

GOVT 2305: American National Government

Course Information

Course: GOVT 2305.003
Term: Spring 2019
Class Meetings: MWF 4:00pm-4:50pm
Location: HH 2.402

Professor Contact Information

Dr. Patrick F. Larue
patrick.larue@utdallas.edu
Twitter: @LaruePhD
Office: GR 3.230
Office Hours: MW 1:30pm-2:30pm, T 10:00am-12:00pm, and by appt.

Course Description

This course is the first in a two-course sequence in the Department of Political Science that satisfies the Government/Political Science requirement of the University Core Curriculum. The purpose of this course is to highlight the foundations and operations of government at the national level within the United States; the institutions that exist, the functions of those institutions, and the importance of those functions in our daily lives.

Although this is an introductory course, this course will be more important to you than you may think. The laws that are implemented by our government impact you on a daily basis, and whether you are a psychologist, a computer scientist, or a banker, you should know how the government affects you individually. These laws can affect your job, your pocketbook, or both. Knowing how these laws are created, and what you can do about it will be the subject of much of the content of this course.

Course Objectives

Upon passage of this course, you should be able to:

- Define various key terms regarding American Government, like federalism, the separation of powers, a prisoner's dilemma, the incumbency advantage, polyarchy, and soft media.
- Describe how the major institutions of American Government function, including Congress, the President, and the Federal Courts.
- Identify and explain what is in the Constitution, including the amendments.

Textbook Information

Students are required to purchase the following textbook.

1. *Readings in American National Government*, by Miller, Banks and Jennifer S. Holmes. Kendall Hunt Publishing. ISBN: 9781524933807

This text is supplementary to course lectures, but a significant portion of your grade will be based on this textbook. This will be available in the bookstore, and online through the publisher. The most economical way to purchase this book is through this link: <https://he.kendallhunt.com/product/readings-american-national-government>. The ebook is priced at \$40. The printed version is priced at \$80. Feel free to purchase the ebook as it is half the price and will not be needed in class. Please make sure that your book has the gray cover. If it does not, then you have the wrong book (the book has been updated).

Students are *NOT* required to purchase the following textbook, but is recommended should you feel as though you would like a textbook that will generally follow along with the course content.

1. *We the People: an Introduction to American Politics*, 11th edition (Essentials) by Ginsberg, et al. ISBN: 9780393639988

This text is available at the campus bookstore, and at other outlets as well. Feel free to find the cheapest used/rental/ebook version. Since these is merely a recommended text, you are welcome to use an older version. Also, *We the People* is available to check out in the library if you want to avoid spending money on this book. *Readings* is not.

Additional materials: You will also be required to stay up to date with current events as it pertains to the information discussed in the course. Current events will comprise a portion of your exam grade, as questions regarding particular current events will be on each exam. Questions will be based *exclusively* on the current events found on my Twitter page listed above. The page is set as public, so you do not need to follow me in order to see which stories I post, but you will need to stay up to date with these posts in order to maximize your opportunities for success on each exam.

There is a purpose to this. Staying abreast of what is happening in the news on a week-to-week basis will help you understand how things work, and why we see the outcomes we do. This is especially important given the political climate we are currently in. I am happy to discuss current events in class, and at times, we will focus on a particular story. All other non-relevant events may be discussed after class or during office hours. If you are looking for general suggestions on reputable news sources that are generally not skewed towards either political ideology, I would recommend The Economist, NPR, and the Washington Post.

Grading

There are 4 components of this course that will determine your final grade.

- **Three Exams**, each worth 23% of the final grade. (69% total)
There are three mandatory exams in this course. Each exam will be multiple choice (or true-false) questions. You will need a scantron (882-E or equivalent) and pencil for these exams. Dates are listed in this syllabus. Exams are in-class, closed book, and will be collected at the end of the class period. *If you come in late, then you will not receive extra time to complete the exam. Also, in the*

interest of exam security, if you enter the room more than 20 minutes late, you will not be given an exam. Exam dates may change for unforeseen circumstances, but changes will be disclosed well in advance. The exams are based on lecture material (defined as anything taught in the classroom, except points made in teacher/student discussion) and current events, so your attendance in class meetings is mandatory. Study guides are not available for this course. In lieu of this, I will reserve one class meeting immediately prior to each exam for a question and answer session for you to ask questions about the exam, or to clarify lecture material. Make-up exams are generally not allowed. You are **ONLY** eligible to take a make-up exam if you will be gone for a school-sponsored activity, and you have notified me one week in advance of the departure. A faculty sponsor/coach must also provide documentation prior to your departure. Otherwise, there are no make-up exams allowed. In lieu of this, there will be an *optional* comprehensive final exam. The comprehensive final is intended for two groups of students: 1) those who missed one of the three normal exams, and 2) those who would like to attempt to replace their lowest exam grade with a higher grade. All students are eligible to take the comprehensive final, but will only replace *one* normal exam grade. If all four of your regular exam grades are higher than your comprehensive grade, then no grade replacement will occur.

