

GOV 310L: American Government Syllabus

Fall 2022

Instructor

Dr. Roberto F. Carlos
Office: Mezes Hall 3.148
Email: rcarlos@austin.utexas.edu
Office Hours: Thursday
12:30 PM – 1:45 PM

Class Schedule

Tuesday and Thursday
3:30 PM -5:00 PM
Mezes Hall 1.306

Teaching Assistant

Chris Cassella (Ph.D. student)
Office: TBA
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Office Hours: Mondays 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM & Tuesdays 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

Course Description and Objective

This course examines the political system in the United States. We will explore the origins, development, and functions of the government's executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The course will also focus on more significant issues and controversies that surround the study of American politics. As a class, we will analyze the political culture of the United States and examine how the basic structure of the American government is set up to take input from individual citizens and interest groups and turn it into policy outcomes. Additionally, an introduction to Texas politics will be provided.

Required Text and Technology

We the People (13th Core edition) – by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, and Robert J. Spitzer with access to InQuizitive. You are automatically opted into the book with this course. You can access the book on Canvas under the Modules tab. See bookstore for how to opt-out.

Evaluation

Response Paper: You will complete **one** short paper in this course. Topics are listed in the syllabus and match each week's theme. Note that the paper's due date varies according to the topic you choose. The paper should be at least 750 words, no more than 1200 (double spaced) and are due a week after the week's theme as listed on the syllabus. Please make sure to discuss the criteria of the paper with your TA in advance if you have questions. Also, note that there are only 20 spots available per topic, and you must sign up on Canvas by week 2. First come, first served for topic choices.

Exam One: The first exam will consist of multiple-choice questions with varying difficulty levels. These questions will cover material from the first half of the semester. *As of now, exam one is scheduled for Thursday, October 6th, in class.* Students must be prepared to show their UT identification cards during exams.

Exam Two: Exam two is not cumulative and will consist of multiple-choice questions with varying difficulty levels. *As of now, the exam is scheduled for Thursday, December 1st, in class.* Students must be prepared to show their UT identification cards during exams.

Weekly Assignments: There will be **InQuizitive** weekly assignments that you can access on Canvas. You will access InQuizitive on Canvas under the **Assignments** tab. Inquisitive assignments are **due every Thursday at 8 pm**. The lowest two weekly assignment grades will be dropped; this includes missed weekly assignments. No make-ups or late work allowed.

Readings and Quizzes: The required readings typically include one chapter of the textbook per week. Additional readings that are assigned are available electronically on Canvas. It is essential that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in discussions during lectures. I strongly recommend you finish the readings before your class takes place since there will be four short quizzes (3-5 questions) based on the lectures and assigned readings for that week. The dates of the quizzes are listed below. No make-up quizzes are allowed. However, the lowest quiz grade will be dropped; this includes missed quizzes.

Class attendance, late work, and make-up policies: I do not use class attendance to determine your grade directly. However, the syllabus has two in-class exams and four in-class quizzes. If you miss these dates, you will not be allowed to make up the quizzes; therefore, make sure that if you miss a quiz day, you do not miss another, as again, only one quiz grade is dropped. As to make-up exams and late papers, this will only be allowed on a case-by-case basis. Please check with your instructor before the exam or paper due date to discuss your situation. Late papers will be docked 5 points per day (half letter grade) for each day the paper is late (including weekends). Talk to your teaching assistant if you need a (reasonable) extension. Finally, no late work will be accepted for InQuizitive assignments, but as a reminder, we drop the lowest two InQuizitive grades.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage:

Exam One: 25%

Exam Two: 25%

Response Paper: 20%

Quizzes: 10%

Weekly InQuizitive Assignments: 20%

Grading Scale for Final Semester Grades:

100-93 A; 92-90 A-

89-87 B+; 86-83 B; 82-80 B-

79-77 C+; 76-73 C; 72-70 C-

69-67 D+, 66-63 D, 62-60 D-

59-0 F

******Please note that there is no standard rounding policy. Rounding decisions can be made on a case-by-case basis and are largely determined by your TA.******

Grade Appeals and Incompletes: Any questions regarding grades should be directed to your teaching assistant. If you cannot resolve the matter with them, you may appeal the grade to me. Keep in mind that formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of a paper, I will re-grade your entire paper. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the instructor's discretion. If an incomplete is given, it is the student's responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible.

Email Policy: Please give me and your TA at least 24 hours to respond to emails on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends.

Office Hours: Students having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to contact their teaching assistant. But also, don't be afraid to come by to see me. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you missed class. If you like to talk to me, feel free to stop by my office during office hours by making an appointment via canvas.

Syllabus Policy: I reserve the right to change the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

Services for Students with Disabilities (D&A): If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with Disability & Access (D&A). Additional information can be found here:
<https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

Withdrawal Policy: Refer to <https://registrar.utexas.edu/calendars> to see when the last day an undergraduate may: Q-drop a class; withdraw; or change a class to pass/fail

Culture of Honesty Policy: “Scholastic dishonesty’ includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor), or the attempt to commit such an act.” Section 11-802 (b), Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities. If you have any questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty, you should consult with me and the following websites: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/> <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>

Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: “Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.”

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited: “No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. The unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s Student Honor Code and

an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials. Any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.”

Prohibition on Recording Lectures. Without written authorization from the SSD, students may not make a visual or audio recording of any aspect of this course. Students who have a recording accommodation agree in writing that “class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.”

