

Course Syllabus

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PS 2305 – 003

Introductory American Government

Spring 2026

01/12 – 05/02

Tuesdays and Thursdays - 11AM - 12:20PM

Arts and Sciences 158

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CAS 125

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Office Hours: T TR 12:30-2PM

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Note - This syllabus is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and on Canvas.

Introduction

In this course, we will begin with a fundamental dynamic of the American political system: conflict. At the heart of conflict within this system is our Constitution and the concept of federalism and each of its iterations. You will also examine the institutions of government, and why and how conflict exists among them. Furthermore, students will focus on interest groups, parties, the bureaucracy, citizenship rights, and public opinion, all important facets of American government, and all contributing to both its continuance and an enduring conflict in our nation.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Examine the concept of federalism and its influence on the American system of government.
2. Have an introductory understanding of American political institutions: the judiciary, the presidency, Congress, and the bureaucracy.
3. Identify the differences between civil rights and civil liberties, as well as their importance in American democracy.
4. Think critically about “hot button” political issues and the conflicts that persist.

Grade

Quizzes – 25%

Discussion Participation- 15%

Film Labs and Final Portfolio - 20%

Midterm Exam – 20%

Final Exam – 20%

Quizzes

There will be six (6) quizzes throughout the semester. Five (5) will count toward the final grade.

Note - If you miss an exam, you must have one of the following: A) a note from a doctor proving you were too ill on the day of the exam to take it. Be aware that receipts from the Student Health Center are not sufficient documentation of a serious illness; or B) a copy of an obituary, in the unfortunate case you have to attend a funeral. The make-up exam you take will be different from the exam taken by the rest of the class and may include essay questions. No other excuses will be accepted for a missed exam.

Grade Assignment

Below 60 = F

60 and less than 70 = D

70 and less than 80 = C

80 and less than 90 = B

90 and less than 100 = A

Accommodations

If you need accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please inform me immediately. Please see me privately after class, or at my office. To request academic accommodations (for example, a note taker or extended time on exams), students must also register with the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) (<https://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices/>), located at UC 3150 (903-566-7079). It is the campus office responsible for reviewing documentation provided by students requesting academic accommodations, and for accommodations planning in cooperation with students and instructors, as needed and consistent with course requirements.

Important Covid-19 Information for Classroom

Students are expected to wear face masks covering their nose and mouth in public settings (including classrooms and laboratories). The UT Tyler community of Patriots views adoption of these practices consistent with its [Honor Code \(Links to an external site.\)](https://www.uttyler.edu/center-for-ethics/)  (<https://www.uttyler.edu/center-for-ethics/>) and a sign of good citizenship and respectful care of fellow classmates, faculty, and staff.

Students who are feeling ill or experiencing symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, digestive issues (e.g. nausea, diarrhea), or a higher than normal temperature should stay at home and are encouraged to use the [UT Tyler COVID-19 Information and Procedures \(Links to an external site.\)](https://www.uttyler.edu/coronavirus/)  (<https://www.uttyler.edu/coronavirus/>) website to review protocols, check symptoms, and report possible exposure. Students needing additional accommodations may contact the Office of Student Accessibility and Resources at University Center 3150, or call (903) 566-7079 or email saroffice@uttyler.edu (<mailto:saroffice@uttyler.edu>).

Recording of Class Sessions

Class sessions may be recorded by the instructor for use by students enrolled in this course. Recordings that contain personally identifiable information or other information subject to FERPA shall not be shared with individuals not enrolled in this course unless appropriate consent is obtained from all relevant students. Class recordings are reserved only for the use of students enrolled in the course and only for

educational purposes. Course recordings should not be shared outside of the course in any form without express permission.

Family Friendly Policy

Currently, the university does not have a formal policy on children in the classroom. The policy described here is thus, a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff and faculty parents. All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary to support the breastfeeding relationship. Because not all women can pump sufficient milk, and not all babies will take a bottle reliably, I never want students to feel like they have to choose between feeding their baby and continuing their education. You and your nursing baby are welcome in class anytime.

