

U.S. & Texas Government I: POLS 2301-06, Fall 2016

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Political Science Department

MW 1:40PM – 2:55PM

Classroom: Student Academic Center 1.101

Instructor: Dr. Mi-son Kim

Email: mison.kim@utrgv.edu

Office Location: SBSC 230

Office Hours: MW 3:00-4:30PM 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

Calendar of Activities

Some important dates for Fall 2016 include:

- Aug 29 Fall classes begin
- Sept 1 Last day to add or register for Fall classes
- Sept 2 Last day to withdraw (drop all classes) for a 80% refund
- Sept 5 Labor Day Holiday, no classes
- Sept 14 Census day (last day to drop without it appearing on the transcript)
- Nov 17 Last day to drop (DR grade) a class or withdraw (grade of W)
- Nov 18 - Dec 8 Online course evaluations available
- Nov 24 - Nov 25 Thanksgiving Holiday, no classes
- Dec 8 Study Day, no classes
- Dec 9 – Dec 15 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. Reading Activities (10%):** At the beginning of randomly picked class meetings you will have a worksheet to complete based on your understanding of the assigned reading. This activity is designed to encourage you to read material and be prepared for class discussion.

- B. Mini Quizzes (7%):** At the end of every class meeting, you will have a short, simple quiz (2 questions) on the subject discussed in the class.

- C. 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.

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.** However, your lowest quiz grade will be automatically dropped and only five better grades will be taken for your course grade.

E. Mini Presentation (10%): There will be required readings assigned for every meeting. You will be given a chance to do a mini presentation on any of those readings throughout the course. You will be asked to briefly discuss main points/concepts of the assigned reading you choose and lead the class discussion by asking the class interesting, thought-provoking questions. Your presentation should be about 5-10 minutes.

F. Class Participation (3%): Active participation in 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. 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.

Course Outline

(All dates are tentative and subject to change)

Week 1	August 29	Introduction
	August 31	Philosophical Foundation of the U.S., Democratic Theories
Week 2	September 5	Labor Day; NO CLASS
	September 7	The U.S. Constitution I
Week 3	September 12	The U.S. Constitution II
	September 14	The U.S. Constitution III
Week 4	September 19	Texas Constitution Blackboard Quiz 1 due by 11:59 pm

	September 21	Civil Liberties I
Week 5	September 26	Civil Liberties II
	September 28	Civil Rights I
Week 6	October 3	Civil Rights II Blackboard Quiz 2 due by 11:59 pm
	October 5	Review Session
Week 7	October 10	Exam 1
	October 12	Political Ideology & Political Culture I
Week 8	October 17	Political Ideology & Political Culture II
	October 19	Public Opinion & Participation I
Week 9	October 24	Public Opinion & Participation II Blackboard Quiz 3 due by 11:59 pm
	October 26	Interest Groups I – Theories of Group Politics
Week 10	October 31	Interest Groups II – Interest Groups in U.S. Politics
	November 2	Interest Groups III – Interest Groups in Texas Blackboard Quiz 4 due by 11:59 pm
Week 11	November 7	Review Session
	November 9	Exam 2
Week 12	November 14	Political Parties I – Why Parties
	November 16	Political Parties II
Week 13	November 21	Political Parties III – Political Parties in Texas Blackboard Quiz 5 due by 11:59 pm
	November 23	Thanksgiving Break; NO CLASS
Week 14	November 28	Voting
	November 30	Campaigns
Week 15	December 5	Elections Blackboard Quiz 6 due by 11:59 pm
	December 7	Course Wrap-Up
Week 16	December 12	Exam 3 @ 1:15 – 3:00PM

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 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:

Oct 5 – Oct 12 for Module 1 courses

Dec 1 – Dec 7 for Module 2 courses

Nov 18 – Dec 8 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.