Senate Bill 212 and Title IX Reporting Requirements: “Under Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), the professor and TAs for this course are required to report for further investigation any information concerning incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking committed by or against a UT student or employee. Federal law and university policy also require reporting incidents of sex- and gender-based discrimination and sexual misconduct (collectively known as Title IX incidents). This means we cannot keep confidential information about any such incidents that you share with us. If you need to talk with someone who can maintain confidentiality, please contact University Health Services (512-471-4955 or 512-475-6877) or the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (512-471-3515 or 512-471-2255). We strongly urge you to make use of these services for any needed support and that you report any Title IX incidents to the [Title IX Office](#).”

Week 1 (August 23 /25)

Topic: Introduction to class /The Citizen and the Government /The Founding and the Constitution

Readings: Chapters 1 and 2 in “We the People”

Week 2 (August 30 / September 1)

Topic: The Founding and the Constitution continued /Federalism

Readings: Chapter 3 in “We the People”

Readings: Dahl, Robert A. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Yale University Press, 2003. Excerpt on Canvas

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapters 1 and 2 on Inquisite due Thursday, September 1, by 8 pm

Week 3 (September 6 / 8)

Topic: Congress

Quiz One: in class on September 8

Readings: Chapter 12 in “We the People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 3 on *Inquizi*tive due Thursday, September 8, by 8 pm

Potential Short Paper Topic: Think about the abortion or marijuana issue, which currently puts state power in contention with national power. Write out your stance on whether the issue should be addressed at the federal or state level. Justify your decision. Due: September 9th by midnight. Submit via Canvas.

Week 4 (September 13 / 15) *

Topic: Congress continued

Reading: Mayhew, David R. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Yale university press, 2004. Excerpt on Canvas

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 12 on *Inquizi*tive due Thursday, September 15, by 8 pm

*No in-person class on September 15th; look to Canvas for a digital lecture

Week 5 (September 20 / 22)

Topic: The Presidency

Readings: Chapter 13 in “We the People”

Reading: Neustadt, Richard E. *Presidential Power, and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. Simon and Schuster, 1991. Excerpt on Canvas

Potential Short Paper Topic: Look up your representative’s recent voting records and ideological placement (<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes>). Make a list of five issues they voted on, and state whether you would have voted the same way on behalf of your district, taking into account your district’s socio-economic characteristics. Justify your decisions. Due: September 23th by midnight. Submit via Canvas.

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 13 on *Inquizi*tive due Thursday, September 22, by 8 pm

Week 6 (September 27 / 29)

Topic: The Federal Courts

Quiz Two: in class on September 27

Readings: Chapter 15 in “We the People”

Reading: Gerald N. Rosenberg, The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change? Excerpt on Canvas

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 15 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, September 29, by 8 pm

Week 7 (October 4 / 6) Exam One *

Topic: The Bureaucracy /Exam One on October 6th

Readings: Chapter 14 in “We the People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 14 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, October 6, by 8 pm

* Texas ou weekend, so please plan accordingly to not leave for Dallas until after class.

Week 8 (October 11 / 13)

Topic: Public Opinion

Readings: Chapter 6 in “We the People”

Reading: Mason, Lilliana. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became our Identity*. University of Chicago Press, 2018. Excerpt on Canvas

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 6 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, October 13, by 8 pm

Potential Short Paper Topic: Consider former President Obama’s action on DACA and President Biden’s decision to continue to support it. Explain why you think the president should or should not have the power to act on this issue. In your answer, discuss the implication for those impacted by DACA and whether there is a better solution. Due: October 14th by midnight. Submit via Canvas.

Week 9 (October 18 / 20)

Topic: The Media

Readings: Chapter 7 in “We the People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 7 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, October 20, by 8 pm

Week 10 (October 25 / 27)

Topic: Participation

Quiz Three: in class on October 27

Readings: Chapter 8 in “We the People”

Reading: Leighley, Jan E., and Jonathan Nagler. *Who Votes Now?: Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States*. Princeton University Press, 2013. Excerpt on Canvas

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 8 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, October 27, by 8 pm

Potential Short Paper Topic: Pick a current political topic and compare how it is reported on one of the national news (ABC, CBS, or NBC), one of the cable news (CNN, MSNBC, or FOX NEWS), and one newspaper (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, or The Washington Post). Identify the different frames and describe their impact. Due: October 28th by midnight. Submit via Canvas.

Week 11 (November 1 / 3)

Topic: Political Parties

Readings: Chapter 9 in “We the People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 9 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, November 3, by 8 pm

Week 12 (November 8 / 10)*

Topic: Campaigns and Elections

Readings: Chapter 10 in “We the People”

Reading: Achen, Christopher H., and Larry M. Bartels. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Vol. 4. Princeton University Press, 2017. Excerpt on Canvas

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 10 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, November 10, by 8 pm

Potential Short Paper Topic: Write a list of reasons individuals may not vote. Examine the role of personal motivation as well as institutional barriers in your answer and propose possible strategies to increase turnout. Due: November 11th by midnight. Submit via Canvas.

*Don’t Forget to Vote if you are eligible

Week 13 (November 15 / 17)

Topic: Interest Groups and Intro to Civil Liberties

Quiz Four: in class on November 15

Readings: Chapter 11 in “We the People”

Weekly Online Assignment: Chapter 11 on *Inquisitive* due Thursday, November 17, by 8 pm

Fall Break Week November 21 -26

Week 14 November 29 / December 1) * Exam Two

Topic: Civil Liberties and Exam on December 1st