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.

Class Policies
A. Attendance: Coming to class is crucial to complete the course successfully. 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. 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 your stuff before I dismiss you. If you have to leave early, please give me a notice before a 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 two (2) 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 daily 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 **MUST** take notes from lectures to complete this course successfully. I will upload lecture note 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 frequently as you can (once a day) for updates, class materials, and announcements.**

**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%)**: Five (5) times during the Summer II session, 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 class topic, you will be given about 2-3 short readings (mostly news articles) to complete. The reading materials correspond with the topic covered during the period. They will provide specific discussion topics which you are asked to actively engage in class. For you to be better prepared for class discussion there will be online quizzes on the readings you are required to complete the day before coming to class. These quizzes will be conducted through the course webpage on Blackboard. The quiz contains 3-5 short answer questions.

E. Presentation (10%): On the readings mentioned above (in D. Blackboard Reading Quizzes), you will be asked to do a presentation by discussing the main points and arguments of the assigned reading you choose and lead the class discussion by asking the class interesting, thought-provoking questions.

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
There is NO required textbook in this course. Instead, I will post required readings to Blackboard such as news articles, book excerpts, and journal articles. You must read assigned readings and be prepared for discussion before coming to class.

Class Topics and Readings
For each topic you should 1) have a copy of lecture note outlines, 2) read the assigned readings, and 3) participation in discussion.

Topic 1 “Historical Foundation of American Politics”: Day 1 (July 13, Thu) – Day 2 (July 14, Fri)
- Class intro
- Presentation topic assignments

Topic 2 “The U.S. Constitution”: Day 3 (July 17, Mon) – Day 6 (July 19, Wed)
- Reading Blackboard Quiz 1: available between July 17-19 (due by 9:00AM). Choose the best time for you to complete the quiz within this window.
- Presentation 1 on July 19, Wed in class
- **Review Quiz 1 on July 19, Wed in class.** This quiz covers Topics 1-2.

  - Topic 3 “Civil Liberties”: **Day 7 (July 20, Thu) – Day 8 (July 24 Mon)**
    - Reading Blackboard Quiz 2: available between July 20-24 (due by 9:00AM)
    - Presentation 2 on July 24, Mon in class

  - Topic 4 “Civil Rights”: **Day 8 (July 24, Mon) – Day 10 (July 26, Wed)**
    - Reading Blackboard Quiz 3: available between July 24-26 (due by 9:00AM)
    - Presentation 3 on July 26, Wed in class
    - **Review Quiz 2 on July 26, Wed in class.** This quiz covers Topics 3-4 only.

  - **Exam 1: Day 11 (July 27, Thu) in class; Topics 1-4**

    - Topic 5 “Political Culture, Ideology, and Public Opinion”: **Day 12 (July 28, Fri) – Day 13 (July 31, Mon)**
      - Reading Blackboard Quiz 4: available between July 28-31 (due by 9:00AM)
      - Presentation 4 on July 31, Mon in class

    - Topic 6 “Interest Groups”: **Day 14 (August 1, Tue) – Day 15 (August 2, Wed)**
      - Reading Blackboard Quiz 5: available between August 1-2 (due by 9:00AM)
      - Presentation 5 on August 2, Wed in class

    - Topic 7 “Political Parties”: **Day 16 (August 3, Thu) – Day 18 (August 7, Mon)**
      - Reading Blackboard Quiz 6: available between August 3-7 (due by 9:00AM)
      - Presentation 6 on August 7, Mon in class
      - **Review Quiz 3 on August 7, Mon in class.** This quiz covers Topics 5-7 only.

  - **Exam 2: Day 19 (August 8, Tue) in class; Topics 5-8**

    - Topic 8 “Congress”: **Day 20 (August 9, Wed) – Day 22 (August 11, Fri)**
      - Reading Blackboard Quiz 7: available between August 9-11 (due by 9:00AM)
      - Presentation 7 on August 11, Fri in class
      - **Review Quiz 4 on August 11, Fri in class.** This quiz covers Topic 8 only.

    - Topic 9 “The Presidency”: **Day 22 (August 11, Fri) – Day 23 (August 14, Mon)**

      - Reading Blackboard Quiz 8: available between August 14-16 (due by 9:00AM)
      - Presentation 8 on August 16, Wed in class
      - **Review Quiz 5 on August 16, Wed in class.** This quiz covers Topics 9-10 only.

  - **Exam 3: Day 27 (August 18, Fri) in class; Topics 8-10**
**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:

**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.