

The University of Texas at Austin
American Government (38690)
GOV 310L
Spring 2010
Mezes 1.306
MWF 1-2PM

Professor:

Dr. Samuel Workman

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Office Hours: Monday 11:30AM-1:00PM; Wednesday 11:30AM-1:00PM

Teaching Assistants:

Mine Tafolar (minetka2001@yahoo.com)

Office Hours: Batts 1.118; Wednesday and Friday 11:00AM-12:30PM

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Office Hours: Batts 1.118; Monday 9:30AM-12:30PM

Course Description:

Twelve hours of college coursework and a passing score on the reading section on the THEA test are prerequisites. The course fulfills the first half of the legislative requirement for Government.

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 of the state of Texas.

Course Requirements and Grading:

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 **Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy, 14th Ed.** By George C. Edwards, III, Martin Wattenberg, and Robert Lineberry, and is available for purchase at the University Co-Op. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings for each meeting of the course.

Grading for the course is based on four midterm exams each worth 25 percent of the student's grade. Each exam is cumulative and based equally on both the assigned readings and class lecture. This course will use plus/minus grading. Grades will not be curved.

Makeup Exams:

Makeup exams are given only under the most extreme and dire circumstances preventing the student from taking the exam. Students missing an exam should notify the Professor immediately, or if possible, before the exam. If a student misses an exam and the excuse warrants a makeup exam, it is the *student's responsibility* to schedule a makeup exam within two class days after missing the exam. (For example, a student missing an exam on Friday must schedule a makeup before Wednesday of the following week.) Failure to do so will result in a zero for the exam.

Contacting the Professor:

Students should address questions first to the Teaching Assistants, and only then to me. 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 a response may be expected is within 24 hours.

Academic Dishonesty:

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 integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

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 512-471-6259.

Course Outline:

January 20th

Introduction and Course Overview

Introducing the Fundamental Tensions of American Government

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 1, 14th Ed.; Chp. 1, 10th Ed.

January 22nd and 25th

The Structure of the American System of Government

“Rules of the Game”

Reading: Government in America, Chps. 2, 4, & 5, 14th Ed.; Chps. 2, 4, & 5, 10th Ed.

January 27th

Law and Political Power in the American System
Pluralism, Power Elites, and American Democracy

January 29th and February 1st

The Structure of the American System of Government
Federalism, Separation of Powers, and American Political Institutions
Reading: Government in America, Chps. 3 and 21, 14th Ed.; Chp. 3, 10th Ed.

February 3rd

Legislative Branch
Bicameralism
Reading: Government in America, Chp. 12, 14th Ed.; Chp. 11, 10th Ed.

February 5th

The Members of Congress
The Electoral Connection
House “Homestyles” and Senate “Folkways”

February 8th and 10th

Congress as an Institution
Theories of Congressional Organization
Channels of Congressional Policymaking

February 12th

First Midterm Examination (25 percent of Final Grade)
Bring a Blue Book to class

February 15th

The Executive Branch
The Personal President
Presidential Transitions
Reading: Government in America, Chp. 13, 14th Ed.; Chp. 12, 10th Ed.

February 17th and 19th

The Institutional Presidency
Presidential Management Styles
The Administrative President

February 22th

Inter-branch conflict in Policymaking

The “Two Presidencies” Thesis
War Powers, Taxing, Spending, and Budgets
Reading: Government in America, Chp. 14, 14th Ed.; Chp. 15, 10th Ed.

February 24nd

The U.S. Federal Bureaucracy
Origins of the Bureaucracy
Structure and Change, Progressives and Civil Service through Time
Reading: Government in America, Chp. 15, 14th Ed.; Chp. 13, 10th Ed.

February 26th

Overhead Democracy and Principal-Agent Theory
Information and Bureaucracy as the “Antennae of Government”

March 1st

Bureaucracy and Policymaking
Criteria for Evaluating Bureaucracy
The Role of Bureaucracy in Democratic Government

March 3rd

The Federal Judiciary
Reading: Government in America, Chp. 16, 14th Ed.; Chp. 14, 10th Ed.

March 5th

Second Midterm Examination (25 percent of Final Grade)
Bring Blue Book to class

March 8th

Political Parties in the United States
Origins and Change Over Time
Reading: Government in America, Chp. 8, 14th Ed.; Chp. 8, 10th Ed.

March 10th

Parties as Organizations
Parties in Government
Parties in Elections

March 12th

Interest Groups in the American System
Organization and Maintenance
Reading: Government in America, Chp. 11, 14th Ed.; Chp. 10, 10th Ed.

March 14th

Interest Groups in the American System
The Influence of Groups in American Politics and the Policy Process

March 15th through 20th

Spring Break

March 22nd

The Mass Media in American Politics
Structure and Historical Functions

How the Mass Media has changed over time

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 7, 14th Ed.; Chp. 7, 10th Ed.

March 24th

Theories of Media Influence in Politics

Mass Media and Agenda Setting in the American System

March 26th

Public Opinion In American Politics

Theories of Opinion and Democratic Responsiveness

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 6, 14th Ed.; Chp. 6, 10th Ed.

March 29th

Elections and Voting in the United States

Reading: Government in America, Chapter 10, 14th Ed.; Chp. 9, 10th Ed.

March 31st

Nominations and Campaigns

Primaries in the United States

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 9, 14th Ed.; Chp. 9, 10th Ed.

April 2nd

Third Midterm Examination (25 percent of Final Grade)

Bring Blue Book to class

April 5th

Public Policy in the American System

Stages of the Policy Process

Theories of Policymaking and Change

April 7th

Economic Policymaking

The Economic Policy Subsystem

Fiscal versus Monetary Policy

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 17, 14th Ed.; 10th Ed.—See Chp. 17, 14th Ed. on Blackboard.

April 9th and 12th

Social Welfare Policy

Characteristics of Social Welfare Policies

Entitlement Programs

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 18, 14th Ed.; Chp. 16, 10th Ed.

April 14th

Healthcare in the United States

The Healthcare Subsystem

Growing Importance in American Politics

Health in Comparative Perspective

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 19, 14th Ed.; 10th Ed.—See Chp. 19, 14th Ed. on Blackboard.

April 16th

Environmental Policy in the United States

Environmental Policy Subsystem

Climate Change

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 19, 14th Ed.; 10th Ed.—See Chp. 19, 14th Ed. on Blackboard.

April 19th

Business Regulation in the United States

Business and Political Power

April 21st

Homeland Security and Disaster Management

Policies and Publics

Creation of the Department of Homeland Security

The Politics of Risk

April 23rd

National Security and Diplomacy

Doctrinal Change and Historical Perspective

Reading: Government in America, Chp. 20, 14th Ed.; Chp. 17, 10th Ed.

April 26th

The Texas State Constitution

Texas State Political Institutions

April 28th

The Texas State Legislature

Organization and Major Differences

April 30th

The Executive Branch in Texas

History, Powers, and Organization

May 3rd

Bureaucracy in the State of Texas
Analytical Functions and Major Areas of Policymaking

May 5th and 7th

Electoral Politics in Texas
Last Day of Class

May 10th and 11th

No-class days

May 13th

Final Examination, 2-5PM