American Government
GOV 310L (38555)
The University of Texas at Austin
Tuesday & Thursday, 8-9:30AM
Mezes Hall 1.306

Fall 2012

Professor

Dr. Samuel Workman
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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to American politics. The course centers on the fundamental role played by the institutions of American government including Congress, the Presidency, Federal Judiciary, and the Bureaucracy in understanding political dynamics in the United States. The course also examines public opinion and participation as inputs to the institutions of American government, and the mediating role of organizations such as interest groups, the news media, and political parties. In addition to mastering basic facts about American government, the course will apply political science theories to the broader questions of democratic government and examine evidence assessing these theories. The course also makes connections between politics at the federal level of government and the political institutions and processes of the state of Texas.

Pre-requisites

12 hours of college course-work and a passing score on the reading section on the THEA test. The course fulfills the first half of the legislative requirement for Government.

Course Requirements

Students are required to attend each lecture and participate in class discussions. In addition, students should be prepared to discuss current events related to American politics. The best way to do this is browsing the New York Times or Washington Post online. Finally, students should also be prepared to discuss politics and current events relevant to Texas state politics. Students are also to complete supplemental readings as required and provided by the Professor. The required text for the course is The American Political System 1st Ed. (Paperback FULL EDITION) by Ken Kollman. This text is available for purchase at the University Co- Op. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before each meeting of the course. In addition to a concern with the institutions and processes that shape public policy at the Federal level, the course will frequently draw comparisons to, and focus on, state government in Texas including

its unique political institutions and political processes. To facilitate this discussion, students will frequently be asked to become familiar with content maintained on the Texas Politics website at http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/. For the four exams, students need to purchase four blue books and a number two pencil.

Grading

Grading for the course is based on four exams. Each exam will constitute 25 percent of the students grade. There will be no final examination during the University-scheduled finals week. Each exam is based equally on both the assigned readings and class lecture. This means that things will go drastically wrong for you if you do not read the assigned text(s), attend each class, and take good notes. This course will use plus/minus grading. Grades will not be curved and are not negotiable (do not even think about sending me that email). Attendance during exam sessions is required. Formal attendance for lecture sessions does not make up a portion of your grade. The grading scale is as follows:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Letter Grade	Percentage
A	≥ 93	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	<60

Makeup Exam Policy

Attendance is required at regularly scheduled exams. Do not miss regularly scheduled exams. You do not want to take the make-up exam. There will be one makeup exam offered at the end of the semester and students will be permitted to take this exam only under the most extreme and dire circumstances preventing the student from taking the regularly scheduled exam. Students will not be permitted to take the makeup exam without prior documentation and approval by the Professor. The makeup exam is not an optional exam. For illnesses, a Doctors documentation must be provided. The form letter from University Health Services does not suffice to be granted a makeup exam. Students have one week to notify the Professor following missing an exam. Notifications later than this will not be granted a makeup exam. Students may make-up only one exam with no exceptions. Note that this means failure to take two or more exams results in grades of zero for the second, third, and fourth missed exam.

Text & Materials

1. Kollman, Ken. 2012. The American Political System. 1st Edition. New York: W.W. Norton.

2. Texas Politics. http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/

3. Other supplemental readings as selected by the Professor.
4. Four blue books and a number two pencil.

Contacting the Professor

Students should address all questions first to the Teaching Assistants, and only then to the Professor. The Teaching Assistants are there to help students understand the material and field general course questions. In addition, I tend to check my email only once every 24 hours. Depending on when I check my email on a given day, the earliest time at which a response may be expected is within 24 hours. Please be aware that I also do not respond to emails on the weekend.

Academic Dishonesty

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University of Texas Honor Code

The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd. If you require accommodation, it is your responsibility to bring your note to me early in the semester so we can work out arrangements. It is also the students responsibility to schedule exams with SSD.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class or an examination in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley written in the subject line. Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at http://www.utexas.edu/emergency.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading
Thursday, August 30	GAO Videos of Policy Problems	
Tuesday, September 4	Introduction & Overview	Kollman, Ch. 1
Thursday, September 6	Fundamental Tensions of American Government	
Tuesday, September 11	Structure of the American System of Government	Kollman, Ch. 2 & 3
Thursday, September 13	Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, & Law	Kollman, Ch. 4
Tuesday, September 18	Introducing American Political Institutions	
Thursday, September 20	**First Exam**	Blue Book & No. 2 Pencil
Tuesday, September 25	Congress the Institution	Kollman, Ch. 5
Thursday, September 27	Congressional Decision-making	
Tuesday, October 2	Presidential Power	Kollman, Ch. 6
Thursday, October 4	Presidential Governance	
Tuesday, October 9	Interbranch Politics-The U.S. Budget	
Thursday, October 11	The Federal Bureaucracy	Kollman, Ch. 7
Tuesday, October 16	**Second Exam**	Blue Book & No.2 Pencil
Thursday, October 18	The Federal Judiciary	Kollman, Ch. 8
Tuesday, October 23	Organized Interests	Kollman, Ch. 11
Thursday, October 25	The Media	Kollman, Ch. 14
Tuesday, October 30	Political Parties	Kollman, Ch. 12
Thursday, November 1	Public Opinion	Kollman, Ch. 9
Tuesday, November 6	Elections & Voting	Kollman, Ch. 10 & 13
Thursday, November 8	**Third Exam**	Blue Book & No.2 Pencil
Tuesday, November 13	Stages & Theories of the Policy Process	
Thursday, November 15	Economic Policy	
Tuesday, November 20	Social Welfare Policy	
Tuesday, November 16	The Politics of Public Risks Policy	
Thursday, November 18	Foreign Policy	
Tuesday, November 20	The Politics of Bureaucratic Reform	
Tuesday, November 27	Evaluation & Feedback in the Policy Process	
Thursday, November 29	Special Topics in Public Policy	
Tuesday, December 4	**Fourth Exam**	Blue Book & No.2 Pencil
Thursday, December 6	**Makeup Exam**	Blue Book & No.2 Pencil