

American Government (POLS 2305)

Term: *Fall 2025*

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Office Hours: Friday 1-2pm and by appointment, scheduled through Canvas message

Course Dates: August 25, 2025-December 13, 2025

Course Times: Virtual

Classroom: Online/Virtual

Please contact me via Canvas Inbox messages. Any messages outside of Canvas will be redirected to Canvas Inbox messaging.

Course Overview

In Introductory U.S. Government, you will learn about the principles and beliefs that the country was founded on, as well as how the government works at different levels (national, state, and local).

Key topics include:

- Major political ideas and different forms of government throughout history
- The U.S. Constitution, its principles, and the government it established
- Important concepts like republicanism, federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights

You will compare the U.S. government with other political systems, explore the government's role in the free enterprise system, and understand the importance of certain places to the U.S.

Additionally, the course covers how individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media influence American politics. It emphasizes the importance of participating in a constitutional republic and examines the rights guaranteed by the Constitution. You will also look at how government policies affect American culture and encourage scientific research.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

1) Analyze the United States Constitution and its foundational role in shaping American government and political institutions.

- Outcome: Students will be able to explain the key principles of the Constitution, including federalism, separation of powers, and checks and balances, and assess its impact on contemporary governance.

2) Evaluate the structure, functions, and interactions of the three branches of the U.S. government: the legislative, executive, and judiciary.

- Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how Congress, the Presidency, and the Federal Judiciary operate, interact, and influence public policy and governance.

3) Assess the influence of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties on the American political process and policy-making.

- Outcome: Students will critically analyze how these elements shape political behavior, electoral outcomes, and policy decisions in the U.S.

4) Examine the role of the media in American politics, including its impact on public opinion, campaigns, and elections.

- Outcome: Students will be able to discuss the ways in which the media influences political communication, shapes voter perceptions, and affects the dynamics of political campaigns.

5) Understand and apply the concepts of public policy-making, including the processes, actors, and outcomes involved in the development and implementation of U.S. public policy.

- Outcome: Students will develop the ability to analyze and critique different public policies, considering the political, social, and economic factors that influence policy decisions.

Required Textbooks and Readings

- **Primary Textbook:** Bryant, Kenneth, Eric Lopez, and Mark Owens. 2019. Game of Politics: Conflict, Power, & Representation. UT-Tyler OER Textbook. Available on Canvas.

- **Additional Readings:** Throughout the semester, you will encounter insightful readings assigned and posted on Canvas.

Recommended Resources (Optional):

- Newspaper subscriptions. Please visit [Robert R. Muntz Library](#) to see what subscriptions you have access to for free as a student.

Special Course Notes:

Proctoring Notice:

The exams in this course will be proctored by course facilitators and you will only be able to take them in class with the facilitator as proctor.

Course Structure

The online nature of this class will push you to take an active role in the learning process. You will do this by engaging and collaborating with other students and the instructor on a regular basis, whether in live sessions, as well as through group work and activities. No quiz or test is open note or open book. Students may use one index card, front and back, to take notes for quizzes and tests.

Tips for Success in this Course

1. **Participate.** I invite you to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your classmates. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and professor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** I get it—students usually juggle a lot, and I know you've got commitments beyond this class. Still, doing your best often means carving out enough dedicated time for coursework. Try scheduling specific blocks of time and ensure you have enough room to finish assignments, allowing extra space for any tech issues that might pop up.
3. **Login regularly.** I recommend that you log in to Canvas several times a week to view announcements, discussion posts and replies to your posts.
4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous class content. If you feel you are starting to fall behind, check in with the instructor as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind in the pre-work or post-work.

5. **Use Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable notifications to be sent instantly or daily. ([Canvas Notification Guide](#))
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me and your classmates for support.

