

University of Texas at Dallas
GOVT 2305.011 Fall, 2013
Syllabus

Instructor: Dr. Brian Bearry
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Textbooks:

Bearry, Brian. *American Government: Understanding the Democratic Republic*
Kendall Hunt Publishing, ISBN: 978-0-7575-7704-8

Alexander Hamilton argued during the Constitutional Convention that men are attached to their governments for what he considered five reasons: self-interest, opinion, habit, force of law or arms, and honor. With this in mind, what would you say is the cause of most Americans' attachment to their government? Is it merely opinion imprinted through education; is it simply habit; or is the American model of government the best guarantor of freedom and liberty yet devised by human beings? Or, are the principles of the Constitution an eloquent deception so that the wealthy and "elite" can rule? What is *your* attachment? Do you belong to that class of citizens who Roger Sherman argued (when discussing the incompetence of the American people to elect Congress) should not be allowed to vote because you "lack for information and are constantly liable to be misled?" Or, do you know the basic underlying principles, institutions and functions of American government and politics? The purpose of this course is to discuss questions such as these and to give you a broad overview of the foundation and purpose of American governmental institutions and politics. The focus of this course will be threefold. The first aspect of this course will be devoted to American foundational ideals and principles, such as republicanism, federalism (to include local government,) separation of powers, majority rule etc.; as well as an excursion into the meaning and structure of the US Constitution. During the second part of this course we will explore the constitutional foundations of the three main branches of government and their operations. And lastly you should gain an appreciation for American governmental secondary institutions and politics; in which we will explore public opinion, the media, political parties and interest groups, as well as political campaigns and elections. And lastly, By the end of the semester, you should have the intellectual foundation to understand, analyze and discuss American national government and politics as it pertains to contemporary American political life.

On completing this course, students will be able to:

1. provide examples and apply important theoretical and scholarly approaches to explaining national institutional behavior, citizen involvement, and interaction between citizens and institutions of government;
2. analyze and appreciate historical trends in the development of government institutions and their constitutional foundations;
3. identify, describe and analyze various mechanisms of American politics as they relate to a healthy functioning, free democratic polity.

Requirements, grading and participation:

Each student will be required to follow current events (you may use whatever newspapers, magazines, internet sites—please ensure the source is considered "legitimate" as defined by common journalistic and political standards). You will see current events questions on the tests and quizzes. There will be four exams for this course. Thus, your final grade will be determined as follows:

Four exams	20% each
Unit Posts	20%
Total	100%

Grading scale:

A: 94-100	B-: 80-83	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-93	C+: 77-79	D: 64-66
B+: 87-89	C: 74-76	D-: 60-63
B: 84-86	C-: 70-73	F: below 60

Class rules and grades:

1. COURSE POSTS. Module posts are due no later than 11:59 pm on the due date. Any post submitted after that time will receive a 0 for that post. All module posts are final—there are no “revisions” or “re-dos”. Ensure that before you post, you have developed a well-thought out argument that exactly follows the prompts. I generally grade the posts as they come in—but I do not release the grades until all posts have been graded.
2. PODCASTS & SLIDES. The PowerPoint slides that accompany the podcasts are simply outlines to the particular lecture. You are responsible for the information lectured during the podcasts—it is testable material; the slides are simply sketches to what is being discussed, so it is in your interest to take notes on what seem to be the salient point of the discussions.
3. EXAMS. Exams are to be completed on the exam date. Tests will be available for the 24 hour period on the exam date. You may take the test at a time of your choosing on that date. Once the exam closes, you may not take the exam.
4. Sunday night “document dumps.” Check elearning Sunday evenings for supplemental reading. Sometimes there will be no supplemental reading; other times, there may be chapter length reading. With each post, you will be notified of the date by which the reading should be completed.
5. All grades are final (unless there is a mistake when determining a grade—this does happen). The time to be concerned with a grade is during the semester, not after. When challenging a grade, it is the responsibility of the student to produce the requisite materials. There is no extra credit given in this class.

University Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty:

It is the policy of the University of Texas at Dallas that cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Violations will result in immediate disciplinary action to the fullest extent of University policy. See the University catalog for a detailed explanation.

Additional reading:

Brutus Essay #11 <http://www.thisnation.com/library/antifederalist/80.html>

Hamilton, Madison, Jay. *Federalist Papers*

These papers may be found at: <http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/federalist/>

James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance*: <http://www.law.ou.edu/ushistory/remon.shtml>

Mayflower Compact: <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/revolution/mayflower.htm>

John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon (*Cato's Letters*):

Letter #15: <http://classicliberal.tripod.com/cato/letter015.html> (free speech)

Letter #38: <http://classicliberal.tripod.com/cato/letter038.html> (representative government)

Letter #96 <http://classicliberal.tripod.com/cato/letter096.html> (parties)

U.S. Constitution: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/constitution.overview.html>

Reading schedule and course outline:

FOUNDATIONS

Module 1 Political Science, Government & Politics (two lectures)

