

**GOVERNMENT 310L:  
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

As originally conceived by the Ancient Greeks, the purpose of a university education is to equip citizens to participate in their own governance. The University of Texas has carried on that tradition by requiring every student to take two courses in American government, ensuring that you will all leave your undergraduate education with a basic foundation in American law and politics. Whether you're a Government major who is deeply interested in this material or a future engineer or visual artist who would rather be spending your time elsewhere, the purpose of this course is to help you become a better-informed voter and citizen.

Over the course of this semester, we will study the historical and conceptual foundations of American governing institutions and the modern operation and interaction of the formal and informal institutions of American politics. We will dive deeply into federalism and separation of powers, but we will also look at the role of campaigns, elections, voters, and the media in shaping American law.

Importantly, my goal is not to tell you what to think; it is to equip you to think for yourself. All perspectives and opinions are welcome in my classroom, and regardless of your preconceptions—whether conservative, liberal, socialistic, or libertarian—I will push all of you to think critically about your existing beliefs.

By the end of the course, you should all have a deeper understanding of American political institutions, a greater capacity to present and defend your views of American politics, and a greater appreciation for perspectives that differ from your own. Whether you plan to continue in your study of American government or end your civic education here, I hope you will leave the semester enriched.

**TEXTS**

Textbook available for purchase at the Co-Op: Kollman, Ken. *The American Political System*. 3rd Core Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2018.  
Supplementary materials listed on the syllabus will be available online at the links integrated into the syllabus or posted on Canvas under the Files tab.

**GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Your grade for this course will be based on attendance, in-class participation, and two exams. The breakdown of your grade will be as follows:

Attendance & Participation	20%
Midterm Exam	40%
Final Exam	40%

**Grade Scale:**

A:	93-100	C:	73-76
A-:	90-92	C-:	70-72
B+:	87-89	D+:	67-69
B:	83-86	D:	63-66
B-:	80-82	D-:	60-62
C+:	77-79	F:	Less than 60

Without exception, I will round up scores of 0.5 and higher and round down scores of less than 0.5.

**ATTENDANCE**

Because this class will be primarily discussion-based, in-person attendance is mandatory at all meetings.

If you cannot make it to class in person but would like to Zoom in to receive attendance credit, you must email me before 8 AM the day of the relevant meeting to request permission. Your email should include an explanation of why you are unable to attend in-person. If you can neither attend in person nor Zoom into class, you must email me before noon to excuse the absence; otherwise, you will be credited with one unexcused absence per missed meeting. If you have more than 3 unexcused absences at the end of the semester, you will receive a 0 for the attendance and participation portion of your grade.

**TECHNOLOGY**

I will not enforce any limits on your use of technology during class. One of the most important skills of the modern age is self-regulation with devices. If you find that a laptop is helpful for taking notes, use one. If you find that the temptation to surf is too distracting, put your phone and laptop away. If someone sitting in front of you is playing a game that you can't stop watching, move to a different seat. If your phone rings and you need to answer it, step into the hall. (Bonus points if you have an awesome ringtone. Extra bonus points if it's a song related to freedom.) All the while, please bear in mind that participation is 10% of your grade and that it's pretty obvious, from the lecturer's dais, when you're surfing TikTok instead of following the discussion.

## OTHER POLICY STATEMENTS

Any students with disabilities may request appropriate accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities. Please let me know as soon as possible, by email, if you have made arrangements for such accommodations.

If you haven't already, please immediately read the UT Honor Code and the explanation of what constitutes plagiarism. Plagiarism on your paper will result in an automatic grade of 0 on the paper, which will put you at serious risk of failure.

By UT policy, you must notify me at least 14 days in advance if you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **Week 1      Introduction**

*Reading:*      Course syllabus  
                    Kollman, Chapter 1

### **Week 2      The Constitution and the Founding**

*Reading:*      Kollman, Chapter 2

### **Week 3      The Constitution and the Founding**

*Reading:*      [United States Constitution](#)  
                    [Declaration of Independence](#)  
                    *Federalist* [10](#), [51](#)  
                    [Antifederalist 2](#)

### **Week 4      Federalism**

*Reading:*      Kollman, Chapter 3

### **Week 5      Federalism**

*Reading:*      [Federalist 39](#)  
                    *McCulloch v. Maryland*  
                    *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association*

### **Week 6      Congress**

*Reading:*      Kollman, Chapter 5

<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Congress</b> <i>Reading:</i> Obamacare Timeline <i>King v. Burwell</i> Shepsle, “Congress is a ‘They’, Not an ‘It’: Legislative Intent as Oxymoron” <a href="#"><u>Moncrieff, “King, Chevron, and the Age of Textualism”</u></a>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>The Presidency</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 6 <i>Youngstown Sheet and Tube Co. v. Sawyer</i> <i>Chevron v. Natural Resources Defense Council</i>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>The Presidency</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 7 Tulis, “Impeachment in the Constitutional Order” <a href="#"><u>Articles of Impeachment Against President Donald J. Trump</u></a>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>The Courts</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 8 <i>Marbury v. Madison</i> <i>Lochner v. New York</i> <i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i>
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Civil Rights and Civil Liberties</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 4 <i>Brown v. Board</i> <i>Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission</i>
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>Public Opinion/Political Participation</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapters 9 and 10 Introduction to Lippmann, <i>Public Opinion</i>
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Interest Groups and Social Movements</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 11
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Political Parties</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 12 Iyengar et al., “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States”
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Elections and Campaigns</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 13
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>Mass Media and the Press</b> <i>Reading:</i> Kollman, Chapter 14