U.S. Federal Government & Politics: POLS 2305-16, Fall 2017
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Political Science Department
MW 1:40PM – 2:55PM
Classroom: ELABN 115

Instructor: Dr. Mi-son Kim
Office Location: ELABN 213
Office Phone: (956) 665-3808
Email: mison.kim@utrgv.edu
Office Hours: M 9:00AM-12:00PM or by appointment

Course Description
This course introduces you to theories about and the practice of American federal government. Specific topics include: origin and development of the U.S. Constitution, structure and powers of the national government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, federalism, political participation, the national election process, public policy, civil liberties, and civil rights. Throughout the semester, we will examine the following questions. Why is our government set up the way it is? How was our government established by our Constitution and the debates of the founding era? How have they evolved over time? How does the American mass public fit into the political process of American government? In doing so, we will explore the very foundation of our national government and public behavior in American politics.

Learning Objectives/Outcomes for the Course
1. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the separation of powers as described in the U.S. constitution;
2. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of Congress and its institutions;
3. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the Presidency and the workings of federal agencies;
4. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the federal judicial system; and,
5. To demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the processes by which federal domestic policy are made and executed.

Learning Objectives for Core Curriculum Requirements
This course fulfills a core area requirement in Government/Political Science:

(i) Courses in this category focus on consideration of the Constitution of the United States and the constitutions of the states, with special emphasis on that of Texas.
(ii) Courses in this area involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations.
(iii) The following four core objectives must be addressed in each course approved to fulfill this category requirement: Critical Thinking Skills, Communication Skills, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility.

The core objectives are defined as:

Critical Thinking
Students will demonstrate comprehension of a variety of written texts and other information sources by analyzing and evaluating the logic, validity, and relevance of the information in them to solve challenging problems, to arrive at well-reasoned conclusions, and to develop and explore new questions.

**Communication Skills**
Students will demonstrate the ability to adapt their communications to a particular context, audience, and purpose using language, genre conventions, and sources appropriate to a specific discipline and/or communication task.

**Personal Responsibility**
Students will demonstrate an awareness of the range of human values and beliefs that they draw upon to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.

**Social Responsibility**
Students will recognize and describe cultural diversity, the role of civic engagement in society, and the link between ethics and behavior.

**Calendar of Activities**
Some important dates for Fall 2017 include:

- **Aug 28**: Fall classes begin
- **Aug 31**: Last day to add or register for Fall classes
- **Sept 1**: Last day to withdraw (drop all classes) for a 80% refund
- **Sept 4**: Labor Day Holiday, no classes
- **Sept 13**: Census day (last day to drop without it appearing on the transcript)
- **Nov 15**: Last day to drop (DR grade) a class or withdraw (grade of W)
- **Nov 15 - Dec 6**: Online course evaluations available
- **Nov 23 - Nov 25**: Thanksgiving Holiday, no classes
- **Dec 7**: Study Day, no classes
- **Dec 8 – Dec 14**: Final Exams

**Class Policies**

**A. Attendance**: Coming to class is crucial to complete the course successfully. I will take attendance within the first five (5) minutes of each class meeting. Be in your seat by the time class is scheduled to begin in order to ensure that you are counted present. If you accumulate zero or one (0 or 1) unexcused absence from meetings, you will receive an automatic two (2) point bonus on your course grade. I do not punish absences directly i.e., by deducting points, because a failure to come to class itself gives you disadvantages in various ways. First, you miss a lecture; second, you miss opportunities to participate in class activities such as discussion and mini quizzes, which are all integrated into your course grade.

**B. Make-Up Exams**: Make-up exams are only given in this class in extenuating circumstances and with proof of that circumstance. Extenuating circumstances are inevitable, unpredictable, AND uncontrollable incidents that prevent you from taking an exam on a designated date. Examples include emergencies like severe illness and grave family emergencies. Therefore, a mild fever or headache, for instance, is not considered an extenuating circumstance. Proof consists of your
hospital admittance paper or a relevant obituary. Requests for make-up exams should be made to Dr. Kim directly and MUST BE MADE BEFORE THE EXAM TAKES PLACE. This means if you do not show up for the exam without notifying me ahead of time, you will NOT receive a make-up exam.

C. Class Decorum: Cell phones are either to be set to a silent mode or to be turned off. They are NOT to be used at all in class. If I see or hear a cell phone once, you get a warning and a dirty look. If I see it twice, you will be asked to leave the classroom. Tablet devices and laptops are allowed for note taking in class. However, if I notice that things other than note-taking are going on, you will be asked to put the laptop away. Also, please do not pack up before I dismiss you. If you have to leave early, please give me a notice before class begins.

