

# GOVT 2302: Political Institutions in the U.S. and Texas

## Course Information

GOVT 2302  
Section 2302-004  
Fall 2007  
11:30am-12:45pm, CN 1.112

## Contact Information

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## Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of politics and the constitutions and political institutions of the United States and Texas.

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 in a phone book.

## Student Learning Objectives

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

- provide examples and apply important theoretical and scholarly approaches to explaining state and national institutional behavior, citizen involvement, and interaction between citizens and institutions of government

- analyze and appreciate historical trends in the development of government institutions and their constitutional foundations
- identify, describe and analyze various mechanisms of citizen political involvement.

## Required texts and materials

The following book has been ordered for this course:

Lowi, Theodore et al. 2007. *We the people, An introduction to American politics (Texas edition)*. 6th edition. W. W. Norton.

This text is available at the UTD bookstore, Off-Campus Books, etc. Off Campus Books allows rentals of this text.

Required readings will be approximately 50 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 such as the Dallas Morning News, New York Times or the Chicago Tribune. Alternatively you may also wish to read a weekly news magazine such as The Economist, Newsweek, Time, or U.S. News and World Report.

## Grading and Course Policies

### Grading

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

- First exam, September 13th (30% of final grade).
- Second exam, October 16th (30% of final grade).
- Third exam, November 20th (30% of final grade).
- Highest 14 of 16 online quizzes via WebCT (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 plus / minuses at my discretion.

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). Assignments to be re-graded must include a memo stating the reason why you believe they assignment should be re-graded. Finally, re-graded assignments can be graded higher, lower, or the same as the initial grade.

## Exams

The three exams and optional final will be given on the dates noted 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. There will be no formal review sessions for the exam. The exams are based on lecture material AND required readings. Some of the lecture material will not be in the readings.

*No make up exams will be given.* Instead, with advance notice, students may take a comprehensive final exam to replace one exam during the regularly scheduled final exam period for this class. If you miss more than one exam, you will receive a zero for the additional missed exam. There are no exceptions. The optional comprehensive exam cannot be made up if missed. Plan on taking the optional comprehensive exam at your own risk. *The comprehensive final may only be taken to replace a missed exam, not to raise your grade. Plan your schedule and course preparation accordingly.*

## WebCT

WebCT is used in this class for quizzes, review, and to check your progress in the class. If you do not have a computer at home or prefer to work on campus, you may do this at the library or in the many computer labs on campus. You can access the course WebCT page at <http://webct6.utdallas.edu>. Additional information about how to use WebCT is available at this site as well. You will need a UTD net-id to access this site.

WebCT is also how I will communicate with you. You are responsible for announcements made through WebCT. You may forward messages from WebCT to your regular e-mail account. Please select a forwarding address in your mail preferences if you do not regularly check your WebCT mail or UTD email.

## Quizzes

You must take quizzes online through WebCT. They are accessible via the “Assessments” tab on the left menu (I know this sounds weird, but there is no way for me to change the button name in WebCT.) 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.
- 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 WebCT. You have an 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 WebCT. Plan for any outages in WebCT (they are announced and posted in My WebCT). Any problems you have accessing WebCT are your problem not mine.
- I will only count your highest 14 of the 16 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 0.714 points. So missing all of the quizzes will lower your final grade by 10 points (or one whole letter).

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. 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. You are responsible for any announcements made or information given during class. I generally will not provide copies of lecture notes or slides, so your attendance is very important.

## Course conduct

The following rules apply in class:

1. 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.)
2. Do not fall asleep. It is rude and distracting. Bring coffee if you need it (I do.)
3. Be polite and courteous to your fellow students.
4. 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.

5. 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?"
6. 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.
7. Class starts at 11:30am. Not 11:45. Be here on time.
8. Respect my time and I will respect yours. We are both busy.
9. *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.

## Course Calendar

The dates listed for each topic are approximate and will depend on how quickly we move through material. You should read the material for each date before class. Also note that you will need to check WebCT periodically for updates, announcements and quizzes. Readings are listed under the lecture topics below.

