

**American Mass Politics**  
**POLS 4355**  
**Fall 2008**

**Prof. Courtney Cullison**  
[ccullison@uttyler.edu](mailto:ccullison@uttyler.edu)  
903-566-7163  
BUS 224

**Office Hours:**  
**Monday 3:00 – 4:30**  
**Tuesday 2:00 – 3:30**  
**Wednesday 10:00 – 11:30**

**Required Readings**

*Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Robert D. Putnam  
*American Public Opinion: It's Origins, Content, and Impact* (7<sup>th</sup> Edition), Robert S. Erikson and Kent L Tedin

**Course Objectives**

Government is not limited to Washington, D.C. and state capitols – it's something we are all connected to in some way. You may be a participant, a beneficiary, or part of the formal government structure. This course will examine public life and our role in the public order. We will begin with an examination of the roots the public self, focusing on development and trends in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. You will be asked to involve yourself in the world around you and think critically about the role you play in the societal order. We will move on to an examination of our political self, looking at the various ways that we express our political beliefs and participate in the business of government.

At the conclusion of this semester, you should:

- Have a basic understanding of the potential influence that social relationships among citizens can have over public life
- Understand how the pattern of social relationships has evolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- Understand and identify the various mechanisms by which we act as citizens in a representative democracy
- Be able to find and critically think about trends in public opinion and participation
- Function as production citizens
- 

**Blackboard**

This class will heavily utilize Blackboard. This is where all course materials, and your grades, will be posted. You will need to log in to Blackboard (<http://ccs.uttyler.edu/blackboard>) and enroll yourself in this course ASAP.

The Blackboard server does not know what courses you have registered for during UT Tyler registration. At the first of each semester you may have to search for, and "Enroll", in any Blackboard courses that are available to you.

- After you Log In, click on the "Courses" tab at the top of the Blackboard window
- Search for your course in the Course Catalog (If it is not there, you will need to let your instructor know that it does not show up.)
- When you find your course name, **DO NOT CLICK ON THE COURSE NAME**
- Look for and click on the "Enroll" button to the right of the course name (If it is not there, you will need to let your instructor know that it does not show up.)
- Follow the instructions for enrolling in that Blackboard course
- You will need the access code to enroll for this course. The code is 10741

**Attendance & Participation**

You are upperclassmen, so I assume you know the importance of class attendance. Exams and writing assignments will draw from lecture material, so regular attendance is paramount to your success. If you have to miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed and take the appropriate actions to make up for your absence. I will take attendance daily, and will consider it when assigning final grades.

In addition to showing up, I will expect that you have completed the assigned readings and are prepared to answer

questions and participate in class discussion. I will post a brief lecture outline on Blackboard prior to class to help you organize your thoughts as you prepare for class. If it seems that a lot of you have not completed the readings and are unable (or unwilling) to answer questions or discuss the material, I will dismiss class.

Statements that are offensive or rude, or statements that are not relevant to the class material will not be tolerated. I expect discussion in this class to be productive. In order to achieve that, I have a few rules.

- I understand that you all have opinions, and you are encouraged to express them so long as they are grounded in something other than your ego. Any opinion you express must be grounded in some evidence or fact. Just because you think something is or should be a certain way doesn't make it true. Offer evidence to support your opinion or keep it to yourself.
- Be respectful. Understand that a lot of people will never agree with you. That does not make them stupid or irrational. You're free to offer your opinion, and they are free to offer theirs.
- We will question government and elected officials in this class. It's a healthy practice in a democracy. It's not high treason (it's not even a misdemeanor) and we will not treat it as such. But, if you do point out a problem or inconsistency in the operation of government or the behavior of a public official be prepared to offer a reasonable solution as well. Focusing only on what's wrong fosters apathy and distrust. These are not healthy practices in a democracy and we won't engage in them in this class.

Note Regarding Student Absence due to Religious Observances: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are *requested* to inform the instructor by the second class meeting of such absences.

### **Class Decorum**

You are all adults and I expect you to act as such. Arrive on time. Do not leave early unless you have seen me first. Turn cell phones and all other electronic devices off. Do not talk in class unless you are asking a question or participating in class discussion. Please sleep elsewhere. In short, be respectful of the professor and your classmates. Students who fail to do so will be asked to leave class. If you disrupt class or exhibit disrespectful behavior, it may be considered when assigning final grades for the course.

