POLS 2305: Introduction to American Politics

FALL 2015
Mark Owens
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Course Time: 1:25 p.m. – 2:20 p.m. Office Hours: 4:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Mondays
Monday - Wednesday - Friday 12:10 p.m. – 1:10 p.m. Wednesdays
Classroom: BUS 158 Office: BUS 231

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions of the American government. Additionally, the course will investigate the behavioral trends that explain how individuals work within these institutions to change laws. Furthermore, the course will expose students to the ways state politics is unique from the federal government.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed with the objective that by the end the semester each student will have a comprehensive knowledge of how branches of government operate independently and how they interact with one another. Students who will do the best in the course will understand how political contexts shape how institutions function and identify the processes in which the public can influence how the government operates.

Required Books

All texts can be found in the bookstore or online.


Know this is a new format for eTextbooks and your purchase should include a loose leaf copy of the actual textbook.

Additional required readings can be found on the course page.

Student Evaluation

Participation

I believe active participation in discussion is an important part of a class, which is why participation will make up 150 points of your final grade. The participation grade is a proportion of the high quality contributions to class discussion throughout the class meetings, or engaging beyond the minimum activities on the discussion board (i.e. posts, responses, and replying to a response). Note: Incorrect answers during class discussion will not count against you, but you should not expect points in those cases. Students attentively taking notes each day, but not engaging in discussions or helping their peers should expect to receive 113 of the 150 points. Texting, email, and “researching trends in public opinion” via social networks detracts from your participation in class and this score.

Assignments

There will be nine announced class assignments throughout the semester to make up 140 points. Up to two bonus assignments may be added during term. Each activity will correspond with the readings and is designed to assess your ability to understand the material. Note: The lowest score of these assignments will be dropped. All missed assignments will be counted as a zero, but can be dropped.
**REVEL Chapter Quizzes**

The textbook for this class includes interactive exercises to test your knowledge as you study. Complete these tasks outside of class and consult the instructions posted to Blackboard.

**Exams**

Three exams on September 14, October 12, and October 26 are each worth 100 points. The final, 200 points, will be cumulative in that it will ask you to draw connections across topics covered throughout the class. Each exam will offer different types of short-answer, matching, and multiple choice questions. Each question will hold different point values. *Missing an exam without the confirmation of an alternative test date will result in a zero.*

**Grading**

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<tr>
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<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Prompt (x3)</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>REVEL Quizzes</td>
<td>140</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Assignments</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam I (Sept 14)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Exam II (Oct 12)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<td>Exam III (Oct 26)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>200</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
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**Student Conduct**

I have high expectations for each student in this class, which are based on your academic performance to get to this point and my belief that you will treat each of your fellow classmates with respect. My goal is to facilitate a supportive and engaging classroom for everyone and one part of that is eliminating disruptive behavior. I will allow computers in-class for note taking. However, it is unacceptable to use your cell phone or computer during class to chat, surf the web, talk, or text. Using technology in this way during class is distracting to others and demonstrates a lack of respect for the instructor.

**Academic Honesty**

It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and dishonesty. The University of Texas at Tyler Policies and Procedures for Student Affairs will be strictly followed and can be found here at: [http://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/documents/8Student%20Conduct%20and%20Discipline.pdf](http://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/documents/8Student%20Conduct%20and%20Discipline.pdf). Tests and assignments are designed to assess your understanding of the material—do not reference another student’s answers.

Violations of academic integrity are serious and will have a negative consequence on your classroom performance. In each instance a violation occurs, a failing grade will be assigned for the assignment or the course, any forgiveness will require work to be redone, and the cause of the violation will need to be identified upon resubmission. These matters will be referred to the Dean of Students if institutional action is necessary. Reference the rights and responsibilities of students: [http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php](http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php).

