

# GOVT 2305: American National Government

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## Course Information

Course: GOVT 2305.001  
Term: Spring 2018  
Class Meetings: MWF 1:00pm-1:50pm  
Location: HH 2.402

## Professor Contact Information

Dr. Patrick F. Larue  
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Office: GR 3.230  
Office Hours: MW 10:00am-12:00pm, and by appt.

## Teaching Assistants

Soham Das(A-L)  
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Office Hours: TBD

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## Supplemental Instruction

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is offered for this course. SI sessions are free group study opportunities, scheduled 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 [www.utdallas.edu/studentsuccess/leaders/si.html](http://www.utdallas.edu/studentsuccess/leaders/si.html) Your SI: Andrew Njo (andrew.njo@utdallas.edu).

## Course Description

This course is the first in a two-course sequence in the Department of Political Science that satisfies the Government/Political Science requirement of the University Core Curriculum. The purpose of this course is to highlight the basic foundations of government in the United States; the institutions we have, the functions of those institutions, and the importance of those functions in our daily lives.

Although this is an introductory course, this course will be more important to you than you may think. The laws that are implemented by our government impact you on a daily basis, and whether you are a psychologist, a computer scientist, or a banker, you should know how the government affects you individually.

These laws can affect your job, your pocketbook, or both. Knowing how these laws are created, and what you can do about it will be the subject of much of the content of this course.

## Course Objectives

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

- Define various key terms regarding American Government, like federalism, the separation of powers, a prisoner's dilemma, the incumbency advantage, polyarchy, and opinion attitudes.
- Describe how the major institutions of American Government function, including Congress, the President, and the Federal Courts.
- Identify and explain what is in the Constitution, including the amendments.
- Analyze the perils, pitfalls, and promises of government power in the United States.

## Required Textbooks

1. *The Logic of American Politics*, 7th edition by Kernell et al. ISBN: 9781483319841
2. *Readings in American National Government*, by Miller and Holmes. ISBN: 9781524933807

These are available at the campus bookstore, and at other outlets as well. Feel free to find the cheapest used/rental/ebook version. I always am asked about alternate texts, and alternate editions. My answer is always going to be this. You can, but it is not suggested. Weekly quizzes are based on the textbooks. Questions from the textbooks will show up on the exam, and will be based on the quizzes. I believe that it would be very difficult to make an A in this course without these books. Older versions may suffice for general information, but quizzes will be based on the specific versions mentioned above. *Logic* is available to check out in the library. *Readings* is not.

The books are meant to provide both a historical grounding in American Government, and a scholarly perspective on topics. The *Logic* book is better at providing the history and a thorough coverage of many different topics related to American Government. The *Readings* text is better at providing a scholarly perspective on these issues and concepts. Both, together, are integral to a full understanding of how our government works. Because this is such a massive course, we simply cannot cover **everything**. So, in full disclosure, your reading of the texts will give you a more full picture of standard concepts in American Government, and lecture will supplement that. At times, we will go in greater depth than the book does. At times, we will cover completely distinct material. Reading the texts plus active participation is more likely to generate higher knowledge, and therefore, higher grades.

Additional materials: There are no other required materials, but consistently referring to current events would give you an advantage in this course. Staying abreast of what is happening in the news on a week-to-week basis will help you understand how things work, and why we see the outcomes we do. This is especially important given the political climate we are currently in.

## Grading

There are 3 components of this course that will determine your final grade.

- **Three Exams**, each worth 25% of the final grade.
- **Online Quizzes**, worth 15% of the final grade.
- **Writing Assignment**, worth 10% of the final grade.

### **Exam Information**

- The exams will be given on the dates listed in this syllabus. Exams are in-class, closed book, and will be collected at the end of the class period. *If you come in late, then you will not receive extra time to complete the exam.* Exam dates may change for unforeseen circumstances, but changes will be disclosed well in advance.
- Exams are based on lecture material and material from the textbook. This will be discussed in more detail prior to each exam.
- Study guides will be given prior to each exam. However, these are not traditional study guides that tell you everything you need to know for the exam, and they are not meant to replace information in your notes. It is intended to help structure your studying so that you are thoroughly studying the topics covered on each exam.
- Make-up exams: You are **ONLY** eligible to take a make-up exam if you will be gone for a school-sponsored activity, and you have notified me one week in advance of the departure. A faculty sponsor/coach must also provide documentation prior to your departure.
- **The lowest of the four exam grades will be dropped.**

