

GOVT 2305.006 - American National Government

Course Instructor: Venkatesh Subramanian

Fall 2026 Syllabus

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Class Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 8:30am-9:45am
Class Room: JO 3.516 ([UTD Map link](#))

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10:30AM-12:30PM
Office Hours Location: MC 1.314 or Teams
Office Hours Booking: [Calendly Link](#)

TA name: Maitreyi Pillai
TA Office Hours: Walkins on Mondays, 10AM-12PM

TA E-mail: Maitreyi.Pillai@utdallas.edu
TA location: GR 3.318

Description

American National Government (GOVT 2305) is a 3-semester-credit-hours course which provides a survey of the US Federal government, politics, and constitutional development. This is a Texas Core Curriculum course (Core - 070 Government / Political Science). *There are no pre/co-requisites to this course.*

Learning Objectives

This course is aimed at enabling students to:

- critique the structure of the US federal government, and its role in different walks of life in America.
- communicate issues related to the US federal government and its politics within the context of the appropriate historical and scholarly trends.
- understand how they can engage with different branches of the US federal government.
- cultivate a sense of civic responsibility.

Course Materials

Required material on TopHat Pro

Students are **required** to purchase and access the textbook for this course via the Top Hat Pro platform by following these steps:

- Go to <https://app.tophat.com/e/180415>
- Follow the on-screen instructions to purchase access to the course (which includes the digital interactive textbook, *Introduction to American Government*).
 - If required you can use the join code: 180415

In addition to accessing the book, Top Hat Pro platform will also be used for assessing class attendance, administering homework assignments and exams, and polling in-class to gauge class participation. The Top Hat Pro platform subscription will cost \$35. In addition, the cost of the textbook is \$40, and it will be applied at checkout when purchasing the Top Hat Pro course. Please

don't panic if the books appears largely empty at the start. Chapter and HWs will reveal themselves as the course proceeds.

Should you require assistance with Top Hat Pro at any time please contact their Support Team directly by way of email (support@tophat.com), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491. Specific user information may be required by their technical support team when troubleshooting issues.

Optional material on Canvas

Apart from the required book on the Top Hat platform, all other supplemental course materials will be available free of cost on UTD's Canvas. This will include the class room lecture slides/notes. So, Canvas will be the secondary digital platform in the context of this course while TopHat will be the primary platform you will interact with.

Grades

Grading Components

Student grades in this course will be a weighted sum of the following components:

Component	Weightage
Open book/note exams (3 total, lowest score dropped)	50%
Closed-book, open-note, in-class final exam	10%
Weekly Top Hat chapter homework	30%
Class Attendance & Participation	10%
Excessive absences penalty	-3.5% per absence after 4th absence

Each component is described below.

Open Book/Note Exams (3 total, lowest score dropped)

There will be 3 open-book/note exams in this course per the dates provided in the schedule (see later in this document). Each of these exams is worth 25% with the lowest scoring exam being dropped in final grade calculations. All these 3 exams will be held online in the Top Hat Pro platform. These exams will be open within a 24-hour window (12:00 AM to 11:59 PM) on the exam date. Once started, the exam should be submitted within 75 minutes. Each exam will cover a set of non-cumulative chapters.

Make-up opportunities for missed exams are generally NOT available. In extraneous circumstances¹, it can be made available provided adequate justification/documentation is provided (e.g. a doctor's note).

Closed-book, Open-note, In-class Final Exam

There will be an in-class final exam on **Dec 16** (see class schedule below) during class hours via the TopHat Pro platform. Students will be *required* to bring their laptop to class to take this

¹What counts as an "extraneous" circumstance is at the discretion of the instructor decided on a case-by-case basis.

exam. This will be a “**Monitored Test**” which means students can NOT access any digital materials/documents/tools on their laptop other than the exam window. Instead, students will be allowed to bring a summary of their notes in *a single sheet of A4-size paper (both front & back)* as a reference during the exam. This final exam will be cumulative of all content covered in the course. This exam will be worth 10% of the final grade.

Given its closed-book nature, make-up opportunities for this final exam will generally NOT be available. Students who believe that they will not be able to take the exam on the assigned date and time should contact the instructor at least 2 weeks before the exam. Depending on the number of students with such requests, alternate arrangements can be made for such students for this final assessment of their holistic understanding of the course material.

Weekly Top Hat Chapter Homework

Each week in the Top Hat Pro platform students will answer homework questions. These homework questions are integrated into the textbook chapters. Points on homework are evaluated for both participation and correctness, with each attribute making up half of the points a question provides. The lowest homework grade will be dropped. These homeworks are worth 30% of the final grade. Each homework will be due at the date specified in the schedule below.