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1Should the class schedule need to be amended, I will advise the class in advance by email and via the course page.
Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies:

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are available in the Enrollment Services Center or at http://www.uttyler.edu/registrar. Each semester's Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar. Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:
- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy:

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (See Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Disability Services:

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call 903.566.7079. You may also send an email to cstaples@uttyler.edu.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance:

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester. Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you
(or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Social Security and FERPA 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. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation:

Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructors directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

If you have any questions or concerns about what is expected or permissible in this course or about academic integrity in general, please contact me.

Class Schedule

Week One

Aug 24    Class Introduction and Expectations
Aug 26    Politics and Political Science  
          Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 1
Aug 28    Politics and Governance  
          Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 1

Week Two

Aug 31    Concerns in Collective Action  
          Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 1
Sept 2    Decision Making Perspectives  
          Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 1  
          In-Class Activity 1
Sept 4    No Class

Week Three

Sept 7    No Class: Labor Day
Sept 9    Problems in Preserving Equality  
          Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 2
Sept 11   Individual Beliefs  
          Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 2
Week Four

Sept 14  Exam I on *Politics and Culture*

Sept 16  Episode of John Adams: *Join or Die*  In-Class Activity 2

Sept 18  Building to the Constitution: Colonies and Confederation
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 3

Week Five

Sept 21  Structure of the Constitution: Powers Considered and Agreements Reached
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 3

Sept 23  Instructions from the Constitution  In-Class Activity 3
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 3

Sept 25  Federalism: Structure
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 4

Week Six

Sept 28  Federalism: Processes that Shift Power
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 4

Sept 30  Public Opinion and Socialization
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 5

Oct 2    Participation & Distinguishing Groups  In-Class Activity 4
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 5

Week Seven

Oct 5    Mass Media: Who Frames the Problem?
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 6

Oct 7    Mass Media: What information are you acting on?
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 6

Oct 9    Discussion: *Are Policy Decisions Affected by the Media?*

Week Eight

Oct 12   Exam II on *System of Governance and New Challenges*

Oct 14   How Does a Political Party Achieve Its Goal?
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 7

Oct 15   How Inclusive Are Political Parties?
         *Readings: Politics in America*, Ch. 7
Week Nine

Oct 19  Campaign Strategies
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 8

Oct 21  Managing the Costs of a Campaign
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 8

Oct 23  Effect of Campaign Rules
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 8

Week Ten

Oct 19  Interest Groups: More Attention to Pluralism
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 9

Oct 21  Lobbying: Access and Trust
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 9

Oct 23  Coalition Building and Timing
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 9

Week Eleven

Oct 26  Exam III on Mass Participation and Organization

Oct 28  Congress: Bicameral Differences
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 10

Oct 30  Congress: Committees and Specialization
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 10

Week Twelve

Nov 2  Congress: Passing Legislation
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 10

Nov 4  Presidency: Qualifications and Roles
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 11

Nov 6  Online: Presidency: Tools of Power and Leverage
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 11

Week Thirteen

Nov 9  Presidency: War Powers and Foreign Affairs
Readings: Politics in America, Ch. 11
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 11</td>
<td>Bureaucracy: Delegation and Implementation</td>
<td>Politics in America, Ch. 12</td>
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<td>Nov 13</td>
<td>Online: Bureaucracy: When to consult Congress</td>
<td>Politics in America, Ch. 12</td>
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<td><strong>Week Fourteen</strong></td>
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<td>Nov 16</td>
<td>Jurisdictions of the Federal Courts</td>
<td>Politics in America, Ch. 13</td>
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<td>Nov 18</td>
<td>Judicial Selection and Decision Making Processes</td>
<td>Politics in America, Ch. 13</td>
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<td>Nov 20</td>
<td>Online: The Public's Role in the Judicial System Activity 8</td>
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<td>Nov 30</td>
<td>Protecting Equality: Civil Rights and Voting Rights</td>
<td>Politics in America, Ch. 15</td>
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<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>Geography, Representation, and Rights</td>
<td>In-Class Activity 9</td>
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<td>Dec 4</td>
<td>Final Exam Review</td>
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