### **Quiz Information**

- The highest 10 of 11 online quizzes will count towards your final grade. This means you can miss 1 quiz with no impact to your grade.
- Quizzes will be given online through eLearning. Each quiz will be available for a specified amount of time, on specified dates. You're responsible for checking online each week to see if there is a quiz. Generally, quizzes occur every week (not including week 1 or the week of Spring Break).
- Quizzes are open-book, but do not attempt to coordinate with others on quizzes. Questions are randomized, so it would not behoove you to work with others.
- Quiz questions cover material that is not discussed in lecture.
- Each quiz will be between 10 and 15 questions, and you have one hour to complete the quiz once you begin.
- I am not responsible for your inability to access eLearning. If there are scheduled outages, be aware of them. You will have 7 days to take each quiz, so it is suggested that you do not wait until the last day. An outage (even an unexpected one) may cause you to miss the quiz.
- Deadlines for quizzes will be 11:59pm on the specified dates. Turning it in at 11:59:01 will be considered late, and will be given a zero. Do not wait until 11:00pm on Sunday to complete the quiz.
- There is one exception to these quizzes. You will be required to complete Quiz 11 in 5 days, with the deadline being Friday, April 6. This is to ensure that you will have ample time to study the quiz for Exam 4.

- I do not reopen quizzes for any reason. *No exceptions.* Make sure you do not accidentally open quizzes.

## Instructor Policies

- It is a best practice to email me (even right before) if you are coming by office hours, just to make sure I am there. I often find myself running around to various meetings and other responsibilities, so a quick heads up will save you and me some potential headaches.
- I discourage the use of laptops in class. They end up distracting yourself and others. If they become an issue, I reserve the right to disallow them in the room.
- Do not use your phone in class. You don't need it. If you do need it, come talk to me. I'm happy to accommodate. Otherwise, I reserve the right to ask you to leave if it is distracting to others, or to me.
- Be respectful of others. Given this is a course on government, divisive political discussions may result. These are encouraged within a forum that encourages dignity and respect.
- Do not cheat. I will handle this aggressively. If I suspect that you cheat, I will move you (or the victim) into another seat, *at a minimum.*
- For most questions, the teaching assistants should be your first point of contact. You should contact me directly if you need to let me know you are missing an exam, for example. If you need clarification on lecture material, coming to my (or TA) office hours would serve you best. Other questions about exam content, for instance, should be sent directly to your teaching assistant. If you email me or a teaching assistant about something that can be answered by the syllabus, we will simply direct you to the syllabus.
- If you email me, it must be through your UTD email address. University policy dictates this, and I do not deviate from this. Grades can only be discussed face-to-face. I highly recommend setting an appointment or coming to office hours in order to respect your privacy.
- There are no individual bonus opportunities or extra credit.
- Finally, you are not children. I treat you as such. You are responsible for your grade. The level of effort you put into this course will reap a particular grade output. If you put much into this course, it will likely reap dividends. If you put little into it, then you will likely earn a lower grade.

## Course Outline

This outline is tentative and subject to change. An asterisk indicates optional days (no attendance will be taken).

Chapters normally refer to the *Logic* textbook. Chapters with (RNG) next to it refer to the *Readings* text.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| Jan 8:     | Introduction  |
| Jan 10-12: | Regimes and Political Culture, and Ideology   Chapter 1, Chapter 1(RNG) |
| Jan 16:    | <b>NO CLASS - MLK Holiday</b>   |
| Jan 17-24  | The Constitution   Chapters 2 and 5, Chapter 2 (RNG)                    |
| Jan 26:    | Reading Day/Review*   |
| Jan 29:    | <b>EXAM 1</b>   |

Jan 31-Feb 2: Federalism | Chapter 3, Chapter 3(RNG)  
 Feb 5-12: Civil Rights | Chapter 4, Chapter 4 (RNG)  
 Feb 14-21: Public Opinion | Chapter 10  
 Feb 23: Reading Day/Review\*  
 Feb 26: **EXAM 2**

Feb 28-Mar 5: Voting and Elections | Chapter 11, Chapter 11(RNG)  
 Mar 7-9: Political Parties | Chapter 12, Chapter 10 (RNG)  
 Mar 12-16: **NO CLASS - Spring Break**  
 Mar 19-21: Interest Groups | Chapter 13  
 Mar 23: Reading Day/Review\*  
 Mar 26: **EXAM 3**

Mar 28-Apr 4: Congress | Chapter 6, Chapter 5(RNG)  
 Apr 7: **NO CLASS - Conference**  
 Apr 9-11: The Executive and the Bureaucracy | Chapter 7&8, Chapter 6 (RNG)  
 Apr 13-18: The Judiciary | Chapter 9, Chapter 7 (RNG)  
 Apr 20-23: Public Policy Issues (TBD) | Chapter 12 (RNG)  
 Apr 25: Reading Day/Review\*  
 Apr 27: **EXAM 4**

## University Policies and Miscellany

- University policies regarding email communication, withdrawals, grievances, incompletes, holidays, and disability accommodations can be found at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.
- This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.