

U.S. Federal Government & Politics: POLS 2305-04, Fall 2017
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Political Science Department
MW 9:25AM – 10:40AM
Classroom: ELABN 105

Instructor: Dr. Mi-son Kim
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Office Hours: MW 3:00PM-4:30PM 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. 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 (15%): 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 two (2) exams in this course, each of which counts for 30% of your course grade. These exams are not cumulative, each covering the only topics learned in each period.

C. Review Quizzes (20%): five (5) 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. 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.

E. 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.

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

Course Outline

(All dates are tentative and subject to change)

Week 5	September 25	Philosophical Foundation of the U.S., Democratic Theories
	September 27	The Constitution I
Week 6	October 2	The Constitution II
	October 4	The Constitution III
		Review Quiz 1
Week 7	October 9	Civil Liberties I
	October 11	Civil Liberties II

Week 8	October 16	Civil Rights I
	October 18	Civil Rights II Review Quiz 2
Week 9	October 23	Political Ideology & Political Culture
	October 25	Public Opinion & Participation
Week 10	October 30	Exam 1
	November 1	Interest Groups I
Week 11	November 6	Interest Groups II
	November 8	Political Parties I
Week 12	November 13	Political Parties II Review Quiz 3
	November 15	Congress I
Week 13	November 20	Congress II
	November 22	Thanksgiving Break; NO CLASS
Week 14	November 27	Review Quiz 4 Presidency I
	November 29	Presidency II
Week 15	December 4	Judiciary I
	December 6	Judiciary II Review Quiz 5
Week 16	Exam 3	TBA

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.