GOVT 2302:
Political Institutions in the U.S. and Texas

Course Information

GOVT 2302
Section 2302-002
Spring 2011
TR 10:00am-11:15pm, HH 2.402

Contact Information

Prof. Patrick T. Brandt
E-mail: pbrandt@utdallas.edu
Office: Green 2.802
Hours: Monday 3-5pm, Tuesday and Thursday 9-10am, and by appointment
Phone: 972 883 4923

TA: Joy Francisco
E-mail: jbf094020@utdallas.edu
Office: Green 3.314
Hours: TR 1:30-3:00pm

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of politics and the constitutions and political institutions of the United States and Texas.

The information in this course is more practical than you might think: whether you are an engineering, business, or political science major, as a citizen it is important that you be informed about how government works. Businessmen find it difficult to navigate government that they do not understand, and engineers cannot get a patent unless they know the rules and laws that protect inventions, and citizens have almost no hope of finding out anything by calling a government agency in a phone book.

Student Learning Objectives

On completing this core curriculum course, students will be able to:

- provide examples and apply important theoretical and scholarly approaches to explaining state and national institutional behavior, citizen involvement, and interaction between citizens and institutions of government
- analyze and appreciate historical trends in the development of government institutions and their constitutional foundations
- identify, describe and analyze various mechanisms of citizen political involvement.

Required texts and materials

The following book has been ordered for this course:

Ginsberg et al. 2009. *We the people, An introduction to American politics (Texas edition)*. 7th edition. W. W. Norton.

This text is available at the UTD bookstore, Off-Campus Books, etc. Off Campus Books allows rentals of this text.

There is also an e-book for this course if you would prefer an on-line version. It is available for purchase / access at `www.nortonebooks.com/disciplines/polisci.asp`
Please be sure to chose the **Texas edition** of *We the People* before clicking on the option to purchase.

Students regularly ask me if they can use another (i.e., cheaper) edition. That choice is up to you and I have no opinion other than to note that the quizzes and exams are based on the text listed above.

Required readings will be approximately 50 pages per week. You should read carefully the material at least once before class. Chapter references in the course outline are to this text.

Students should also stay abreast of current events in American politics. Current events will figure prominently in class discussions, assignments, as well as examples. I recommend making a habit of reading a daily paper such as the Dallas Morning News, New York Times or the Chicago Tribune. Alternatively you may also wish to read a weekly news magazine such as The Economist, Newsweek, Time, or U.S. News and World Report.

Grading and Course Policies

Grading

There are **FOUR** major graded components to this course:

- **First exam, February 10, 2011** (28% of final grade).
- **Second exam, March 10, 2011** (28% of final grade).
- **Third exam, April 28, 2011** (28% of final grade).
- Highest 14 of 16 online quizzes via eLearning (16% of final grade).

There is no extra credit available in this course. Note the grading criteria and plan accordingly for your success.

Grades are based on the standard grading scale: A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, etc., with pluses / minuses at my discretion.

If you have any questions about your grade on an assignment, please wait until 24 hours after receiving your assignment before discussing the grade with the professor—not the teaching assistant. There are no exceptions to this policy.

If you wish to have an assignment re-graded, it must be returned to the professor within two days of the day it was returned (if I am not available that day, ask the staff of the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences to leave it in my box). Assignments to be re-graded must include a memo stating the reason why you believe they assignment should be re-graded. Finally, re-graded assignments can be graded higher, lower, or the same as the initial grade.

Exams

The three exams and an optional makeup exam will be given on the dates noted in the course plan of this syllabus. Exams will be given in-class. More information about the exams will be given before the exam dates. The exams are based on lecture material AND required readings.

No makeup exams will be given. Instead, with advance notice, students may take a comprehensive makeup exam to replace up to *one* missed exam during the regularly scheduled final exam period for this class. If you miss more than one exam, you will receive a zero for the additional missed exam. There are no exceptions. The makeup exam cannot be made up if missed. Plan on taking the comprehensive makeup exam at your own risk. *The comprehensive makeup exam may only be taken to replace a single missed exam, not to raise your grade or replace an earlier exam. Plan your schedule and course preparation accordingly.*

eLearning

eLearning is used in this class for quizzes, review, and to check your progress in the class. If you do not have a computer at home or prefer to work on campus, you may do this at the library or in the many computer labs on campus. You can access the course eLearning page at `http://elearning.utdallas.edu`. Additional information about how to use eLearning is available at this site as well. You will need a UTD net-id to access this site.

eLearning is also how I will communicate with you. You are responsible for announcements made through eLearning. You may forward messages from eLearning to your regular e-mail account. Please select a forwarding address in your mail preferences if you do not regularly check your eLearning mail or UTD email.

