

**University of Texas at El Paso**  
**POLS 2311, Section 8, CRN 35964 – American Government and Politics**  
**Syllabus – Maymester 2017**

**I. Instructor Information**

**Instructor:** William J. Corbett, MPA, JD

**Email:** wcorbett@nmsu.edu

**Office Hrs:** By appointment only in classroom immediately following our class period

**Phone Messages:** 575-646-4352

(voicemail at the NMSU Dept. of Govt.)

**Class Time:** M-F. 8 am to 1 pm (5/15-5/26)

**Class Location:** Rm 106, Liberal Arts Bldg

**Instructor Biography**

I received a B.A. in Political Science and a MPA from the Pennsylvania State University. Following graduation I worked as a family law hearing officer for the Court of Common Pleas in Pennsylvania prior to working as a management consultant for the Alexander Proudfoot Company. I then obtained a J.D. degree from the University of Illinois and worked as a civil litigator in California for 13 years. Since 2001, I have been a college instructor in the areas of criminal justice, political science, and government. I teach at UTEP, NMSU, EPCC, and WNMU, as well as serve as a facilitator/mediator for civil litigation cases filed in the Third Judicial District of New Mexico.

**Contacting the Instructor**

Please use email to contact me instead of leaving telephone messages at NMSU (my physical office). You may email me at [wcorbett@nmsu.edu](mailto:wcorbett@nmsu.edu). In the subject line of the email, include the course, course number, section, your last name, and your first name. Office hours are conducted by appointment only, right before and right after class.

**II. Text and Materials**

**Required Textbook and Course Materials**

O'Connor, Karen, et al., *American Government: Roots and Reform: 2016 Presidential Election Edition* (Copyright 2018, 13th ed.) Pearson/Longman Publishers, New York, New York. ISBN-13: 978-0-134-64937-5

**III. Course Description, Objectives, and Prerequisites**

**Course Description:** POLS 2311 is an introductory study of American government and politics. The course surveys the basic concepts of the American national, state, and local government, the theory of democracy, the structure and function of political institutions, and contemporary issues and policies. The United States and Texas Constitutions are given particular emphasis.

**Course Objectives:** Upon satisfactory completion of this course, the American Government student will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of reading for background information, preparing for class using out-of-class time and listening for pertinent class material as presented by the instructor.
2. Express verbally or in writing an understanding of the vocabulary, political concepts and political values as pertains to the American political system.
3. Express verbally or in writing an understanding of the intellectual and political foundations of the American federal system.
4. Express verbally or in writing an understanding of the major components and structure of the American governmental system (executive, legislative and judiciary) and describe the processes which are used to govern our nation.
5. Express verbally and in writing an understanding of the political dynamics of parties, interest groups and the bureaucracy and the interaction of those institutions with the American governmental structure.
6. Express verbally or in writing an understanding of the political policies and outcomes based on the Bill of Rights, civil law, foreign and domestic policy, monetary policies, and public opinion.
7. Understand contemporary American national, state, and local political processes and institutions.
8. Understand the Constitutions of the United States and Texas.

Students may be evaluated using various techniques not limited to but may include testing and examinations, research papers, field research, and other written and electronic assignments.

**Prerequisites:** There are no prerequisites to this course.

#### **IV. Course Requirements**

##### **Course Structure**

Each student is required to complete the course homework, public meeting paper and reading before the beginning of the relevant class. Each student is expected to keep informed of current political events by viewing national news websites such as [www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com) or [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com), throughout the course on a daily (M-F) basis. Spending ten minutes per day on the news website and bringing three national political news stories to class suffices. Students must be prepared to give a short presentation on relevant current national, state or local political events at every class as well as a short presentation on a government public meeting later in the semester.

**Course Grading:** This political science course will consist of a total of 200 points as follows:

Exam 1	40 points
Exam 2	40 points
Exam 3	40 points
Exam 4	40 points
Public Meeting Paper	<u>40 points</u>
Total Course Points	200 points

The grading scale for the course:

<b>Points</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Grade</b>
180-200	90-100%	A
160-179	80-89%	B
140-159	70-79%	C
120-139	60-69%	D
0-119	0-59%	F

**S/U Grades:** Students taking this course under the S/U option must earn 140 or more points to receive an “S” grade.

**Extra Credit:** None. There is no extra credit for this class.

## **V. Instructor’s Policies**

Class meetings will be composed of lectures and class discussion. Assigned reading material is to be read before class to facilitate class discussion. Students will be tested on lecture, reading material, and class discussions. Students will be called upon during class to verbalize the concepts covered throughout the course.

**Grades during the Semester:** Students should keep track of their points throughout the course. I will provide any student with his or her points, upon request, at any time during the semester.

## **Exams**

There will be four multiple choice and true/false examinations. Each exam consists of 40 questions and students have the first 60 minutes of class during each exam date to complete each exam, including the final exam. Please bring a number two pencil, scantron, and an eraser to each exam. Exam makeups (and late paper submissions or oral presentations) are permitted only for documented deaths in the family, documented emergency doctor/hospital visits, documented university activities, and extraordinary circumstances beyond a student’s control if instructor-approved.

