THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Government 310L
38530
Professor Daron Shaw
Spring 2012

MEETING PLACE:	JESTER A121.A	MEETING TIME:	MWF 1:00-2:00
OFFICE:	BATTS 4.146	PHONE:	232-7275
EMAIL:	dshaw@austin.utexas.edu	OFFICE HOURS:	MWF 2:00-3:00

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

John Di Pietro	jdipietro@utexas.edu	MW 11:0-12:30
Derrick Goodrich	derrickg@utexas.edu	MF 9:30-11:00
Matt Grinney	matt.grinney@gmail.com	TH 3:30-5:00, F 9:30-11:00

Each TA office at 1.108 Batts Hall.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. While our main focus is on the national level, additional attention is paid to the state and local governments of Texas. In some instances, the American case is placed in a comparative context derived from the experience of other western democratic nations. In other instances, we focus on changes over time within the American political system to demonstrate how principles often change with context. At all times we are interested in a better understanding of how this particular system has developed and what it means for citizens of the United States.

There are three primary objectives in this course. The first is to provide basic descriptive information about the American and Texas political systems by examining important political processes, institutions, and actors. The second is to develop analytical skills by which to understand complex relationships and phenomena. The third is to introduce the work of the political scientist by concentrating on the paradigms and techniques of the discipline.

COURSE EVALUATION

There will be two in-class midterm examinations that will determine your grade. Each exam will have two equally weighted components worth a total of 100 points. There are thus 200 total points available in the class.

MIDTERM 1	**POINTS**	**QUESTIONS**	**DATE**
Multiple Choice	50	50	March 5
Short-Answer	50	10	March 7

MIDTERM 2	**POINTS**	**QUESTIONS**	**DATE**
Multiple Choice	50	50	May 2
Short-Answer	50	10	May 4

TOTAL	200

The exams are not cumulative. The first exam covers material up to and including public opinion and voting behavior. The second exam covers material from campaigns and elections through public policy. The exams encompass both reading and lecture material; the balance is approximately 60% lecture, 40% reading. As indicated by the figure above, each exam will be spread over two days. The first day will be multiple choice. Each item will have four response options. ("None of the above" or "B and C only" or "All of the above" are possible options.) The second day will be short answer questions. You will be asked to write a sentence or two in response to specific questions. Your answer will be graded on a 0-5 scale in which you start off with a 0 and work your way up depending upon the quality of your answer. An answer that is basically correct, for example, is worth 3 points. An

answer that demonstrates that you can actually apply the appropriate concepts to understand politics more broadly is worth 5 points. My approach is to reward analytical mastery rather than nit-picking you to death.

Overall grades will be based upon a curve. The highest point total achieved in the class will be used as the 100% score, and all other scores will be recalculated as a percentage of that total. For example, if the high score is 180 points and you have a total of 145, your "curved" score/percentage would be 145/180 or 80.5%. This would be a B-.

The "curved" grading scale is as follows:

93%-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87%-89%	B+
83%-86%	B
80%-82%	B-
77%-79%	C+
73%-76%	C
70%-72%	C-
67%-69%	D+
63%-66%	D
60%-62%	D-
0%-59%	F.

There will be an opportunity for extra credit. The details are being worked out now, but you will be able to earn a few points for participating in a survey/experimental project (non-invasive, of course) for one of the other professors in the Government Department.

There will be *no early or make-up exams,* except for extreme emergencies (and I am the sole arbiter of what constitutes an extreme emergency). Incomplete grades are highly discouraged and will only be given in the direst of circumstances. Students must complete ALL assigned work to pass the course. Failure to complete all course requirements will result in a failing grade.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following book is available at the University of Texas Coop:

- Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. *American Government: Power & Purpose*. 11th edition (2010 Election Update). Norton Publishing.

For information on Texas Government and Texas Politics, see:

- http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/

COURSE FORMAT

Class meetings run approximately 50 minutes and rely on a lecture format. However, I ask questions of the class and may call on students at random. On the other side of the lectern, questions and observations are always encouraged. I try to recognize those raising their hand to ask a question as soon as possible. Keep in mind that the lectures parallel, but do not repeat the readings. Because of this, not attending class is a particularly bad practice.

