

GOV 310L American Government

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Unique Number: 37215

Fall 2023

TuTh 12:30 pm to 2:00 pm - Parlin Hall 201

Instructor

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Office: MEZ 3.216.

Office Hours: TuThu 11:30am to 12:30am & Wed 1:30pm – 3:00pm or by appointment

Course Description

How did our current form of government come about, and what makes it unique? What challenges does our Constitutional Republic face? How do the various parts of our governmental system function together, and what are the key policy debates in our nation today? Throughout the semester, we will delve into these questions and more as we explore different aspects of American Governance.

We will start with a basic overview of politics and governance before delving into our nation's founding and how decisions made over 200 years ago continue to shape our government today. Next, we will examine the various institutions that comprise our government and then shift our focus to the foundation of American Government—the views and opinions of the mass public.

Towards the end of the course, we will survey major policy areas of contemporary relevance and analyze how our government responds to and influences domestic and international public policy. By the course's conclusion, my goal is for you to have a strong understanding of how American government works and feel confident in making well-informed political decisions in your daily life.

Required Reading:

Lowi, Theodore J. et al. 2023. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. Seventeenth edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

ISBN: 978-1-324-03963-1

Course Requirements and Grading

- 25% - Assignments/Quizzes
- 25% - Exam I
- 25% - Exam II
- 25% - Exam III

A 93-100
A- 90-92
B+ 87-89
B 83-86
B- 80-82
C+ 77-79

C 73-76
C- 70-72
D 60-69
F 0-59

There will be no rounding of 89s, 79s, 69s, or 59s!

Class Participation/Quizzes

Assignments/quizzes will be given during the regularly scheduled class time and some will be required to be completed outside of class. Submission of in-class assignments/quizzes will be administered through Canvas and **MUST** be submitted during class time in order to receive credit. **Attendance and participation in class is expected and required. You must come prepared and ready to contribute very week.** Class contributions include but are not limited to: raising questions about the readings, relating your own experience or current events to the class discussion, listening and engaging with the contributions of fellow classmates.

Exams

The format of the three exams will be multiple choice and will cover all of the course lectures, films, and readings. Both exams will be administered during the regularly scheduled class time. The third exam will **NOT** be cumulative.

Excused Absences

An absence from class will only be excused if proper documentation is presented. In the case of an illness, you will need to produce a note from your doctor stating that you could not attend class that day. In all other cases, you will need to provide documentation from Student Emergency Services (<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>). In the case of planned activities, the documentation must be presented to me at least a week before your scheduled absence. I will not accept a planned activity as a valid excuse for an absence after the fact. In the case of unexpected circumstances, the documentation must be turned in within a week of your return.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be tolerated. Progress in the course, as well as feedback from classmates and classroom discussion depend on the timely submission of assignments. Like excused absences, late assignments will not count against your grade if there is a *legitimate documented reason* for the lateness. Again, discussions regarding late assignments must happen **BEFORE** the fact, not **AFTER** the fact. Late assignments will be docked 10 points per day, with no more than 50 points docked due to lateness. All late assignments have a **FINAL** submission date (regardless of total points docked) by (insert date of Presentation I). Any assignments not received by that date will be given a **ZERO**.

Expectations

Meeting the goals of the class requires—attendance, preparation and professionalism.

Attendance

Although attendance is not mandatory, it is expected. Therefore, I find it unnecessary to formally take attendance. Nevertheless, missing class will greatly affect your grade. First, I frequently give pop quizzes and in-class assignments. Students that miss a quiz/assignment will receive a zero. Second, exams are based on a combination of the course readings, class lectures, and supplementary media presentations. Thus, missing class will greatly affect your grade.

Preparation

Doing well in this class necessitates that students are informed and prepared. Therefore, you will be expected to complete the readings prior to the first day we are scheduled to cover that topic. This course covers a large amount of material in a short amount of time. If you do not keep up with the readings, your grade will reflect it.

