

# **GOVT 2305: American National Government**

## **Course Information**

GOVT 2305  
Section 2305-002  
Spring 2016  
TR 1:00pm-2:15pm, HH 2.402

## **Contact Information**

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## **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the study of politics and the constitution, political institutions, and national policies of the United States.

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.

## **Student Learning Objectives**

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

- Explain the meaning of key terms like federalism, separation of powers, judicial review, incumbency advantage, and primary elections).
- Describe the historical and social context within which the American political system operates.
- Explain the value and origins of the U.S. Constitution.
- Describe how the major institutions of the federal government (executive, legislative, and judiciary) operate and interact.

## **Required texts and materials**

The following book has been ordered for this course:

*The Logic of American Politics* 7th Edition by Kernell and Jacobson et al., Sage/CQ Press.

This text is available at the UTD bookstore, Off-Campus Books, etc.

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 60 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 or its equivalent

website such as the Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times, New York Times or the Chicago Tribune. Alternatively you may also wish to read a weekly news magazine or its web equivalent such as The Economist, Time, etc. Since we are in a presidential election year this will figure prominently into class discussions.

## Grading and Course Policies

### Grading

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

1. **First exam** (30% of final grade).
2. **Second exam** (30% of final grade).
3. **Third exam** (30% of final grade).
4. Highest 12 of 14 online quizzes via eLearning (10% 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 and based on class performance.

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). Finally, re-graded assignments can be graded higher, lower, or the same as the initial grade.

### Exams

The three exams will be given on the dates noted below 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, on dates scheduled in advance, students may take a makeup exam to replace up to *one* missed exam during the regularly scheduled periods. 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 makeup exams 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 and Quizzes

eLearning is used in this class for quizzes, review, and to check your progress in the class. 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 your UTD netid 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 *UTD* 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. They are accessible via the “Quizzes” folder. 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 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. If you do not take the assessment, you have no later access to the questions or answers. Do not e-mail me asking me to change this, since the default policy is to only make quizzes available to those who have completed them.
- I will only count your highest 12 of the 14 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 0.0083 points. So missing all of the quizzes will lower your final grade by a fraction of a letter grade.

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. 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. For verifying your enrollment in the course, I will utilize quiz completion before the census date.

## Supplemental Instruction

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is offered for this course. SI sessions are free group study opportunities, scheduled two or three times per week. Sessions are facilitated by an SI Leader, who has recently taken the course and received a high final grade. Attendance is voluntary. For information about the days, times, and locations for SI sessions, refer to <http://www.utdallas.edu/studentsuccess/leaders/si.html>.

Contact UGE Teaching Intern, Dhiren Kisani at [dkk140030@utdallas.edu](mailto:dkk140030@utdallas.edu) for more details.

## University Policies

University course-related policies about e-mail, course withdrawals, 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. I strongly *discourage* the use of laptops, iPads, phones, 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.
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.
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 1:00pm, not 1:15pm. 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 immediately 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 grades by week 8: they are due on March 5th. 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 know from eLearning).

## Course Calendar

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.

12 January:	Introduction
14 January:	What is Government? Chapter 1
19-21 January:	Politics, Institutions, Incentives, Collective Action, and Strategy
26 January:	Constitution Chapter 2
28 January:	Constitution Read Logic Appendices! U.S. Constitution Federalist 10 Federalist 51
2-4 February:	Federalism Chapter 3
9-11 February:	Civil Rights Chapter 4
16-18 February:	Civil Liberties Chapter 5
23 February:	<b>Exam 1 in class</b>
25 February:	Congress Chapter 6
1 March:	Congress
3-8 March:	Presidency Chapter 7
10 March:	Bureaucracy Chapter 8

15-17 March:	<b>No class, Spring Break</b>
22 March:	Federal Judiciary Chapter 9
24-29 March:	Public Opinion Chapter 10
31 March:	<b>Exam 2 in class</b>
5-7 April:	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections Chapter 11
12-14 April:	Political Parties Chapter 12
19-21 April:	Interest Groups Chapter 13
26 April:	News Media Chapter 14
28 April:	<b>Exam 3</b>
TBD Exam Week	<b>Makeup Exam</b>

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