### **Policy on Laptops in Class**

I understand that many of you prefer to take notes on a laptop, and you're welcome to do so. However, if I suspect you are doing anything other than taking notes, I will ask to see you at the end of the class period. If you cannot show me a reasonable set of notes from that class period, you will no longer be allowed to use your laptop in class.

### **Disability Statement**

If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request disability support services/accommodation(s), please contact Ida MacDonald in the Disability Support Services office so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting disability support services/accommodation(s) must provide appropriate documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Support Services counselor. For more information, call or visit the Student Services Center located in the University Center, Room 282. The telephone number is 566-7079 (TDD 565-5579)." Additional information may also be obtained at the following UT Tyler Web address: <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>.

### **Social Security Statement**

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

The UT Tyler community regarding cheating as an extremely serious matter and deals severely with those who violate the standards of academic integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Copying from another person's test paper
- During a test, possession of materials not authorized by the person administering the test
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination or the divulging of examination contents to another when an instructor has allowed the exam to be kept by the student

- Working with others in taking tests or preparing academic assignments when not authorized by the course instructor
- Obtaining by any means another person's work and submitting that work as one's own. This included the downloading of academic papers or the purchase of papers written by others.

If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the classroom instructor may ask the student to meet with him or her to discuss the incident. A student may admit to allegations of academic dishonesty, waive the right to a hearing and accept penalties imposed by the instructor. The student may also deny all allegations and ask to see the Dean of Student Affairs. An accused student may accept the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs or ask for a hearing before an impartial hearing officer appointed by the university. Witnesses may be called and evidence presented. The hearing officer will consider all evidence and make a decision. The decision of the hearing officer may be appealed to the President by either the student or the Dean of Student Affairs. For a discussion of possible penalties, please see <http://www.uttyler.edu/mainsite/conduct.html>.

### **Grade Replacement**

If you are repeating this course for a grade replacement, you must file an intent to receive grade forgiveness with the registrar by the census date. Failure to file an intent to use grade forgiveness will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. A student will receive grade forgiveness (grade replacement) for only three (undergraduate student) or two (graduate student) course repeats during his/her career at UT Tyler. (2006-08 Catalog, p. 35)

### **Grading**

Your grade in this class will consist of four components:

- Reading Quizzes (100 points) – These will be given in class and will cover the assigned reading for that day. If you have taken notes over the reading, you may use those notes (and only those notes – not your entire notebook) when you take the quiz. If you have typed your notes, they must be printed out. You will not be able to use your laptop on the quizzes. Notice of quizzes will be given in class (not posted on Blackboard) one class period prior to the quiz.
- Writing Assignments (100 points) – You will be asked to write a series of short papers throughout the semester. These will be critical analysis papers, and due dates will be announced when the assignments are given.
- Exams (200points) – There will be a midterm and a final. Exams will consist of an objective portion (multiple choice, short answer, matching) and a subjective portion (essay). Your essays should be adequately answer the question, draw on the reading and lectures, and be well-constructed (a reasoned argument centered on a thesis statement and supporting evidence). If you fail to meet these criteria, do not expect a passing grade. If you need help with this, please feel free to see me or visit the writing center. We'll be happy to help you.

360 – 400 = A

320 – 359 = B

280 – 319 = C

240 – 279 = D

### **Policy on Late/Make-up Work**

Late assignments will be accepted with penalty. One letter grade will be subtracted for every day (including weekends) you are late. There will be no exceptions to this policy. If you fear you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, you should contact me before the due date to request an extension. Extensions may be granted at the professor's discretion.

Make-up quizzes will be given only if you were away for required participation in a University sponsored activity.

Make-up exams may be given at the professor's discretion and only for the following reasons:

- Serious illness
- Family emergency
- Required participation in a university sponsored event

If you know you will miss an exam, please inform me as soon possible to discuss a make-up. If advance notice cannot be given, then *you must contact me within 48 hours of the missed exam* to discuss a make-up. This is your responsibility. I reserve the right to give a different set of questions on the make-up exam.

**Important Dates**

Classes begin	August 27
Labor Day	September 1
Final day to drop/withdraw	October 31
Thanksgiving Break	November 26 - 29
Midterm Exam	TBA
Final Exam	December 18, 9:30 - 11:30