Professionalism

Remember that this is an academic environment. Therefore, I ask that you minimize unnecessary disruptions. This includes (but it is not limited to) side conversations, cell phone calls, bringing pets to class¹, and the consumption of tobacco products². I also ask that you be proactive if any conflict occurs. This means notifying me ahead of time if you are unable to meet the requirements of the course.

Ground Rules

Because this course will sometimes deal with sensitive material, it is imperative that we set a series of ground rules.

1. Respect others. There will be times when you disagree with an idea that has been presented to the class. Although you have the right to disagree with someone, you must remember to challenge the idea and not the person.
2. Listen attentively. The purpose of this course is to present and discuss different ideas. In order to reap the benefits of such an exchange, you must be willing to pay attention to what others have to say.
3. Think before you speak. Refrain from making broad, general, and/or unsubstantiated comments. Make sure that you use evidence and provide a rationale for your statements.
4. Maintain the dignity of the academic environment. Your ideas should be presented using Standard English.
5. Raise your hand. This helps to maintain order in the classroom and helps to ensure that everyone has a chance to talk.
6. Be courteous. Refrain from interrupting or engaging in private conversation while others are speaking. Also, limit disruptive behavior, such as social media use, personal grooming, etc.

Procedures for Dealing with Grade/Evaluation Concerns

Grade/evaluation concerns will only be considered if the following procedure is followed:

All grade complaints must be **TYPED** and must clearly express the student's specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbook, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy. Written statements will not be considered until one week **AFTER** the assignment is returned to students. This allows the student time to reread his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made. Grievances will not be considered once two weeks have passed. For example, if I return a graded assignment on Monday, the student must submit a complaint **BEFORE** the

¹ The Elliott Rule

² The Mock-Hall Rule.

Friday of the following week. Once class is over on that Friday, no complaints will be considered for that assignment. Since class time is limited, I will only deal with questions or concerns during scheduled office hours. Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

University Code of Conduct

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Student Honor Code

As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.

Academic Dishonesty

According to the Institutional Rules, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsifying academic records. In the event that a student violates the University policy on scholastic dishonesty, he or she will be 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. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259, <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

Religious Holy Day Observance

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Campus Safety

Please note the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety>:

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation should inform the instructor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.
- Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050.
- Further information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Outline of Course Topics and Readings

1. ***Syllabus Week and Overview of Course [January 16 & 18]***
2. ***The Inception of America: Founding & the Constitution [January 23 & 25]***
 - Chapter 2: Constructing a Government: The Founding and the Constitution
3. ***Federalism: The Feds vs. The States [January 30 & February 1]***
 - Chapter 3: Federalism and the Separation of Powers
4. ***Rights & Liberties: Protection from Tyranny [February 6 & 8]***
 - Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
 - Chapter 5: Civil Rights
5. ***Congress: The People's Branch [February 13 & 15]***
 - Chapter 6: Congress: The First Branch
6. **Exam 1 Week [February 20 & 22]**
 - ***Exam Review [February 20th]***
 - **Exam 1 [February 22nd]**
7. ***The Presidency & The Executive Branch [February 27 & 29]***
 - Chapter 7: The Presidency as an Institution
 - Chapter 8: The Executive Branch
8. ***The Judiciary [March 5 & 7]***
 - Chapter 9: The Federal Courts
9. ***Spring Break [March 12 & 14]***
10. ***Political Parties [March 19 & 21]***
 - Chapter 12: Political Parties
11. **Exam 2 Week [March 26 & 28]**
 - ***Exam Review [March 26]***
 - **Exam 2 [March 28]**

12. *Public Opinion & Elections: The Voice of the People [April 2 & 4]*

- Chapter 10: Public Opinion
- Chapter 11: Elections

13. *Interest Groups & the Media [April 9 & 11]*

- Chapter 13: Groups and Organized Interests
- Chapter 14: The Media

14. *Public Policy [April 16 & 18]*

- Chapter 15: Economic Policy
- Chapter 16: Social Policy
- Chapter 17: Foreign Policy

15. Exam 3 Week

- *Exam Review – [April 23]*
- *Exam 3 – [April 25]*