D. Concerning Email/Blackboard:
   1) The subject line of each email must state your full name and section number, NOT your student number.
   2) Use your university email account (UTRGV) when sending emails to me. I will not respond to those emails sent via outside accounts.
   3) It is a good idea to save all correspondence between you and me.
   4) I will try to reply back as quickly as possible. If three (3) working days have passed and there is no response to your email, chances are good that I did not receive your email. Please check the address and resend the email.
   5) Please contact me through email instead of Blackboard messaging.
   6) Check the Blackboard page at least once a week for updates. You are responsible for keeping up-to-date with the posts.

Student Responsibilities
A. Reading: Class topics and reading materials are given in the calendar of activities section in this syllabus. I expect you to read the corresponding materials for each class and familiarize yourself with the topic to be covered. Specific class topics are subject to change, and any change will be announced in advance.

B. Note Taking: You are strongly recommended to take notes from lectures to complete this course successfully. I will upload weekly lecture outlines to Blackboard to help your note taking. Please download and print them (if you use a laptop or tablet, then you don’t have to print them out) before coming to class so that you can easily follow up lectures and take notes of important points simply by filling out blanks on the outline provided.

C. Visit Blackboard as frequent as you can for updates, class materials, and announcements.

Instructor Responsibilities
A. Email Correspondence: I will respond to your emails within 2-3 working days. If you don’t hear from me past 3 working days, it is likely that I didn’t receive your email. Please try to re-send your email to me.

B. Grading and Feedback: I will do my best to return your assignments or exams with my feedback as promptly as possible. The general turnaround times are as follows: (1) the following meeting for a mini quiz and mini presentation; (2) within a week for reading activities and exams.
C. Weekly Lecture Outlines: I will post lecture outlines in Word file to Blackboard for each week’s lectures to help your effective note taking in class. You shall be able to find and download them by every Saturday for the lectures of the following week.

D. Class Announcements: I will make announcements both in class and online via Blackboard and email to keep everyone informed of things we are to do in this course.

Course Requirements
A. Mini Quizzes (5%): At the end of every class meeting, you will have a short, simple quiz (2 questions) on the subject discussed in the class.

B. Exams (60%): You will have three (3) exams in this course, each of which counts for 20% of your course grade. These exams are not cumulative, each covering the only topics learned in each period.

C. Review Quizzes (10%): seven (7) times during the semester, you will have a short review quiz on recent material in class. The quiz format will be five multiple-choice or/and T/F items. This activity is designed to give you opportunities to review topics periodically, which will make it a lot easier for you to prepare for the exams. To ensure that you are prepared for quizzes, I recommend that you review what you have learned after every lecture. You will find that devoting fifteen minutes or so later that day to looking back over the points that were covered will be very helpful to keeping up with material. There are NO make-up quizzes.

D. Blackboard Reading Quizzes (10%): For each topic, you will be given a quiz of 15 questions on the chapter of your textbook to be discussed in class. The questions will be simple true/false, multiple choice questions whose answers can easily be found from the corresponding chapter of the textbook. This activity is designed for you to familiarize yourself with a new topic before discussed in class and be better prepared for class discussion. These quizzes will be conducted through the course webpage on Blackboard. You are required to complete the quiz before coming to class.

E. Presentation (10%): For each topic, I will assign extra readings (about 2-3 news articles) that correspond with the topic covered during the period. They will provide specific discussion topics which you are asked to actively engage. Everyone is required to choose one topic and do a presentation on the topic of your choice. Each topic will have roughly 2-3 presenters and they work together to do a team presentation. Presentations should be composed of the following elements: (1) discussing the main points and arguments of the assigned reading & topic you choose; (2) leading the class discussion by asking the class interesting, thought-provoking questions. Although it is a team project, presenters are evaluated individually based on their contribution and performance.

F. Class Participation (5%): Active participation in class discussion is highly encouraged in this course. It will help you learn effectively by not only passively absorbing information but also sharing your thoughts and raising questions.