16 August:	Introduction
21 August:	What is Government? Ch 1
23 August:	Politics, Institutions, Incentives, Collective Action, and Strategy
28 August:	Constitution Ch 2
30 August:	Constitution U.S. Constitution Federalist 10 Federalist 51
4 September:	Texas Constitution Ch 20
6 September:	Federalism Ch 3
11 September:	Texas Local Government Ch 26
13 September:	<b>Exam 1</b>
18 September:	Congress Ch 12
20 September:	Congress Ch 12
25 September:	Texas Legislature Ch 23
27 September:	Presidency Ch 13
2 October:	Presidency Ch 13

4 October:	Texas Executive Ch 24
9 October:	Bureaucracy Ch 14
11 October:	Bureaucracy Ch 14
	<b>Last day to withdraw!</b>
16 October:	<b>Exam 2</b>
18 October:	Judiciary Ch 15
23 October:	Judiciary Ch 15
25 October:	Texas Judiciary Ch 25
30 October:	Government and the Economy Ch 16
1 November:	Government and the Economy Ch 16
6 November:	Social Policy Ch 17
8 November:	Foreign Policy Ch 18
13 November:	Foreign Policy Ch 18
15 November:	Public Policy in Texas Ch 27
20 November:	<b>Exam 3</b>
27 November:	<b>Optional Comprehensive Final Exam, 11:00am</b>

## Student Conduct & Discipline

The University of Texas System and The University of Texas at Dallas have rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of their business. It is the responsibility of each student and each student organization to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the UTD publication, A to Z Guide, which is provided to all registered students each academic year.

The University of Texas at Dallas administers student discipline within the procedures of recognized and established due process. Procedures are defined and described in the Rules and Regulations, Board of Regents, The University of Texas System, Part 1, Chapter VI, Section 3, and in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities of the university's Handbook of Operating Procedures. Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations (SU 1.602, 972/883-6391).

A student at the university neither loses the rights nor escapes the responsibilities of citizenship. He or she is expected to obey federal, state, and local laws as well as the

Regent's Rules, university regulations, and administrative rules. Students are subject to discipline for violating the standards of conduct whether such conduct takes place on or off campus, or whether civil or criminal penalties are also imposed for such conduct.

## Academic Integrity

The faculty expects from its students a high level of responsibility and academic honesty. Because the value of an academic degree depends upon the absolute integrity of the work done by the student for that degree, it is imperative that a student demonstrate a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work.

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, statements, acts or omissions related to applications for enrollment or the award of a degree, and/or the submission as one's own work or material that is not one's own. As a general rule, scholastic dishonesty involves one of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic records. Students suspected of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary proceedings.

Plagiarism, especially from the web, from portions of papers for other classes, and from any other source is unacceptable and will be dealt with under the university's policy on plagiarism (see general catalog for details). This course will use the resources of turnitin.com, which searches the web for possible plagiarism and is over 90% effective.

Each student in this course is expected to exercise independent scholarly thought, expression and aptitude.

During examinations be prepared

- To leave all personal belonging at the front of the room or other designated location (this includes cell phones, turned off of course, and beverage containers)
- To present your UTD Comet Card
- To remove your cap or hat
- To remove the batteries from any electronic device (e.g. calculator)
- To exchange blue books or bring them early as required
- To change seating
- To sign out when exiting the testing room
- To be escorted for lavatory use

All episodes of suspected scholastic dishonesty will be reported according to University policy. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the

University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Penalties that may be assessed for scholastic dishonesty may be reviewed in Subchapter D. Penalties at <http://www.utdallas.edu/student/slife/chapter49.html>.

## Email Use

University policy requires that you have a UTD netid and e-mail account. E-mail sent to me from non-UTD accounts may not arrive or may be trapped by spam filters. Please use your UTD e-mail account and clearly identify yourself by name in e-mail messages. E-mail sent from non-UTD accounts may not be answered if I suspect that it will cause problems for my computer.

The University of Texas at Dallas recognizes the value and efficiency of communication between faculty/staff and students through electronic mail. At the same time, email raises some issues concerning security and the identity of each individual in an email exchange. The university encourages all official student email correspondence be sent only to a student's U.T. Dallas email address and that faculty and staff consider email from students official only if it originates from a UTD student account. This allows the university to maintain a high degree of confidence in the identity of all individual corresponding and the security of the transmitted information. UTD furnishes each student with a free email account that is to be used in all communication with university personnel. The Department of Information Resources at U.T. Dallas provides a method for students to have their U.T. Dallas mail forwarded to other accounts.

