

GOVT 2305: American National Government

Course Information

GOVT 2305.003

Fall 2017

Class Meetings: MWF 1:00 pm – 1:50 pm

Location: HH 2.402

Professor Contact Information

Dr. Thomas Gray

thomas.gray1@utdallas.edu

Office: Green Hall 3.108A

Office Hours: W 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm, and by appointment

Teaching Assistant

Ryan Lux

rjl140330@utdallas.edu

Office: 3.314

Office Hours: F 9:00 am – 11:00 am, and by appointment

Course Description

GOVT 2305 is the first of a pair of courses (along with State and Local Government) that collectively satisfy the Government/Political Science (Core Area 070) of the Texas Core Curriculum. In this course, students will learn the fundamentals of the American national government, with specific focus on its institutions and legal foundations. Along the way, students will not only learn useful information about how the United States functions politically and legally, but also gain an understanding of political science as an academic discipline and process.

Course Objectives

Upon the passage of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand and explain core terminology and concepts of American government, and be able to use these concepts analytically when processing new political information.
- Understand and explain the roles, rules, and functions of the major institutions of American government and how these interact to produce policy.
- Think analytically and empirically about politics in a scientific way.

Required Texts

American Government: Power and Purpose (14th edition), by Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere

This book is available in both physical and eBook formats, and either option is acceptable for the course. I discourage students from using prior editions of the text as they may miss important material that has been added to the newest edition. I also discourage students from purchasing any abbreviated or abridged editions of the text for the same reason.

A Reader in American National Government, by Holmes and Miller (eds.)

This reader is available only in digital form and can be obtained at the student book store. It provides useful readings to supplement the main textbook.

Grading

There are several components of the course grades.

- Three in-class exams – Collectively 80% of the course grade
- The accumulation of in-class and online quiz questions – 20% of the course grade

Exam Information

The examinations will be given as scheduled in this syllabus and will cover all material presented in class and in the assigned readings since the preceding exam (or since the start of the semester for the first exam). Later exams may also draw on earlier material when related to new topics. The exams will be in-class, and timed to the normal lecture schedule (50 minutes). All exams, quizzes, and assignments are closed book and strictly individual assessments unless otherwise indicated by the Professor. Students will not be given extra time if they are late to class on the day of the exam. Unforeseen circumstances may cause the exam date to be moved, but there is a firm intention to keep this date and any changes will be announced with as much advanced warning for students as possible.

Make-up Examinations: Students may make up exams missed with justification (such as a serious illness with a doctor's note). Exams missed without justification will be graded as a zero.

Quiz Information

Intermittently throughout the semester, quizzes will be given either online or in-class. These questions (and students' performance on them) will accumulate over the course of the year and contribute 20% to the student's overall grade. Thus, it is impossible to get an A in the class without satisfactory effort on the quizzes. Some quizzes will be posted through the eLearning system while others will be provided through the TurningPoint clicker system in-class. All quizzes are individual and "closed book" unless otherwise indicated by the Professor. No quizzes will be made up or retaken. If students do not attend class, they receive a zero for any quiz questions given that day. If they do not take an online quiz, they receive a zero for that assignment. To account for valid reasons to miss class, students will be afforded a number of free quiz questions roughly equivalent to the amount given in an average week. This exact number will be specified by the Professor at the end of the course once such an average is determined.

Instructor Policies

- Students with minor administrative questions should first contact their TA. If their TA is unable to resolve the question, the TA will forward it on to the Professor. Students are encouraged to attend either the TA's or the Professor's Office Hours to ask any substantive questions they may have. If students have other obligations during the scheduled office-hours time, both the Professor and TA are available by appointment.
- Students are not prohibited from the use of technological devices in class, but students should pay attention and be quiet and respectful of their neighbors. The Professor may change this policy at any time if it becomes a problem.

- There will not be opportunities for extra credit.
- Attendance in class is important and will be evident through the performance on in-class quizzes. This will impact your grade.
- Any e-mail communication between the Professor or TA and students, by University regulation, should be conducted through official utdallas.edu e-mail accounts and never through personal e-mail addresses.
- Students must come to class prepared, which means having done all readings assigned on this syllabus or through prior communication by the professor.
- As a class on politics, the material may at times be divisive or sensitive. Students should engage with the material, but be respectful of their classmates, the TA, and the Professor.

Course Outline

This outline is tentative and subject to change. Readings are listed in the parentheses. “Text” refers to the main textbook by Lowi et al, while “Reader” refers to the Reader by Holmes and Miller. Readings should be completed by the first class listed for the topic.

August 21:	Introduction
August 23:	Foundations (Text Ch. 1 & Reader Ch. 1)
August 25 – September 1:	The Constitution (Text Ch. 2 & Reader 32-40; 49-54)
September 4:	University Closed, NO CLASS
September 6 – 8:	Federalism (Text Ch. 3 & Reader 56-60; 67-70)
September 11 – 13:	Civil Liberties (Text Ch. 4 & Reader 75-81)
September 15 – 20:	Civil Rights (Ch. 5 & Reader 72-74; 82-90)
September 22:	EXAM 1
September 25 – 29:	Congress (Text Ch. 6 & Reader Ch. 5)
October 2 – 6:	President (Text Ch. 7 & Reader Ch. 6)
October 9 – 11:	Bureaucracy (Text Ch. 8 & Reader Ch. 8)
October 13 – 18:	Federal Courts (Text Ch. 9 & Reader Ch. 7)
October 20:	EXAM 2
October 23 – 25:	Public Opinion (Text Ch. 10 & Reader Ch. 9)
October 27 – 30:	Elections (Text Ch. 11 & Reader Ch. 11)
November 1 – 3:	Parties (Text Ch. 12)
November 6:	Tentatively Scheduled Guest Speaker
November 8 – 10:	Interest Groups (Text Ch. 13)
November 13 – 15:	Media (Text Ch. 14)
November 17:	Economic Policy (Text Ch. 15)
November 20 – 24:	University Closed, NO CLASS
November 27:	Economic Policy (Text Ch. 15 & Reader 303-34)
November 29 – December 1:	Social Policy (Text Ch. 16)
December 4:	Foreign Policy (Text Ch. 17)
December 6:	EXAM 3

Other Policies

- “Clickers” will be used in the class. Students may use either physical hardware or a mobile device to answer questions. If students are too distracted by the use of mobile devices, this policy may change to mandate the use of clicker hardware.
- The University of Texas at Dallas supports the Turning Point clicker system. Students must obtain a license to use this program during the semester.
- This document does not abrogate or alter any rights or requirements students have under prevailing University policies, which can be found at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.
- This syllabus is subject to change at any time and at the exclusive discretion of the Professor.