G. University Assessment: There will be a short exam in addition to the final exam that students are required to take. Because this is a University requirement students will not receive a grade for this course unless the short exam is completed at the end of the semester. This does NOT count toward your final grade.
**H. Grading Rubric:** 100-90 A; 89-80 B; 79-70 C; 69-60 D; 59- F

**Required Textbook**  
Barbour, Christine and Gerald C. Wright. Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics; THE ESSENTIALS, 6th – 8th Edition allowed. CQ Press. (Available both used and new on Amazon and other online retailer)

**Course Outline**  
(All dates are tentative and subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>August 28</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 30</td>
<td>Philosophical Foundation of the U.S., Democratic Theories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>September 4</td>
<td>Labor Day; NO CLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 6</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 1 due by 1:00PM&lt;br&gt;The Constitution I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>September 11</td>
<td>The Constitution II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 13</td>
<td>The Constitution III&lt;br&gt;Presentation 1; Review Quiz 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>September 18</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 2 due by 1:00PM&lt;br&gt;Civil Liberties I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 20</td>
<td>Civil Liberties II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>September 25</td>
<td>Presentation 2; Civil Rights I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 27</td>
<td>Civil Rights II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>October 2</td>
<td>Presentation 3; Review Quiz 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 4</td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>October 9</td>
<td>Political Ideology &amp; Political Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 11</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 3 due by 1:00PM&lt;br&gt;Public Opinion &amp; Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>October 16</td>
<td>Presentation 4; Review Quiz 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 18</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 4 due by 1:00PM&lt;br&gt;Interest Groups I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>October 23</td>
<td>Interest Groups II&lt;br&gt;Presentation 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 25</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 5 due by 1:00PM&lt;br&gt;Political Parties I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>October 30</td>
<td>Political Parties II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 1</td>
<td>Presentation 6; Review Quiz 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>November 6</td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 8</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 6 due by 1:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>November 13</td>
<td>Congress II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 15</td>
<td>Congress III</td>
<td>Presentation 7; Review Quiz 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>November 20</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 7 due by 1:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 22</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break; NO CLASS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>November 27</td>
<td>Presidency II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 29</td>
<td>Presentation 8; Review Quiz 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>December 4</td>
<td>Blackboard Reading Quiz 8 due by 1:00PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 6</td>
<td>Judiciary I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation II; Review Quiz 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 16</td>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**UTRGV Policy Statements**

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:**
If you have a documented disability (physical, psychological, learning, or other disability which affects your academic performance) and would like to receive academic accommodations, please inform your instructor and contact Student Accessibility Services to schedule an appointment to initiate services. It is recommended that you schedule an appointment with Student Accessibility Services before classes start. However, accommodations can be provided at any time. **Brownsville Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in Cortez Hall Room 129 and can be contacted by phone at (956) 882-7374 (Voice) or via email at ability@utrgv.edu. **Edinburg Campus:** Student Accessibility Services is located in 108 University Center and can be contacted by phone at (956) 665-7005 (Voice), (956) 665-3840 (Fax), or via email at ability@utrgv.edu.

**MANDATORY COURSE EVALUATION PERIOD:**
Students are required to complete an ONLINE evaluation of this course, accessed through your UTRGV account (http://my.utrgv.edu); you will be contacted through email with further instructions. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades. Online evaluations will be available: Nov 15 – Dec 6 for full fall semester courses

**ATTENDANCE:**
Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course for excessive absences, more than fifteen (15) absences. UTRGV’s attendance policy excuses students from attending class if they are participating in officially sponsored university activities, such as athletics; for observance of religious holy days; or for military service. Students should contact the instructor in advance of the excused absence and arrange to make up missed work or examinations.

**SCHOLASTIC INTEGRITY:**
As members of a community dedicated to Honesty, Integrity and Respect, students are reminded that those who engage in scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and expulsion from the University. Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, and collusion; submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person; taking an examination for another person; any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student; or the attempt to commit such acts. Since scholastic dishonesty harms the individual, all students and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced (Board of Regents Rules and Regulations and UTRGV Academic Integrity Guidelines). All scholastic dishonesty incidents will be reported to the Dean of Students.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT, DISCRIMINATION, and VIOLENCE:**
In accordance with UT System regulations, your instructor is a “responsible employee” for reporting purposes under Title IX regulations and so must report any instance, occurring during a student’s time in college, of sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, or sexual harassment about which she/he becomes aware during this course through writing, discussion, or personal disclosure. More information can be found at www.utrgv.edu/equity, including confidential resources available on campus. The faculty and staff of UTRGV actively strive to provide a learning, working, and living environment that promotes personal integrity, civility, and mutual respect in an environment free from sexual misconduct and discrimination.

**COURSE DROPS:**
According to UTRGV policy, students may drop any class without penalty earning a grade of DR until the official drop date. Following that date, students must be assigned a letter grade and can no longer drop the class. Students considering dropping the class should be aware of the “3-peat rule” and the “6-drop” rule so they can recognize how dropped classes may affect their academic success. The 6-drop rule refers to Texas law that dictates that undergraduate students may not drop more than six courses during their undergraduate career. Courses dropped at other Texas public higher education institutions will count toward the six-course drop limit. The 3-peat rule refers to additional fees charged to students who take the same class for the third time.