Quizzes

You must take quizzes online through eLearning. The are accessible via the "Assessments" tab on the left menu (I know this sounds weird, but there is no way for me to change the button name in eLearning.) The following rules should be noted for each quiz:

- The quizzes are "open book." You may refer to the book and to lecture materials while you take the quizzes.
- The order of questions is randomized, so there is no advantage to "working with someone" on them. You should work independently of other students to make sure you have mastered the material.
- It is your responsibility to take the quiz before it expires and to note the date and time of the expiration. These dates are all noted in the "Calendar" tab on the left menu in eLearning. You have an approximately one week window to take each quiz, so plan accordingly. There is a 3 hour time window once you start a quiz during which you will be able to take the each chapter quiz. Plan to set aside enough time to complete the quiz in the appropriate time.
- I am not responsible for your inability to access eLearning. Plan for any outages in eLearning (they are announced and posted in My eLearning). Any problems you have accessing eLearning are your problem not mine.
- You are probably going to want to save or print the quizzes once you have completed them. They are going to make up to a majority of the questions you are asked on the exams.
- I will only count your highest 14 of the 16 quizzes. There are no makeups for the quizzes. If you miss a quiz, you will receive a zero and it will be dropped unless you have three or more missed quizzes. Please plan accordingly. In the end missing each quiz after the first two you miss lowers your final grade by 1.14 points. So missing all of the quizzes will lower your final grade by 16 points (or one and a half letter grades).

Although the quizzes are open book and only consist of 16% of your grade, they are essential to your level of success in the class. Missed quizzes cannot be made up or reviewed for the exam. Up to 50% of the exam material will come from the quizzes. The rest of the material will come from readings and the lectures.

Attendance

Class attendance is required. I will randomly take attendance throughout the term. You are responsible for any

announcements made or information given during class. I may provide copies of lecture notes or slides at my discretion. However these are only an outline of the material, so your attendance is very important if you are to master the material.

University Policies

University course-related policies about e-mail, course withdrawls, grievance procedures, incomplete grades, disability services, and holiday policies are at `http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies`.

Course conduct and expectations

The following rules apply in class:

1. You may not use laptops, iPads, iPhones, or other portable electronic devices during the lecture. I have found that they are too distracting and take away from your attention to the lecture. Your Facebook or Twitter update can wait until the end of class.
2. Turn off your cell phone. It is VERY distracting to others. "Off" means that it does not ring OR vibrate. (Exceptions to this policy can be made, come to talk to me.)
3. Do not fall asleep. It is rude and distracting. Bring coffee if you need it (I do.)
4. Be polite and courteous to your fellow students.
5. Raise your hand when you want to be recognized to answer or ask a question. If you do not raise your hand I will not recognize you or your answer.
6. You are responsible for things: therefore if you miss something I announced or fail to complete an assignment, my response will be "How is this my problem?"
7. Note that this syllabus is not a contract. It is subject to change at my discretion. While we may be studying the political science, this class is not a democracy.
8. Class starts at 11:30am, not 11:45am. Be here on time.
9. Respect my time and I will respect yours. We are both busy.
10. Grade disputes must follow university policies about how to contest a grade. If you contact me to contest a grade I will immediate refer you to the University policy and will follow it to the letter.
11. Problems with *eLearning* are not my problem. You need to note 1) the outages schedule and 2) when assignments are due. If you start an assignment and do not complete it before it is due, then it is your problem, not mine. If you leave a quiz until the last minute it is at your peril, not mine.
12. *You are expected to be pro-active in anticipating and planning for any absences or problems you will have in completing course work.* Make arrangements for possibly missed work prior to the due date is preferable and more likely to be successful than doing it after the due date. In the end: "A failure to plan on your part does not constitute a crisis for me." Plan for absences and missed work accordingly.
13. Don't wait until the 6th or later week of class to ask about your grade. I will be doing midterm grade by week 9: they are due on October 15th. They will only include the grade from your first exam. If you e-mail me or contact me around or after this date, the commentary from me will be heavily based on your first exam grade and quiz grades (which you will already known from eLearning).

Course Calendar

The dates listed for each topic are approximate and will depend on how quickly we move through material. You should read the material for each date *before* class. Also note that you will need to check eLearning periodically for updates, announcements and quizzes. Readings are listed under the lecture topics below.

11 January:	Introduction
13 January:	What is Government? Ch 1
18 January:	Politics, Institutions, Incentives, Collective Action, and Strategy
20 January:	Politics, Institutions, Incentives, Collective Action, and Strategy
25 January:	Constitution Ch 2
27 January:	Constitution U.S. Constitution Federalist 10 Federalist 51
1 February	Texas Constitution Ch 20
3 February:	Federalism Ch 3
8 February:	Texas Local Government Ch 26
10 February:	**Exam 1**
15 February:	Congress Ch 12
17 February:	Congress Ch 12
22 February:	Texas Legislature Ch 23
24 February:	Presidency Ch 13

1 March:	Presidency Ch 13
3 March:	Texas Executive Ch 24
8 March:	Bureaucracy Ch 14
10 March:	**Exam 2**
15 and 17 March	Spring Break
22 March:	Judiciary Ch 15
24 March:	Judiciary Ch 15
29 March:	Texas Judiciary Ch 25
31 March:	Government and the Economy Ch 16
5 April:	Government and the Economy Ch 16
7 April:	Government and the Economy Ch 16
12 April	Social Policy Ch 17
14 April:	Foreign Policy Ch 18
19 April:	Foreign Policy Ch 18
21 April:	Public Policy in Texas Ch 27
26 April:	Public Policy in Texas Ch 27
28 April:	**Exam 3**
5 May:	**Comprehensive Makeup Exam, 8:00am**

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.