- **Online Quizzes**, worth 2% each of the final grade. (14% total) There are seven quizzes that will count towards your final grade. Each quiz is therefore worth 2%. The dates are found below in the syllabus. Quizzes will be given online through eLearning. Each quiz will be available for a specified amount of time, on specified dates. While we may discuss textbook material during lecture, do not expect that you will get the answers you need for the quiz in class. Quizzes are open-book, but do not attempt to coordinate with others on quizzes. Questions are randomized, so you may not receive the same questions as others. Each quiz will be 10 questions, and you have one hour to complete the quiz once you begin. Quizzes are automatically submitted at the end of the hour. I am not responsible for your inability to access eLearning. If there are scheduled outages, be aware of them. An outage (even an unexpected one) may cause you to miss the quiz. You must **SUBMIT** the quiz by 11:59:59pm on the specified dates. Submitting at 12:00:00 will be considered late, and will be given a zero. Do not ask me to grade your quiz if you turned it in “2 seconds late.” You have a week to take the quiz. Do not wait until the last minute to attempt the quiz. I also do not reopen quizzes for any reason. *No exceptions.* Make sure you do not accidentally open quizzes. Your time will expire after one hour, and you will not be allowed to make-up the quiz or have it reopened.
- **Writing Assignment**, worth 10% of the final grade.
A film will be shown in class around the seventh week. It will be the basis for your writing assignment. Full instructions for the writing assignment will be on eLearning, and discussed in class.
- **Attendance and Participation**, worth 7% of the final grade.
Attendance will be taken randomly throughout the semester. There is no natural pattern to when I will take attendance, so it is in your best interest to attend each lecture for the full class period. Your attendance grade will be the percentage of classes attended (as per our records) divided by the number of time attendance is taken. Students who contribute to the health of the course through meaningful participation may receive additional points, as per my judgment.

Final grades follow the +/- scale with cutoffs at the X2.5 and X7.5 range. For example, a 92.4 is an A-, and a 97.5 is an A+.

More helpful information

- Please feel free to come by my office. I’m happy to help you throughout the course. One of the more frequent questions is, “How do I improve my grade?” The short (and best) answer is to go see your

scantrons. You will be able to see your answers next to the answer key, so this will be the best way for you to discover where you could improve..

- I **highly discourage** the use of laptops in class. They end up distracting yourself and others. If they become an issue, I reserve the right to disallow them in the room.
- Do not use your phone in class. You don't need it. If you do need it, come talk to me. I'm happy to accommodate. If it becomes distracting to me, I will ask you to leave the room.
- Be respectful of others. Given this is a course on government, divisive political discussions may result. These are encouraged within a forum that encourages dignity and respect.
- Do not cheat on exams. I handle this proactively. If I suspect that you cheat, I will move you (or the victim) into another seat, *at a minimum*.
- Likewise, you are expected to read through the University's policy on academic dishonesty. This will provide information regarding cheating on exams and plagiarism. You will find that here: <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/dishonesty/>.
- For most questions regarding the administrative aspects of the course, the teaching assistants should be your first point of contact. You should contact me directly if you need to let me know you are missing an exam, for example. If you need clarification on lecture material, coming to my (or TA) office hours would serve you best. If you email me or a teaching assistant about something that can be answered by the syllabus, we will simply direct you to the syllabus.
- If you email me (or the TA's), it must be through your UTD email address. University policy dictates this, and I do not deviate from this. Grades can only be discussed face-to-face. I highly recommend setting an appointment or coming to office hours in order to respect your privacy.
- If and when you email me, please include this course name (GOVT 2305) somewhere in the email (subject line or body) to make conversation over email easier.
- There are no individual bonus opportunities or extra credit. Please do not ask me for bonus or extra credit at the end of the semester. If I choose to provide these opportunities, they will be available to everyone, and will be announced appropriately.

Tentative Course Outline

The following is a general outline of each week's lecture material.

Week 1:	Political Regimes, Ideologies, and Culture
Week 2-3:	The Constitution and Federalism
Week 4:	Civil Rights
Week 5:	Public Opinion
Week 6:	Media and Political Protest
Week 7:	Voting
Week 8:	Elections and Political Parties
Week 9:	Interest Groups
Week 10:	The Congress
Week 11:	The Executive
Week 13:	The Courts
Week 14-15:	Public Policy

Quiz Dates

The date for each quiz is as follows:

Quiz 1:	Chapter 1-2	Due: 1/27
Quiz 2:	Chapter 3-4	Due: 2/10
Quiz 3:	Chapter 9-10	Due: 2/24
Quiz 4:	Chapter 11	Due: 3/10
Quiz 5:	Chapter 5-6	Due: 4/7
Quiz 6:	Chapter 7-8	Due: 4/14
Quiz 7:	Chapter 12	Due: 4/21

Exam Dates

The date for each exam is as follows:

Exam 1:	2/18
Exam 2:	4/1
Exam 3:	5/1
Comp. Final:	TBD

University Policies and Miscellany

- University policies regarding email communication, withdrawals, grievances, incompletes, holidays, and disability accommodations can be found at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.
- This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.