utep.edu. If you know of anyone who should report any of these three criteria, you should encourage them to report. If the individual cannot report, you can report on their behalf by sending an email to COVIDaction@utep.edu. I encourage, but UTEP does not require, students to wear a face mask in class, where social distancing is not possible.

SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism or submitting written work that is not the student's own or cheating on an exam is academic misconduct and violates scholastic integrity.

All suspected violations of academic integrity at UTEP must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please see the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures: Student Conduct and Discipline.

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of the UTEP Handbook of Operating Procedures. It includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cheating may involve copying from or providing information to another student, possessing unauthorized materials during a test, or falsifying research data on laboratory reports. Plagiarism occurs when someone intentionally or knowingly represents the words or ideas of another as one's own. Collusion involves collaborating with another person to commit any academically dishonest act. Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All suspected violations of academic integrity at The University of Texas at El Paso must be reported to the [Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution \(OSCCR\)](#) for possible disciplinary action. To learn more, please visit [HOOP: Student Conduct and Discipline](#).

CLASS RECORDINGS

The use of recordings during class is prohibited unless written consent provided by the instructor.

TEST PROCTORING

During an exam, one may not copy the work of another student, allow another student to copy your work, or possess or use materials or devices other your computer.

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT FOR COURSE MATERIALS

All materials used in this course are protected by copyright law. The course materials are only for the use of students currently enrolled in this course and only for the purpose of this course. They may not be further disseminated.

Course Resources: You can go for assistance

UTEP provides various student services and support:

Technology Resources

- Help Desk: Students experiencing technological challenges (email, Blackboard, software, etc.) can submit a ticket to the UTEP Helpdesk for assistance. Contact the Helpdesk via phone, email, chat, website, or in person if on campus.

Academic Resources

- UTEP Library: Access a wide range of resources including online full-text access to thousands of journals and eBooks plus reference service and librarian assistance for enrolled students.
- University Writing Center (UWC): Submit papers here for assistance with writing style and formatting, ask a tutor for help and explore other writing resources.
- Math Tutoring Center (MaRCS): Ask a tutor for help and explore other available math resources.
- History Tutoring Center (HTC): Receive assistance with writing history papers, get help from a tutor and explore other history resources.
- RefWorks: A bibliographic citation tool; check out the RefWorks tutorial and FactSheet and Quick-Start Guide.

Individual Resources

- Military Student Success Center: Assists personnel in any branch of service to reach their educational goals.
- Center for Accommodations and Support Services: Assists students with ADA-related accommodations for coursework, housing, and internships.
- Counseling and Psychological Services: Provides a variety of counseling services including individual, couples, and group sessions as well as career and disability assessments.

Schedule and Weekly Calendar POLS 2311, Spring 2023

(Professor reserves the right to modify the schedule; class notice will be given.)

Week of	Topic	Reading Assigned	Assignment and Exam and Assignment Due Dates; Notes
1/16	Class Introduction; Syllabus Review: Understanding American Politics	Chapter 1 in Bianco textbook; No class 1/16: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday	Each day students are to spend 15 minutes online following U.S. and TX political news for class discussion
1/23	The Constitution and the Founding	Chapter 2 in Bianco textbook; Appendix in Bianco textbook pp A6-A15	
1/30	Federalism	Chapter 3 in Bianco textbook	
2/6	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4 in Bianco textbook	
2/13	Civil Rights	Chapter 5 in Bianco textbook	
2/20	Texas Government	Class Lecture	2/22 Exam 1 in class with Respondus on your laptop (Chapter 1-5, Appendix, and Texas Government lecture)
2/27	Public Opinion and the Media; Political Parties	Chapters 6 and 7 in Bianco textbook	
3/6	Elections	Chapter 8 in Bianco textbook	3/8 Assignment #1 Due—Government Public Meeting
3/13	No class 3/13-3/17: Spring Break Holiday		
3/20	Congress	Chapter 10 in Bianco textbook	Note: we'll cover Chapter 10 before Chapter 9
3/27	Interest Groups	Chapter 9 in Bianco textbook; No class 3/31: Cesar Chavez	3/29 Exam 2 in class with Respondus on your laptop (Chapters 6-10)

		Holiday	
4/3	The Presidency	Chapter 11 in Bianco textbook	
4/10	The Bureaucracy	Chapter 12 in Bianco textbook	
4/17	The Courts	Chapter 13 in Bianco textbook	4/19 Assignment #2 Due—Texas State or Federal Criminal Courts
4/24	Economic and Social Policy	Chapter 14 in Bianco textbook	
5/1	Foreign Policy	Chapter 15 in Bianco textbook	
5/8	Final Exam Week	Take Exam 3	5/10 (Wednesday) Exam 3 in class with Respondus on your laptop from 10:00 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. (Chapters 11-15)