Course Syllabus

GOV 310L: American Government

Fall 2010

TTh 11:00-12:15
PAI 3.02
Unique #38365

Professor Stephen Jessee

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Office Hours:
Tuesday, 1:30-3:30
Batts 4.128

Teaching Assistant

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Tuesday, 12:30-3:30
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Course Description and Format

This course provides an introduction to American government and politics. Topics include the structure of government, theories of electoral campaigns, public opinion and legislator behavior. Because of the size of the course, it will be a lecture format, but I will also try to involve students through discussions of relevant topics. Students should also feel free to ask questions if anything is unclear or if they would like further information on any topic.

While the course material is introductory in nature, I also hope that throughout the semester you will come to understand some of what it means to be a political scientist and to do political science research. With this aim, we will be discussing not only basic structures, rules and concepts in the American political system, but will also be looking at theories, hypotheses and evidence in the study of politics.

Grades

The course will include four exams, which will likely be comprised of some mixture of multiple-choice, short answer and short essay questions. There will be no final exam and the exams will not be cumulative. Each exam will cover all material presented in lectures and assigned readings since the previous exam. All exams will be weighted equally in computing final grades.

Exam 1	Tuesday, September 21st
Exam 2	Tuesday, October 19th
Exam 3	Tuesday, November 9th
Exam 4	Thursday, December 2nd

The professor reserves the right to adjust this formula including, but not limited to, imposing curves on exam grades and adjusting the relative weights of the assignments. The professor also reserves the right to adjust students' grades based on in-class behavior including participation, absences and disruptive or disrespectful actions.

The following grade cutoffs will be used to calculate final course grades:

93-100 points	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
60 – 69	D
Below 60	F

Laptops and Other Classroom Technology

Students are welcome to bring laptops to class to take notes. Any students using laptops in a distracting or inappropriate manner will receive one warning. A second offence will result in a loss of laptop privileges for the remainder of the semester. There is no reason that any student should have a cell phone, music player or video game device out during lecture. All such devices should be put away in pockets or bags before entering the classroom.

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Issues of academic dishonesty will be taken very seriously and any finding of cheating or other unethical behavior will be pursued to the full extent possible under university policy. Students should consult the University of Texas Honor Code.

THERE WILL BE NO MAKEUP EXAMS WITHOUT **PRIOR WRITTEN CONSENT BY THE INSTRUCTOR.** Makeup exams will be granted only for valid medical or other serious reasons, defined at the professor's discretion. Students who miss exams and provide an excuse afterwards will **NOT** be granted a makeup and may be given zero percent on the exam in question.

Special Needs

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, please contact the Dean of Students at 471-6259; 471-4641 TTY. All students needing special accommodations must contact both the students with disabilities office and one of the teaching assistants for this course **at least two weeks prior to the examination** in order to assure special accommodations can be made. Students not taking action by this time may be required to take the exam in the standard time and place.

Required Textbook

"The New American Democracy, 6th Edition (Alternate Edition)",
Fiorina, Peterson et al.

While the bulk of the readings will come from the main text, the instructor will also assign other materials such as scholarly journal articles and excerpts from other books, which will be posted on Blackboard.

Class Schedule

Professor may make changes to this schedule. Any changes will be announced in class. Unless otherwise stated, all chapter references are to Fiorina et al. "The New American Democracy, 6th Edition."

- Thursday, 8/26
  - First class: Introduction
- Tuesday, 8/31
  - Ch. 1: Democracy in the United States
- Thursday, 9/2
  - Class Cancelled (Conference)
- Tuesday, 9/7
  - Ch. 2: Establishing a Constitutional Democracy
- Thursday, 9/9
  - Ch. 3: Federalism
- Tuesday, 9/14
  - Ch. 4: American Political Culture
- Thursday, 9/16
  - Ch. 5: Public Opinion
- Tuesday, 9/21
  - **FIRST EXAM**
- Thursday, 9/23
  - Ch. 6: Individual Participation
- Tuesday, 9/28
  - Ch. 7: Interest Group Participation in American Democracy
- Thursday, 9/30
  - Ch. 8: Political Parties
- Tuesday, 10/5
  - Film on political parties
- Thursday, 10/7
  - Ch. 9: The Media
- Tuesday, 10/12
  - Ch. 10: Electing the President
- Thursday, 10/14
  - Ch. 11: Choosing the Congress
- Tuesday, 10/19

    - **SECOND EXAM**
- Thursday, 10/21
    - Ch. 12: The Congress and Its Work
- Tuesday, 10/26
    - Congress Readings 1 (posted on Blackboard)
- Thursday, 10/28
    - Congress Readings 2 (posted on Blackboard)
- Tuesday, 11/2
    - Ch. 13: The Presidency
- Thursday, 11/4
    - Ch. 14: The Bureaucracy
- Tuesday, 11/9
    - **THIRD EXAM**
- Thursday, 11/11
    - Ch. 15: The Courts
- Tuesday, 11/16
    - Court Cases 1 (posted on Blackboard)
- Thursday, 11/18
    - Court Cases 2 (posted on Blackboard)
- Tuesday, 11/23
    - Ch. 16: Civil Liberties
- Thursday, 11/25
    - Thanksgiving Holiday
- Tuesday, 11/30
    - Ch. 17: Civil Rights
- Thursday, 12/2
    - **FOURTH EXAM**