Late submission of homework is generally NOT allowed, and actively discouraged. In extraneous circumstances², it can be allowed provided adequate justification/documentation is submitted (e.g. a doctor’s note).

Class Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to attend each session of class. At the beginning of each class session an attendance code will be distributed that a student will input into TopHat. Students will be allowed 4 absences which can be taken without needing to explain to the instructor why they will be absent. Participation will be assessed based on engagement with in-class discussions and activities.

Excessive Absences Penalty

Any absences beyond the four allowed absences will be actively penalized at 3.5% of the final grade per absence in addition to any loss of participation points. The penalty may be excused if students provide adequate documentation justifying such absences (e.g. a doctor’s note).

Grading Scale

Score %	Letter Grade
>=93	A/A+
90-92	A-
86-89	B+
83-85	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
74-77	C
70-73	C-

²What counts as an “extraneous” circumstance is at the discretion of the instructor decided on a case-by-case basis.

Score %	Letter Grade
67-69	D+
64-66	D
60-63	D-
<60	F

There is no rounding (a 89.9 is NOT a 90). The instructor has the right to adjust the grade scale or curve based on the overall performance of the class.

Class schedule & submission deadlines

Week	Class Dates	Topics	Deadlines
1	08/24	Introduction	Ungraded HW due 09/13
	08/26	Ch 1: American National Government	
2	08/31	Ch 1: American National Government	Ch 1 HW due 09/13
	09/02	Ch 2: US Constitution	
3	09/07	Labor Day	Ch 2 HW due 09/13
	09/09	Ch 2: US Constitution [Census Day]	
4	09/14 and 09/16	Ch 3: Federalism	Ch 3 HW due 09/20
5	09/21 and 09/23	Ch 4: Congress	Ch 4 HW due 09/27
6	09/28 and 09/30	Ch 5: The Presidency	<i>Open book/note exam 1 (Ch 1-4) on 10/01; Ch 5 HW due 10/04</i>
7	10/05 and 10/07	Ch 6: The Federal Courts	Ch 6 HW due 10/11
8	10/12 and 10/14	Ch 7: Civil Rights	Ch 7 HW due 10/18
9	10/19 and 10/21	Ch 8: Civil Liberties	<i>Open book/note exam 2 (Ch 5-7) on 10/22; Ch 8 HW due 10/25</i>
10	10/26 and 10/28	Ch 9: Political Parties	Ch 9 HW due 11/01
11	11/02 and 11/04	Ch 10: Interest Groups	Ch 10 HW due 11/08
12	11/09 and 11/11	Ch 11: Campaigns and Elections	Ch 11 HW due 11/15
13	11/16 and 11/18	Ch 12: Media and Politics	<i>Open book/note exam 3 (Ch 8-11) on 11/19; Ch 12 HW due 11/22</i>
14	-	Fall Break and Thanksgiving	
15	11/30 and 12/02	Ch 13: Public Opinions	Ch 13 HW due 12/06
16	12/07 and 12/09	Ch 14 and 15	Ch 14 HW due 12/13
17	12/16	<i>Closed-book, open-note, in-class final exam</i>	

Course Policies

This syllabus and the course policies are subject to change at the instructor's sole discretion. Any changes will be disclosed in-class and/or via announcements in Canvas/Email before the changes can take effect.

Email Communication & Getting Help

Students can communicate with the instructor or the TA by emailing them at the email addresses provided on the top of this syllabus. Only student emails from official UTD email addresses (suffixed utdallas.edu) will get a response. Given the scale of the classroom for this course, students can expect a response only on legitimate queries. Legitimate queries are those that can't be answered by reading this syllabus. So, students are encouraged to **read this syllabus thoroughly** before emailing the instructor/TA. *Students can expect a response in 1-2 business days.* Business days are Monday through Friday with the exception of government holidays.

For queries about course logistics not covered in this syllabus, students should email the TA. When writing emails to the TA, students can refer to the TA as "Dear Ms. Pillai". Keep in mind the TA can CC the instructor in responses and/or ask the student to meet during office hours, if necessary. For queries about course content and subject matter, the instructor can be emailed directly. When writing emails to the instructor, students can refer to the instructor as "Dear Mr. Subramanian". Students are encouraged to specify "GOVT 2305" in the subject line so that the instructor/TA can find the relevant emails quickly. An ideal email will ensure to give sufficient information so that the instructor/TA can help resolve the issue. This may include attaching screenshots or other relevant supporting materials, referencing the language from this syllabus, describing what the student has already attempted to resolve the issue, and clarifying what sort of actions the instructor/TA can take to help with the issue.