Any makeup exam is to be taken, any oral presentation is to be given, and any paper is to be submitted the first day the student returns to class. At that time, the appropriate documentation regarding the absence must be presented to the instructor in order for the makeup. Prior to returning to class, an email should be sent to the instructor explaining why the exam or oral presentation was missed or the paper not submitted timely and when the student anticipates returning to class for the makeup exam, oral presentation, or paper submission.

Documented emergency medical visits to the hospital or doctor (wherein the student is the patient), documented required attendance at University activities, documented attendance at a family funeral, or documented extraordinary events (not the student’s fault) that the instructor

believes unavoidably precluded the student's attendance entitle a student to a makeup or early exam, oral presentation, or paper submission

Job, travel, vacation, transportation, and work conflicts, computer problems, providing transportation for others, or caring for others are not exceptional circumstances that would allow a makeup or early exam, paper submission, or presentation regarding the public meeting.

### **Public Meeting Paper**

The best way to understand democracy is to see our government in action. Each student is required to attend a public meeting (off campus) of a city council, school board, or the County Commissioners Court. Only a regular meeting in which voting is conducted is acceptable. Seeing a public speaker give a presentation is not a public meeting appropriate for this course.

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. Please staple your paper, and do not place the paper into a protective cover.

### **Attendance Policy**

The class begins and ends at its schedule times. Do not enter the classroom if you are late or leave while class is in session, absent a documented medical emergency. Class attendance, while not part of the student's grade, is vital to success in this course. Attendance is tracked for administrative purposes. Students are expected, by UTEP and the instructor, to attend every class during the semester except for extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control.

### **Makeup Policy for Examinations and Writing Assignments**

Absent documented emergencies and instructor approval (discussed above under "Exams"), there are no makeups for the exams. Similarly, for each class that any writing assignment is late, the student is penalized 50%. Writing assignments are to be handed in during class and not via email attachment. Students must keep a second hard and digital copy of their paper. There is no makeup for the oral presentation unless the makeup is justified by the makeup guidelines in the syllabus.

**Withdrawing from Class:** It is the student's responsibility to drop the class if circumstances warrant. Please note these dates and the fact that they will be strictly adhered to:

Consult Registrar's Office: Course drop deadline in which a W will appear on student transcript  
Consult Registrar's Office: Deadline to withdraw from UTEP

## Disabled Student Services Office (DSSO)

Disabled Student Services Office (DSSO) provides a program of support to students with physical, or mental impairments, as well as those who become temporarily disabled due to an injury or recent surgery, and to women with “at risk” pregnancies. The department provides the following services to eligible students registered with DSSO: note taking, sign language interpreter and reader and/or scribe services, priority registration, use of adaptive technology, diagnostic testing for learning disabilities, alternative test format and location, and advocacy.

To register to receive services, students need to schedule an intake interview with the director of DSSO and provide medical and/or diagnostic documentation verifying a disability. The documentation must clearly state symptoms and limitations that adversely affect academic performance. **All information provided to DSSO is treated highly confidential and is not disclosed without written consent or a compelling need to know.**

If students have or suspect a hearing loss and/or a learning disability that is adversely affecting academic performance in math and/or foreign language requirements for a degree, they should contact this DSSO immediately to discuss available options. Students should be aware that faculty are not obligated to provide accommodations without proper notification from DSSO. Therefore, if you feel that you may have a disability that requires accommodation, students should contact DSSO at (915) 747-5148 or e-mail at [dss@utep.edu](mailto:dss@utep.edu). You can also visit DSSO’s website at [www.utep.edu/dss](http://www.utep.edu/dss) or the Disabled Services Office located in Room 106, East Union Building.

## Other Class Guidelines

1. Complete Assignments Timely: I ask that students complete the required readings prior to the class the material is discussed, that students submit their papers on time, and that students not miss exams. It is best to read at least 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 (except laptop computers for note taking, provided there is no web surfing) anytime you are in the classroom, e.g., headphones, cell phones, IM, iPods, etc. Arrive on time for class, do not leave early, do not enter the class if you are late (an exception: exam days) and do not leave anytime during class absent a medical emergency that you discuss with the instructor after class. **Do not conduct private conversations**, read newspapers, use electronic devices (except laptops for note taking), or sleep **anytime you are in the classroom—this includes both before class begins and after class ends.**
3. Do Not Engage in Academic Misconduct: Students may not cheat on exams, submit written work that is not their own, plagiarize, or keep examinations or scantrons.

## Academic Dishonesty

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 based on the quality of the 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 the 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 and available from the Office of the Dean of Students, may result in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation, to failing grades on the work in question, to failing grades in the course, to suspension or dismissal, among others.

Faculty and student responsibilities may be found at:  
<http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=27897>

### **Course Limitations**

It is policy that no student may repeat any subject that he or she has taken three times. If a student has taken a course and received a C or better, that student will not be allowed to repeat the course for a higher grade. If a student registers for a class the third time there will be additional tuition charges assessed.

### **VI. Calendar**

A course outline of readings, exams, and assignments is attached to the end of the syllabus.

**Disclaimer:** The instructor reserves the right to revise the course syllabus and course outline if necessary. Notice of any changes to the syllabus and course outline will be given in class, should the need arise.