- Aug 26—course introduction
Aug 28—*American Government*, ch 1 (intro to democratic theory)
Aug 30—*Mayflower Compact; Cato's Letters*, #38 (introduction to American constitutional theory)
Sept 2—campus closed; Labor Day

Module 2 American Founding and Constitution (three lectures)

- Sept 4—*Declaration of Independence; American Government*, pp. 13-20; John Adams, *Thoughts on Government* (colonial government)
Sept 6—*American Government*, pp. 20-31; (Articles of Confederation; Constitutional Convention)
Sept 9—U.S. Constitution, <http://www.constitution.org/constit.htm> (Constitution)
Sept 11—*Federalist Papers* #10, 51 (constitutional principles--ratification)
Sept 13—ratification, <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/ratification/antifederalist/>
Sept 16—*American Government*, pp 33-44 (federalism)
Sept 18—*American Government*, pp 44-50 (federalism)

Module 3 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights (four lectures)

- Sept 20—Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance (<http://www.law.ou.edu/ushistory/remon.shtml>); religious freedom
Cato's Letter #15 (<http://classliberal.tripod.com/cato/letter015.html>) freedom of speech
Sept 23—Bill of Rights (http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)
Sept 25—*American Government* pp. 53-69 (civil liberties)
Sept 27—*American Government* pp. 69-81 (civil rights); **POST 1 DUE**
Sept 30—**EXAM 1**

INSTITUTIONS

Module 4 Congress, Executive & Judiciary (seven lectures)

- Oct 2—*Federalist Papers* #57 & #62 (<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/federalist/>)
Brutus #6 (<http://www.thisnation.com/library/antifederalist/33.html>)
Oct 4—download and read PDF from elearning (Congress)
Oct 7—download and read PDF from elearning (Congress)
Oct 9—*Federalist* #69 (<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/federalist/>)
Cato #4 (<http://www.thisnation.com/library/antifederalist/67.html>)
Oct 11—*American Government*, pp 189-208 (Presidency)
Oct 14—*American Government*, pp 208- 240 (Presidency)
Oct 16—*American Government*, ch 11 (federal bureaucracy)

Oct 18—James Wilson:
The Bureaucracy Problem (<http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/the-bureaucracy-problem>)
Oct 21—Federalist #78 (<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/federalist/>)
Brutus Letter #11 (<http://www.thisnation.com/library/antifederalist/80.html>)

Oct 23—American Government, TBA **POST 2 DUE**
Oct 25—American Government, TBA
Oct 28—**EXAM #2**

DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

Module 5 Public Opinion, Media and Interest Groups (five lectures)

Oct 30—Tocqueville:
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/1_ch15.htm read: "Power Exercised by the Majority Upon Opinion"
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch1_02.htm read: "Of the Principle Source of Belief among Democratic Nations"

Nov 1—American Government, pp 91-99 (public opinion)
Nov 4—American Government, pp 99-110 (public opinion)
Nov 6---American Government, pp 113-121 (media)
Nov 8---American Government, pp 121-128(media)
Nov 11---American Government, pp 131-140 (interest groups)
Nov 13---American Government, pp 140-146 (interest groups)

Module 6 Political Parties, Voting, Campaigns and Elections, Public Policy (five lectures)

Nov 15---American Government, pp 149-156 (political parties)
Nov 18—campus closed; Fall Break
Nov 20—campus closed; Fall Break
Nov 22—campus closed; Fall Break
Nov 25---American Government, pp 156-168 (political parties)
Nov 27—Federalist Paper #68 (<http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/federalist/>)
Nov 29—American Government, ch 13 (voting)
Dec 2—American Government, ch 13 (campaigns and elections)
Dec 4—American Government, ch 14 (public policy)
Dec 6—American Government, ch 14 (public policy)
Dec 9—**POST #3 DUE**
Dec 11—**EXAM #3**

DEC 13-19—Final Exam. The exam covers material from modules 1-4; and will deal only with the Constitution, constitutional principles and the operations of the three main branches of government. You have any time during this period to take the exam.

News and editorial sources:

RealclearPolitics <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/index.html> Excellent source of political news and opinion.

Drudge Report <http://drudgereport.com/>

Political polling <http://www.pollster.com/>

Fox News <http://www.foxnews.com/> "Conservative" or right-leaning news site.

CNN <http://www.cnn.com/> "Liberal" or left-leaning news site.

Dallas Morning News <http://www.dallasnews.com/> State and local news.

Washington Examiner <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/> Political news with a conservative slant

The Politico <http://www.politico.com/> Political news with a liberal slant.

Just One Minute <http://justoneminute.typepad.com/main/> Generally high-quality conservative/right political commentary.

Talking Points Memo <http://www.talkingpointsmemo.com/> Generally high-quality liberal/left political commentary.

Redstate <http://www.redstate.com/> Partisan conservative political commentary.

Daily Kos <http://www.dailykos.com/> Partisan liberal political commentary.