Anyone having difficulty with the course should feel free to see me after class or in office hours. If I can't help solve the problem myself, I can point you towards one of the many excellent support systems for students who need to improve their writing, research or study skills.

POLICY & PROCEDURES

- ✓ It is distracting and discourteous to arrive late or leave during the lecture. I would discourage you from making a habit out of it.
- ✓ There will be no breaks during the class, so food, beverage and restroom necessities should be taken care of prior to class.
- ✓ Please turn off all cell phones and pagers prior to entering the classroom.
- ✓ You are permitted to use your laptops to take notes.
- ✓ You are not permitted to transmit, copy, or otherwise distribute lecture material without my expressed written consent.
- ✓ At a more general level, please show respect for the classroom environment.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any disabled student may request appropriate academic accommodations from the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (471-6259).
http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/

DISHONESTY

Incidents of cheating, plagiarism, and general academic dishonesty will be treated as per university guidelines. Please note the Honor Code of the University:
http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html

INTERNET RESOURCES

If you want to use the Internet to keep abreast of what's happening in politics, I recommend the following sites:

Media http://www.cnn.com http://www.foxnews.com http://www.nytimes.com http://www.washingtonpost.com http://www.latimes.com http://pcl.stanford.edu/ http://www.localnewsarchive.org/index.html **Advertising** http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/index.php http://www.c-span.org/classroom/govt/campaignads.asp http://polisci.wisc.edu/tvadvertising/Index.htm **Money** http://www.fec.gov http://www.opensecrets.com http://www.followthemoney.org **Election Data** http://uselectionatlas.org http://www.umich.edu/_nes/index.htm http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/redist/redist.htm http://www.princeton.edu/~rvdb/JAVA/election2004/ For data for a specific state, check the Secretary of State's website (Election Division).	**Parties** http://www.dems.org http://www.rnc.org **Texas Parties** http://www.txdemocrats.org http://www.texasgop.org **Third Party Madness!** http://www.greenpartyus.org http://www.lp.org http://www.reformparty.org **Polling** http://www.pollingreport.com/ http://www.vanishingvoter.org/ http://www.gallup.com http://www.exit-poll.net/ http://www.pollster.com **General** http://www.realclearpolitics.com http://www.politicsone.com http://www.vote-smart.org/index.htm http://www.kidsvotingusa.org/

COURSE SCHEDULE

PP = Power and Purpose

Week	Dates	Subject	
1	Jan. 18 Jan. 20	Introduction Pre-Constitutional Government Film: Excerpts from "John Adams"	PP: Chapter 1 PP: pp. 32-36
2	Jan. 23-27	Pre-Constitutional Government The Constitution	PP: pp. 37-43 PP: pp. 43-50
3	Jan. 30-Feb. 3	The Constitution Federalism	PP: pp. 50-64 PP: Chapter 3
4	Feb. 6-10	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	PP: Chapter 4
5	Feb. 13-17	Interest Groups	PP: Chapter 12
6	Feb. 20-24	Political Parties	PP: Chapter 11
7	Feb. 27-Mar. 2	Public Opinion Voting Behavior	PP: Chapter 9 PP: pp. 408-450
8	Mar. 5-7 Mar. 9	**MIDTERM EXAM** Film: TBD	
	Mar. 10-18	**SPRING BREAK**	
9	Mar. 19-23	Campaigns and Elections The News Media	PP: pp. 451-465 PP: Chapter 13
10	Mar. 26-30	The News Media The Congress	 PP: Chapter 5
11	Apr. 2-6	The Congress The President	 PP: Chapter 6
12	Apr. 9-13	The President The Judiciary	 PP: Chapter 8
13	Apr. 16-20	The Judiciary Texas Government: Texas Constitution The Legislature The Executive The Judiciary Reforms?	UT Liberal Arts website: Texas Politics
14	Apr. 23-27	Domestic Policy Economic Policy Foreign Policy	PP: Chapter 15 PP: Chapter 14 PP: Chapter 16
15	April 30 May 2-4	Catch-Up and Review **MIDTERM EXAM**	