

U.S. & Texas Government I: POLS 2301-08

Political Science Department, Spring 2016

MW 10:50AM – 12:05PM

Classroom: SBSC 115

Instructor: Dr. Mi-son Kim

Email: mison.kim@utrgv.edu

Office Location: SBSC 230

Office Hours: TR 3:00-5:00PM or by appointment

Office Phone: (956) 665-3808

Course Description

This course introduces you to theories about and the practice of American/Texas government. 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 and regional government and public behavior in American politics.

Main Goals of This Course

- To understand the evolution of political, social, and economic development of the U.S. in general and Texas in particular
- To be able to analyze current political issues in the U.S. and Texas based on the theories and principles learned in the course
- To develop appropriate reading/analytic/writing skills critical for understanding Federal and Texas governments and politics

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 one (1) 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.

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.
- 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.
- 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 textbook chapters are given in the calendar of activities section in this syllabus. I expect you to read the corresponding chapter of your textbook for each class and familiarize yourself with the material to be covered. Specific class topics are subject to change, and any change will be announced in class.

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 the important points simply by filling out the blanks on the outline provided.

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 that we have at the end of every class meeting; (2) within a week for exams; and (3) within 2 weeks for an essay assignment.

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 two (2) weeks in advance of the lecture the outlines are for.

Course Requirements

A. In-Class Mini Quizzes (10%): At the end of every class meeting, you will have a short, simple quiz (of 1 or 2 questions) on the subject discussed in the class.

B. Exams (50%): You will have two (2) exams in this course, each of which counts for 25% of your course grade. These exams are not cumulative, each covering the only topics learned in each period.

C. Essay Assignment (25%): You will write a short analytic essay on two (2) current political topics in Texas. You will be asked to apply the concepts and theories discussed in class to these specific topics, develop your own arguments, and discuss your views critically. Detailed instructions will be provided later.

D. Blackboard Quizzes (10%): Six times during the semester, you will be asked to complete a short quiz on recent material through the course webpage on Blackboard. The quiz format will be five multiple-choice or/and T/F items. 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, either later that day or during the next, to looking back over the points that were covered will be very helpful to keeping up with material. **There are NO make-up quizzes, but your lowest quiz grade will be dropped.**

E. Oral Review Activity (5%): Every meeting before class begins, we will briefly review main points/concepts of the material discussed in the last meeting. About 3-5 people will be asked to explain the concepts that I ask in class. Specific topics/concepts to be asked and who to give an answer in a following meeting will be notified at the end of every class to help you prepared.

F. Grading Rubric: 100-90 A; 89-80 B; 79-70 C; 69-60 D; 59- F

Required Textbook

Introduction to American Government, 8th Edition, by Turner, Stephenson, Bresler, Frederick and Karlesky, Redding CA: BVT Publishing (ISBN: 978-1-62751-627-3)

Optional Reading

Texas Politics 2015 - 2016 Edition (13th edition), by Charldean Newell, David F. Prindle and James W. Riddlesperger, Jr. Cengage Learning

Course Outline

(All dates are tentative and subject to change)

Week 1	January 20	Introduction
Week 2	January 25	The Constitution I
	January 27	The Constitution II
Week 3	February 1	Federalism
	February 3	Texas Constitution Blackboard Quiz 1 due Feb 7 (Sun) by 10 pm
Week 4	February 8	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights I
	February 10	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights II
Week 5	February 15	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights III
	February 17	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights IV Blackboard Quiz 2 due Feb 21 (Sun) by 10 pm
Week 6	February 22	Review Session
	February 25	Exam 1
Week 7	February 29	Political Ideology & Political Culture I
	March 2	Political Ideology & Political Culture II
Week 8	March 7	Public Opinion & Participation I
	March 9	Public Opinion & Participation II Blackboard Quiz 3 due Mar 13 (Sun) by 10 pm
Week 9	March 14-20	Spring Break; NO CLASS
Week 10	March 21	Interest Groups I – Theories of Group Politics
	March 23	Interest Groups II – Interest Groups in U.S. Politics
Week 11	March 28	Political Parties I – Why Parties?
	March 30	Political Parties II

Week 12	April 4	Political Parties III Essay exam topic announced/posted
	April 6	No Class (Midwest Political Science Association Annual Meeting) Blackboard Quiz 4 due Apr 10 (Sun) by 10 pm
Week 13	April 11	No Class; Essay Exam due by 11:59 pm
	April 13	Texas Interest Groups and Political Parties
Week 14	April 18	Politics & Media I
	April 20	Politics & Media II Blackboard Quiz 5 due Apr 24 (Sun) by 10 pm
Week 15	April 25	Voting
	April 27	Campaigns
Week 16	May 2	Elections Blackboard Quiz 6 due May 5 (Thu) by 10 pm
	May 4	Review Session
Week 17	May 9 (Mon)	Final Exam @ 10:15AM – 12:00PM

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 accessibility@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 accessibility@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. Online evaluations will be available April 13 – May 4, 2016. Students who complete their evaluations will have priority access to their grades.

ATTENDANCE:

Students are expected to attend all scheduled classes and may be dropped from the course for excessive 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.