For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to choose between missing classes to stay home with a child and leaving him or her with someone you or the child does not feel comfortable with. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable. I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.

In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met. Non-parents in the class, please reserve seats near the door for your parenting classmates. Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have finally gone to sleep.

The struggles of balancing school, childcare and often another job are exhausting! I hope that you will feel comfortable disclosing your student-parent status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all student in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance. Thank you for the diversity you bring to our classroom!

(Cheyney, 2019)

Class Disruptions

Repeated talking, texting, or surfing the web on laptops is not acceptable in this class. These actions are distracting. Such disruptions harm the learning environment. Incidents of texting, talking, or surfing the

web in class will result in a reduced attendance grade. If I see it, I may say nothing, but I am always watching. Just because I do not stop class to address you, does not mean your misconduct will go unpunished. Believe you me, it just ain't worth the hassle, you can Instagram after class.

Schedule

Refer to Canvas

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do. Students Rights and Responsibilities To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>
[➔\(http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php\)](http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php)

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php> ➔ [\(http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php\)](http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php)

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University

All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free ➔ [\(http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free\)](http://www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free)

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. (For Fall, the Census Date is Sept. 12.) 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 (Sept. 12th) is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions of which students need to be aware. 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/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 3150 or call 903.566.7079.

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. (Revised 05/17)

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 instructor's 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.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but 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, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

“Cheating” includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student's test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed “crib notes”. The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;

- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
 - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
 - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
 - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

“Plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another’s work and the submission of it as one’s own academic work offered for credit. “Collusion” includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- UT Tyler Writing Center (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
 - UT Tyler Tutoring Center (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
 - UT Tyler Counseling Center (903.566.7254)



<https://uttyler.instructure.com/enroll/MJWEMR>

Course Summary:

Date	Details	Due
Thu Jan 15, 2026	 Syllabus and Assignment Review (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055403)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Jan 18, 2026	 Federalism Discussion Question (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055388)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Jan 25, 2026	 Congress Discussion Questions (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055387)	due by 11:59pm
Thu Jan 29, 2026	 Quiz 1 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055398)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 1, 2026	 The Presidency Discussion Questions (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055386)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 8, 2026	 The Judiciary Discussion Questions (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055385)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 15, 2026	 The Bureaucracy Discussion Questions (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055384)	due by 11:59pm
Thu Feb 19, 2026	 Quiz 2 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055399)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Feb 22, 2026	 Political Parties Discussion Questions (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055383)	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 1, 2026	 Interest Group Discussion Question (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055382)	due by 11:59pm
Thu Mar 12, 2026	 Quiz 3 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055400)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
Sun Mar 15, 2026	 Midterm Exam https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055397	due by 11:59pm
Sun Mar 22, 2026	 Liberties, Rights, Freedoms & Equality Discussion Questions https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055381	due by 11:59pm
Thu Apr 2, 2026	 Quiz 4 https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055401	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 5, 2026	 The Media Discussion Questions https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055380	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 12, 2026	 Public Opinion Discussion Questions https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055379	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 19, 2026	 Quiz SIX https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055402	due by 11pm
Sun Apr 19, 2026	 Balance Your Budget - Memo to the President https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1057117	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 19, 2026	 Public Policy Discussion Questions https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055378	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 26, 2026	 Final Exam https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055395	due by 11:59pm
Sun Apr 26, 2026	 Voting, Campaigns, and Elections Discussion Questions https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055377	due by 11:59pm
Wed Apr 29, 2026	 Final Portfolio https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055396	due by 11:59pm
Wed Apr 29, 2026	 Film Lab #1 https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055389	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	Due
	 Film Lab #2 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055390)	
	 Film Lab #3 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055391)	
	 Film Lab #4 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055392)	
	 Film Lab #5 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055393)	
	 Film Lab #6 (https://uttyler.instructure.com/courses/51568/assignments/1055394)	