

GOVT 2302: Political Institutions in the U.S. and Texas
Section 2302-004
Spring 2006
2:00-3:15pm, Green 3.420

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Description

This course is an introduction to the study of politics, 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.

Grading and Requirements

Grading

There are 3 major graded components to this course:

- Three examinations (each 30% of final grade).
- Online quizzes via WebCT (10% of final grade).
- An optional final exam (30% of final grade).

No make up exams will be given. Instead, with advance notice, students may take a comprehensive final exam to replace one exam. If you miss more than one exam, you will receive a zero for the additional missed exam. There are no exceptions. The optional comprehensive exam cannot be made up if missed. Plan on taking the optional comprehensive exam at your own risk.

Incompletes are assigned at the discretion of the professor, according to the policy as stated in the Catalog. To be considered for an incomplete, you must petition with the appropriate form. Please note that the university requires that you have completed at least 70% of the course material to be eligible for an incomplete. Moreover, the incomplete work must be finished within one semester from the date of the original granting of the incomplete.

Grades are based on the standard grading scale: A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, etc.

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 Social 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 optional final will be given on the dates noted in the course plan of this syllabus. Exams will be given in-class.

Quizzes

You must take quizzes online through WebCT. The quizzes are “open book.” You may refer to the book and to lecture materials while you take the quizzes. There is a time window during which you will be able to take the each chapter quiz. It is your responsibility to take the quiz before it expires and to note the date and time of the expiration. Although the quizzes are open book and only consist of 10% 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. There will be no review for the exams. Instead, 75% of the exam material will come from the quizzes. The rest of the material will come from readings and the lectures.

WebCT

WebCT 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.

If you are unfamiliar with WebCT, go to the following website for directions:

http://www.utdallas.edu/distancelearning/students/webct_login.htm

If you need help with a netID or unix password, go here:

<http://www.utdallas.edu/distancelearning/students/netid.htm>

WebCT is a technology based learning aid. Because of this, occasional, brief outages are possible. If, for whatever reason, you lose your connection during an quiz, do not panic. When you are able to log on again, continue with the quiz, even if webct states that you have exceeded the time limit. In these cases, you quiz will still be graded. In general, it is strongly recommended that you do not wait until the last minute to take your quizzes. According to Murphys law, problems occur when least convenient. Procrastinate at your own risk.

Requirements

Class attendance is required. You are responsible for any announcements made or information given during class.

The exams are based on lecture material AND required readings. Some of the lecture material will not be in the readings. (The professor will not provide copies of class notes).

Required readings will be approximately 50 pages per week. You should read carefully the material at least once before class.

University policy requires that you have a UTD netid and e-mail account. E-mail sent to me from non-UTD accounts may not arrive or may be trapped by spam filters. Please use your UTD e-mail account and clearly identify yourself by name in e-mail messages.

Course conduct

Your conduct is governed by the Student Code of Conduct and the Regents' Rules and Regulations. Students are expected to follow these requirements. If there is any doubt about acceptable practices for assignments, students are expected to ask the instructor. Ignorance of these requirements does not exonerate you from their requirements, or from knowledge of what constitutes cheating. It should be noted that the instructor has a zero-tolerance policy on cheating and plagiarism. *The recommended penalty in most cases of scholastic dishonesty on an assignment, quiz, exam or paper will be a failing grade on the assignment, a recommendation of a failing grade for the course and a referral to the appropriate Dean*

The following rules apply in class:

1. 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.)
2. Do not fall asleep. It is rude and distracting. Bring coffee if you need it (I do.)
3. Be polite and courteous to your fellow students.
4. 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.
5. You are responsible for things: therefore if you miss something I announced my response will be "How is this my problem?"
6. 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.
7. Class starts at 2:00pm. Not 2:15. Be here on time.

If you have a condition that requires accommodation in this course, please speak with me after class or in office hours during the first week of class. I will be happy to make appropriate accommodations provided timely notice is received and the arrangement is consistent with any recommendations from Disability Services, when applicable. Disability Services can be reached at 883-2098. The syllabus and other course materials can be made available in alternative formats.

You are expected to be proactive 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.

Books and readings

Course Text

Lowi, Theodore et al. 2005. *We the people, An introduction to American politics (Texas edition)*. 5th edition. W. W. Norton. ISBN: 0-393-92621-4

Chapter references in the course plan are to this text.

Readings and Current Events

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.

Course Outline

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 WebCT periodically for updates, announcements and quizzes.

Note that this is not a contract. It is subject to change at my discretion.

10 January:	Introduction	2 March:	Bureaucracy
12 January:	What is Government? Ch 1		Ch 14
17 January:	Politics, Institutions, Incentives, Collective Action, and Strategy	7 March:	Spring Break
19 January:	Constitution	9 March:	Spring Break
	Ch 2	14 March:	Bureaucracy
24 January:	Constitution		Ch 14
	U.S. Constitution	16 March:	Judiciary
	Federalist 10		Ch 15
	Federalist 51		Last day to withdraw!
26 January:	Texas Constitution	21 March:	Judiciary
	Ch 20		Ch 15
31 January:	Federalism	23 March:	Exam 2
	Ch 3	28 March:	Texas Judiciary
2 February:	Texas Local Government		Ch 25
	Ch 26	30 March:	Government and the Economy
7 February:	Exam 1		Ch 16
9 February:	Congress	4 April:	Government and the Economy
	Ch 12		Ch 16
14 February:	Congress	6 April:	Social Policy
	Ch 12		Ch 17
16 February:	Texas Legislature	11 April:	Foreign Policy
	Ch 23		Ch 18
21 February:	Presidency	13 April:	Foreign Policy
	Ch 13		Ch 18
23 February:	Presidency	18 April:	Public Policy in Texas
	Ch 13		Ch 27
28 February:	Texas Executive	20 April:	Exam 3
	Ch 24	25 April:	Optional Comprehensive Final Exam, 2pm