## Withdrawal from Class

The administration of this institution has set deadlines for withdrawal of any college-level courses. These dates and times are published in that semester's course catalog. Administration procedures must be followed. It is the student's responsibility to handle withdrawal requirements from any class. In other words, I cannot drop or withdraw any student. You must do the proper paperwork to ensure that you will not receive a final grade of "F" in a course if you choose not to attend the class once you are enrolled.

## Student Grievance Procedures

Procedures for student grievances are found in Title V, Rules on Student Services and Activities, of the university's Handbook of Operating Procedures.

In attempting to resolve any student grievance regarding grades, evaluations, or other fulfillments of academic responsibility, it is the obligation of the student first to make a serious effort to resolve the matter with the instructor, supervisor, administrator, or committee with whom the grievance

originates (hereafter called "the respondent"). Individual faculty members retain primary responsibility for assigning grades and evaluations. If the matter cannot be resolved at that level, the grievance must be submitted in writing to the respondent with a copy of the respondent's School Dean. If the matter is not resolved by the written response provided by the respondent, the student may submit a written appeal to the School Dean. If the grievance is not resolved by the School Dean's decision, the student may make a written appeal to the Dean of Graduate or Undergraduate Education, and the dean will appoint and convene an Academic Appeals Panel. The decision of the Academic Appeals Panel is final. The results of the academic appeals process will be distributed to all involved parties.

Copies of these rules and regulations are available to students in the Office of the Dean of Students, where staff members are available to assist students in interpreting the rules and regulations.

## **Incomplete Grade Policy**

As per university policy, incomplete grades will be granted only for work unavoidably missed at the semester's end and only if 70% of the course work has been completed. An incomplete grade must be resolved within eight (8) weeks from the first day of the subsequent long semester. If the required work to complete the course and to remove the incomplete grade is not submitted by the specified deadline, the incomplete grade is changed automatically to a grade of F.

## **Disability Services**

The goal of Disability Services is to provide students with disabilities educational opportunities equal to those of their non-disabled peers. Disability Services is located in room 1.610 in the Student Union. Office hours are Monday and Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; and Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The contact information for the Office of Disability Services is:

The University of Texas at Dallas, SU 22  
PO Box 830688  
Richardson, Texas 75083-0688  
(972) 883-2098 (voice or TTY)

Essentially, the law requires that colleges and universities make those reasonable adjustments necessary to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability. For example, it may be necessary to remove classroom prohibitions against tape recorders or animals (in the case of dog guides) for students who are blind. Occasionally an assignment requirement may be substituted (for example, a research paper versus an oral presentation for a student who is hearing impaired). Classes enrolled students with mobility im-

pairments may have to be rescheduled in accessible facilities. The college or university may need to provide special services such as registration, note-taking, or mobility assistance.

It is the student's responsibility to notify his or her professors of the need for such an accommodation. Disability Services provides students with letters to present to faculty members to verify that the student has a disability and needs accommodations. Individuals requiring special accommodation should contact the professor after class or during office hours.

## **Religious Holy Days**

The University of Texas at Dallas will excuse a student from class or other required activities for the travel to and observance of a religious holy day for a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property tax under Section 11.20, Tax Code, Texas Code Annotated.

The student is encouraged to notify the instructor or activity sponsor as soon as possible regarding the absence, preferably in advance of the assignment. The student, so excused, will be allowed to take the exam or complete the assignment within a reasonable time after the absence: a period equal to the length of the absence, up to a maximum of one week. A student who notifies the instructor and completes any missed exam or assignment may not be penalized for the absence. A student who fails to complete the exam or assignment within the prescribed period may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment.

If a student or an instructor disagrees about the nature of the absence [i.e., for the purpose of observing a religious holy day] or if there is similar disagreement about whether the student has been given a reasonable time to complete any missed assignments or examinations, either the student or the instructor may request a ruling from the chief executive officer of the institution, or his or her designee. The chief executive officer or designee must take into account the legislative intent of TEC 51.911(b), and the student and instructor will abide by the decision of the chief executive officer or designee.

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