

# GOVT 2305: American National Government

## The Modified, Apocalyptic Version

### Course Information

GOVT 2305.002

Spring 2020

~~Class Meetings: MWF 11:00 am – 11:50 am~~

~~Location: West Engineering and Computer Science (ECSW) Building 1.315~~

Post-Spring Break Revision: There will be no in-person meeting of any kind for the remainder of the semester. The remainder of the course will be provided remotely by the professor through content that can be obtained on eLearning and TopHat and used asynchronously.

### Professor Contact Information

Dr. Thomas Gray

thomas.gray1@utdallas.edu

~~Office: Green Hall 2.242~~

Office Hours: By appointment, via Calendly (<https://calendly.com/profgray>)

Post-Spring Break Revision: Office-hours appointments can still be scheduled, but will be completed remotely. This can be through a videoconferencing platform such as Microsoft Teams or other software. Video, audio-only, and text/chat options are available. Good, old-fashioned e-mails will also continue.

Please be patient with responses to communication. The events of this semester have raised a number of additional issues that may cause delays in response.

### Teaching Assistant

Carlos Gutierrez Mannix

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### 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 – 1<sup>st</sup> 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 “1<sup>st</sup> Edition.”

This semester, we will be using the Top Hat digital-learning platform, which is comprised of this semester's online textbook and the in-class response system you will be using. One of the primary texts for this course is the Top Hat American Government textbook. Embedded within this text are interactive questions pertaining to the readings, which will be factored into your overall grade for the course. The in-class response system will allow you to answer in-lecture questions via your mobile phone or laptop, which will also factor into your overall participation grade for the course. To gain access to the Top Hat course, follow the link and instructions in the course invitation that will be sent to your university email address on the first day of class. If you select the one-semester subscription option, you will be charged \$74 at checkout when attempting to access the course and textbook. Access cards (with codes that can be input at the checkout page) for the textbooks and in-class response system can also be purchased at the University of Texas at Dallas bookstore, but may be subject to a price mark-up. If you run into any technical problems signing for Top Hat or gaining access to the course, email [support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com). If you have any questions about how we will use Top Hat in the course, or you do not currently have a smart phone or laptop, please contact the professor at [thomas.gray1@utdallas.edu](mailto:thomas.gray1@utdallas.edu).

### Grading

There are several components of the course grades.

- Three ~~in-class~~ exams – Collectively 90% (30% for each exam)  
**Post-Spring Break Revision: Exams 2 and 3 will be given online-only.**
- The accumulation of in-class and online quiz questions, activities, and participation – 10% 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.

Post-Spring Break Revision: “Unforeseen circumstances,” indeed. Exams 2 and 3 will be given online-only, on TopHat.

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.

### 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 using 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.
- 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. For each class section, students should read the assigned materials in the Reader listed in parentheses.

January 13:	Introduction to Class
January 15:	Foundations (Reader Ch. 1)
January 17:	History
January 20:	UNIVERSITY CLOSED – MLK Day
January 22 – 24:	The Constitution (Reader Ch. 2)
January 27 – 29:	Federalism (Reader Ch. 3)
January 31 – February 5:	Civil Liberties (Reader Ch. 4)
February 7 – 12:	Civil Rights
February 14:	EXAM 1
February 17 – 21:	Congress (Reader Ch. 5)
February 24 – 28:	President (Reader Ch. 6)
March 2 – 6:	Federal Courts (Reader Ch. 7)
March 9 – 11:	Bureaucracy (Reader Ch. 8)
March 13:	<del>EXAM 2</del>
March 16 – 27:	UNIVERSITY CLOSED
March 30:	EXAM 2 & previewing the rest of the semester
April 1 – 3:	Public Opinion (Reader Ch. 9)
April 6 – 8:	Elections (Reader Ch. 11)

April 10 – 13:	Parties (Reader Ch. 10)
April 15 – 17:	Interest Groups
April 20 – 22:	Media
April 24:	Foreign Policy
April 27:	Review
April 29:	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: March 21, 2020