

GOVT 2305: American National Government

Course Information

GOVT 2305.003

Fall 2018

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 2:30 pm – 4:30 pm, and by appointment

Teaching Assistants

Contact information to be disclosed upon assignment.

Course Description

GOVT 2305 is one of a pair of courses (along with State and Local Government) that collectively satisfy the Government/Political Science (Core Area 070) requirement of the Texas Core Curriculum. In this course, students will learn the fundamentals of American national government, with a 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 empirical 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

A Reader in American National Government (2018 – 1st Edition), by Holmes and Miller (eds.)

This reader is available in digital and physical form and can be obtained at the student book store as well as online. It provides useful readings to supplement the course lecture. Note: the 2018 version differs from the 2017 version, though the 2018 version is still listed as the “1st Edition.”

Additional Texts

In addition to the required reader, some students may want supplemental readings to help them with the course material. Course assignments and examinations will be based on the material in the lectures and the Reader, however a wide variety of textbooks provide useful reinforcement

on the topics of the class. I do not require students to buy any specific book or edition, as they all largely cover the same topics with minimal differences between authors.

Suitable examples include:

American Government: Power and Purpose, by Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere
By the People, by Morone and Kersh
We the People, by Ginsberg, Lowi, Tolbert, and Weir
The Logic of American Politics, by Kernell, Jacobsen, Kousser, and Vavreck

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, activities, and participation – 20% of the course grade

Exam Information

The exams 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 these dates and any changes will be announced with as much advanced warning for students as possible. There will be no replacement exams, and all taken exams will count fully in the course grade.

Make-up Exams: 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 may 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. Some quizzes will be posted through the eLearning system while others will be provided through an in-class "clicker" system. 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 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 be no 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.

August 20:	Introduction
August 22:	Foundations
August 24:	History
August 27 – 31:	The Constitution
September 3:	University Closed, NO CLASS
September 5 – 7:	Federalism
September 10 – 12:	Civil Liberties
September 14 – 19:	Civil Rights
September 21:	EXAM 1
September 24 – 28:	Congress
October 1 – 5:	President
October 8 – 12:	Federal Courts
October 15 – 17:	Bureaucracy
October 19:	EXAM 2
October 22 – 24:	Public Opinion
October 26 – 29:	Parties
October 31 – November 2:	Interest Groups
November 5 – 7:	Elections
November 9 – 12:	Media
November 14 – 16:	Economic Policy
November 19 – 23:	University Closed, NO CLASS
November 26 – 28:	Social Policy

November 30 – December 3: Foreign Policy
December 5: Review
December 7: EXAM 3

Other Policies

- 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.
- Syllabus Date: August 17, 2018