Clear written communication is an art unto itself, and students can immensely benefit by taking the time to draft clear emails. Overall, students are encouraged to remember this maxim when communicating (via email or office hours) to get help: *"Help can be provided to only those who help themselves."* Put concisely, in the words of the popular film, Jerry Maguire, *"Help me, help you!"*

Office Hours

To meet the Teaching Assistant (TA), students can walk-in to GR 3.318 on Mondays at 10AM-12PM along with their Comet Cards. If another student is in conversation with the TA during a walk-in, students must be civil, and wait their turn. If more than 2 students are already in line to meet the TA, students must avoid overcrowding, and walk back in later or email the TA to set up an appointment on an alternative timeslot.

To meet the instructor, students can book a 15-minute timeslot using the Calendly link at the top of this syllabus. Appointments are available on Wednesdays at 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM. Students have the option of either meeting the instructor in-person or on Teams. If meeting in-person, the meeting will be held in Sonora Lab (MC 1.314) located at the bottom of the Eugene McDermott Library. Note that reaching this destination requires students to bring their Comet Card along with them.

For a productive meeting with either the TA/instructor, it is ideal for students to come prepared with 1-3 specific questions/comments/concerns regarding the course that they'd want to discuss.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Please refer to the section [in this URL](#) titled 'Accommodations for Students with Disabilities' in the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures. Students in need of accommodations are encouraged to contact the instructor directly via email **as early as possible** in the semester. This will be especially important to make proper arrangements for the in-class final exam.

Academic Integrity Policy

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are strongly encouraged to review the University's policies regarding academic honesty, which can be read [in this URL](#).

Technology and Devices

Laptops and tablets are permitted for course-related use only. Phones must remain silenced. Students must avoid distractions, and respect the attention of classmates during in-class sessions.

Class Recordings

Recording class sessions is prohibited unless officially approved by the AccessAbility Resource Center or if class is held online due to special circumstances as dictated by the university. Recordings may not be shared or uploaded to the world wide web. Unauthorized use will result in disciplinary action.

Reporting Sexual Misconduct and Sharing Confidential Information

Please refer to [this URL](#) of the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures under the section titled 'Reporting Sexual Misconduct and Sharing Confidential Information'.

Students must be aware that the course instructor *and* TA are considered a "responsible employee" under UT Dallas's sexual misconduct policy which means that per UTD policy and Texas state law *both* are required to report a potential Title IX incident that you disclose to them to the university's Title IX coordinator. We, the instructor and TAs of this course, are revealing this information to students because we care and want to help keep students safe, but we cannot (per university policy/state law) keep a potential Title IX violation confidential and we don't want students to feel like we betrayed anyone's confidence.

Here is a link to the UT Dallas sexual misconduct policy (UTDBP3102): <https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdbp3102>

Here are some confidential resources for students to reach out to get help:

- Student Counseling Center, SSB 4.600
 - phone number: 972-883-2575, or after hours helpline 972-UTD-TALK (972-883-8255)
 - website: <https://counseling.utdallas.edu/>
- healthcare professionals at the Student Health Center, SSB 4.700
 - phone number: 972-883-2747
 - website: <https://studenthealthcenter.utdallas.edu/>
- Dallas Area Rape Crisis Center, Dallas, TX
 - phone number: 972-641-7273 (24-hour crisis hotline)
 - website: <https://www.dallasrapecrisis.org/>
- The Turning Point, Plano, TX
 - phone number: 800-886-7273 (24-hour crisis hotline)
 - website: <https://www.theturningpoint.org/>

Resources for Student Success

UTD has a constellation of resources aimed at helping students. Please find them here: <https://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>

A couple of notable resources include:

- The Comet Cupboard is a UT Dallas food pantry initiative dedicated to helping students in need. The Comet Cupboard is located in MC 1.604, on the first floor of the McDermott Library, and can be contacted by calling 972-883-6613 or email.
- The Student Counseling Center offers confidential services to students either for individual appointments or as part of groups. Initial appointments must be made in person in the Student Counseling Center, which is located in SSB 4.600, on the fourth floor of the Student Services Building. Their main number is 972-883-2575 and the 24/7 Crisis Hotline is 972-883-8255 (972-UTD-TALK).

Miscellaneous Policies

Additional UT Dallas Syllabus Policies may be found at: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>
Students should comply with the UTD Student Code of Conduct here: <https://policy.utdallas.edu/utdsp5003> Overall, students are encouraged to conduct themselves per the **Comet Creed**:
"As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do."