Graded Course Requirements Information

Grading Structure

Assignment	Total Points	Percentage %
Quizzes (15 quizzes at 30 points each)	450	45%
Discussions (2 discussions at 25 points each)	50	5%
Notes (4 sets of notes at 25 points each)	100	10%
Exams (4 exams at 100 points each)	400	40%
Total	100%	100%

Grading Scale

- A - (90% or higher)
- B - (80 - 89%)
- C - (70 - 79%)
- D - (60 - 69%)
- F - (Below 60%)

Make-Up Policy and Late Work:

Module close dates are the final date when all work must be completed. Late work can be accepted with 15 points off of the grade earned per day. If you earn an 85 and the assignment is one day late, then your grade for that assignment will be a 70. You have ample time to complete each assignment, usually several weeks, and waiting until the last minute to do an assignment is not advised. If you have a computer issue, internet issue, or any other issue on the date an assignment is due is not an excuse for not completing an assignment and no additional time will be granted. If you do the work early and an issue presents itself, then there is time for us to work together and resolve it so that you can submit the work by the due date.

[***IMPORTANT***] There are no make-up exams or alternative assignments given once a test has been missed. If you are going to miss an exam because of a school activity, you must make arrangements to take the exam **prior** to the day the exam will be given, please contact me the **week before** the test to set up a date and time. In cases of emergency (i.e., a death in the family), however, students will be allowed to take the exam early at the discretion of the Instructor, and the student must provide documentation. Missing an exam does not ensure the student will be able to take the test early, such a decision is ultimately the professor's prerogative. Please contact me as soon as possible if you miss something for an emergency and we will work out the details. The most likely scenario will be to miss the exam and instead take the final to replace the missing exam grade.

University Policies & Student Resources:

University policies and student resources are available on the University website and in Canvas under "Syllabus". (You may copy or print the following information to include in your syllabus or use the links provided below.)

Academic Honesty

According to the Manual of Operating Policies and Procedures for Student Affairs, UT Tyler uses the following definitions for academic dishonesty: "Academic Dishonesty" includes, but is not limited to: cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable, in whole or in part, to another person without giving sufficient credit, taking an examination for another person, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to: submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act." Visit Student Affairs for more information. If you are caught cheating, you will be given a 0 on the assignment, and may be given an F for the semester.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage Statement:

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

The written work submitted by students in this course will be generated by themselves. This includes all process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, editing, and final products. Any instance of the following constitutes a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code: a student has another person/entity do any portion of a graded assignment, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, using a previously submitted assignment and/or using AI tools (such as ChatGPT).

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates

The last date to drop the course is November 4, 2025. The final exam will be due no later than December 10, 2025, online.

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the course page for current deadlines and updates. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.

Course Outline

All Chapter Reading will be from the Game of Politics Textbook, unless noted otherwise.

Module 0 - Getting Started - - See due dates posted in Canvas

Reading: Syllabus

Quiz 1: Getting Started Module and Syllabus Quiz

Module 1 - Foundations of the American Political System - See due dates posted in Canvas

Introduction Chapter

Quiz 2: Introduction to American Government and Civic Engagement Quiz

Chapter 1 The United States Constitution

Quiz 3: The Constitution Quiz

Chapter 2 Public Opinion

Quiz 4: Public Opinion Quiz

Notes 1 Due

Discussion #1 Due

Test: Module 1 test

Module 2 - Political Institution - See due dates posted in Canvas

Chapter 3 Congress

Quiz 5: Congress Quiz

Chapter 4 The Presidency

Quiz 6: The Presidency Quiz

Chapter 5 The History of Bureaucratic Principles

Quiz 7: The History of Bureaucracy Principles Quiz

Chapter 6 The Federal Judiciary

Quiz 8: The Federal Courts Quiz

Notes 2 Due

Test: Module 2 test

Module 3 - Political Behavior - See due dates posted in Canvas

Chapter 7 Interest Groups

Quiz 9: Interest Groups and Lobbying Quiz

Chapter 8 Public Policy

Quiz 10: What is Public Policy Quiz

Notes 3 Due

Discussion #2 Due

Quiz 11

Test: Module 3 test

Module 4 - Public Policy - See due dates posted in Canvas

Chapter 9 The Media

Quiz 12: The Media Quiz

Chapter 10 Political Parties in America

Quiz 13: Political Parties Quiz

Chapter 11 Campaigns and Elections in America

Quiz 14: Campaigns and Elections Quiz

Notes 4 Due

Test: Module 4 test

Quiz 15: Final Quiz

Final

Final: No later than December 10, 2025 by midnight IF you missed a test. You will not need to take this test if you completed all tests and are able to opt out.