

2311:27311 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS (ONLINE)

Spring 2021

Instructor:

Dr. Joseph Yingnan Zhou

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Virtual Office Hours: by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

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Virtual Office Hours: 1-2pm T&R

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course introduces you to the basics of American government and politics. It will help you understand the structures, processes, and environment of both our national government and the government in Texas. It will improve your ability to analyze institutions and contemporary issues. We will draw frequently on current events to illustrate general principles of government operation.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course you will gain:

1. an understanding of key topics of US politics
2. an understanding of research methods and their application to real-world problems
3. UTEP EDGE Experiences including problem-solving, communication, global awareness, teamwork, and critical thinking

Blackboard and UTEP Email: Syllabus, lecture videos, and other tasks will be posted on Blackboard. Announcements will be made through on Blackboard. Communication between students and the instructor will be conducted via UTEP Email. Please check Blackboard and your UTEP Email regularly.

TEXTBOOK:

Reading the textbook is essential to getting an excellent grade. The following textbook is required.

Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, Spitzer. 2019. *We the People* (12th Essentials Edition). ISBN: 978-0-393-66464-5.

It is available at UTEP Bookstore. You may of course purchase them elsewhere. Beware of the different editions and versions with the same title. Make sure to choose the right one.

COURSE REQUIREMENT AND POLICIES:

About This Online Course: This is an asynchronous course, meaning that pre-recorded lectures are posted for you to watch at the recommended pace. New lectures are normally available each Monday and Wednesday. All other class activities, including discussion, quizzes, and virtual office hours take place on Blackboard.

Asynchronous courses have the obvious advantage of flexibility. No one has to miss a class due to scheduling conflict or logistic difficulty. You can pause and rewind and take better notes. However, this advantage, taken unwisely, can turn into serious disadvantages. Many students yield to the temptation to procrastinate and quickly become overwhelmed by the mounting work. Without the

classroom environment, attention span, which wasn't long to begin with, becomes shorter. Thinking that everything is available "out there," some people believe it needless to take notes, often to their regret.

Therefore, I take two measures to overcome those disadvantages. First, I provide a very detailed timetable, down to on which day to accomplish what. Be aware that discussions and quizzes all have deadlines, so by all means finish the lectures before taking them. Second, I take virtual attendance which count 10% toward your final grade. At the end of each video, you are going to select "Yes, I have watched this lecture" to count as attendance.

Virtual Attendance: At the end of each lecture video, you will be prompted to check "Yes, I have watched this lecture." Because I have to deploy the "quiz" function to take attendance, the lectures will appear as video quizzes. They are the same as lectures. Don't get confused.

Discussion Posts: Students will be divided into five discussion groups (about 10 in each). On the days specified in the time table, I will open a forum thread with a topic for you to discuss **within your group**. A discussion usually starts on a Monday and will be closed on the following Sunday. Each student is required to submit **at least one post** in reply to my topic and **at least one post in reply to others' posts**. The first post should be **between 250 and 500 words in length**. There is no length requirement for the second post, but try to make it informed and thoughtful. Of course, you are not limited to only two posts and are welcome to post more. **In order to give group members enough time to reply, I require that your first post be submitted by Thursday midnight**. Make sure to visit the discussion board frequently to answer questions others may have for you. Do so even after you have submitted the first two posts.

To get a good grade, it is important to base your posts on knowledge from this class, not only your personal opinions. While lively or even heated discussion is desirable, civility must always be preserved.

Your group membership will be announced on Wednesday January 20 on the Blackboard discussion board. Find your group and introduce yourself as a reply (tell us who you are, where you are from, your major, and one fun fact about you.) **This self-introduction is due at midnight Sunday January 24.**

Take-home Quizzes: There will be 6 take-home quizzes on Blackboard. You must take the quizzes by its deadline. Quizzes may cover lecture, textbook, and other assigned materials. **Quizzes cannot be made up, but the lowest one will be dropped.** Save your quizzes because they could be helpful for preparing for the exams. The first quiz will contain a couple of questions on the syllabus!

Exams: There are three online, open-book exams. In each, the vast majority of the questions will be based on lecture, the rest based on textbook materials or documentaries that are not extensively covered in lecture. Exams are mostly non-cumulative, but questions from previous exams may be re-tested.

Open-book means that you can use lecture videos, the textbook, slides, and notes, but **it does not mean you can collaborate with your classmates or search for answers on the Internet.** Violations are easily to detect and will be handled as academic misconduct.

A make-up exam is only given in cases of emergency. Requests for make-ups must be supported by documentation.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a disability and need accommodations, please let me know at your earliest convenience. Please also contact The Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or by email to cass@utep.edu.

Academic Integrity: Please read and comply with [UTEP policies on academic integrity](#).

Grade: The course grade will be determined as follows:

Virtual Attendance	10%
Online Discussion	10%
Online Quizzes	10%
Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	20%
Exam #3	30%
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	100%

Letter Grades will be assigned as follows:

Final Score	Final Grade
90-100%	A
80-89%	B
65-79%	C
50-64%	D
Below 50%	F

Incompletes will be given only for a medical or personal emergency with documentation.

COURSE TIMETABLE:

Jan 20, Wednesday: lecture 1.1 Class Introduction; lecture 1.2 What is Politics?
Textbook, Ch. 1

Jan 25, Monday: lecture 2.1 & 2.2 Constitution
Textbook, Ch. 2

Discussion 1 available

Jan 27, Wednesday: lecture 2.3 Constitution; lecture 3 Federalism
Textbook, Ch. 3

Quiz 1 available

Feb 1, Monday: lecture 4.1 & 4.2 Civil Liberties
Textbook, Ch. 4

Feb 3, Wednesday: lecture 4.3 Civil Liberties; lecture 5.1 Civil Rights

Textbook, Ch. 4 (continued)

Feb 8, Monday: lecture 5.2 & 5.3 Civil Rights

Textbook, Ch. 4 (continued)

Quiz 2 available

Feb 10, Wednesday: Documentary Freedom Riders

Feb 15, Monday: lecture 6.1 & 6.2 Beliefs and Socialization

Textbook, Ch. 5

Feb 17, Wednesday: lecture 6.3 Beliefs and Socialization

Textbook, Ch. 5 (continued)

Exam 1 live Q&A on Blackboard (9-10:30 am)

Quiz 3 available

Feb 22, Monday: Exam 1

Feb 24, Wednesday: lecture 7.1 & 7.2 Political Participation

Textbook, Ch. 7, p. 220-248

Mar 1, Monday: lecture 7.3 Political Participation; lecture 8.1 Interest Group

Textbook, Ch. 7, p. 220-248 (continued); Ch. 8

Discussion 2 available

Mar 3, Wednesday: lecture 8.2 Interest Groups; lecture 9.1 Political Parties

Textbook, Ch. 8 (continued); Ch.7, p. 204-220

Mar 8, Monday: lecture 9.2 & 9.3 Political Parties

Textbook, Ch.8, p. 204-220 (continued)

Mar 10, Wednesday: lecture 10.1 & 10.2 News Media

Textbook, Ch. 6

Quiz 4 available

Mar 15 and Mar 17: Spring Break

Mar 22, Monday: lecture 10.3 & 10.4 News Media

Textbook, Ch. 6 (continued)

Discussion 3 available

Mar 24, Wednesday: lecture 11.1 & 11.2 Congress

Textbook, Ch. 9

Mar 29, Monday: lecture 11.3 & 11.4 Congress
Textbook, Ch. 9 (continued)

Mar 31 Wednesday: Lecture 11.5 Congress
Textbook, Ch. 9 (continued)

Quiz 5 available

Apr 5, Monday: lecture 12.1 & 12.2 Presidency
Textbook, Ch. 10

Apr 7, Wednesday: Documentary The Choice 2020: Trump vs. Biden

Exam 2 live Q&A on Blackboard (9-10:30 am)

Apr 12, Monday: Exam 2

Discussion 4 available

Apr 14, Wednesday: lecture 13.1 & 13.2 Bureaucracy
We the People, Chapter 12.

Apr 19, Monday: lecture 13.3 & 13.4 Bureaucracy

Apr 21, Wednesday: lecture 14.1 & 14.2 Courts

Apr 26, Monday: lecture 14.3 Courts; lecture 15.1 Texas Politics

Quiz 6 available

Apr 28, Wednesday: lecture 15.2 & 15.3 Texas Politics

May 3, Monday: lecture 15.4 Texas Politics

May 5, Wednesday: Exam 1 live Q&A on Blackboard (9-10:30 am)

May 10, Monday: Exam 3