Introduction to American Government
POLS 2305.005, Fall 2014, 9:30 – 10:50 am Thursdays, Hybrid/PATSS

Instructor Information
Dr. Amentahru Wahlrab
E-mail: awahlrab@uttler.edu (best way to reach me)
Phone: (903) 565-5876 (during office hours)
Office: BUS 224
Office Hours: T/Th 2-3 pm and 11:15am – 12:15 pm Tuesdays; by appointment as needed.

Required Readings
You must purchase these books (available online or Campus bookstore)

  - ISBN-10: 053849719X
  - Paperback

  - Paperback

  - ISBN-10: 0300192363
  - Paperback

  - ISBN-10: 1583671994
  - Paperback

Course Description
An examination of the United States political system, including its intellectual foundations and the design of the Constitution. Includes study of the major institutional factors, the impact of interest groups and the media, and the processes of policy-making. No prerequisite required.

Course Objectives
The primary goal is to successfully complete a required course with minimal pain and suffering while gathering useful information. To that end, after successfully completing this course, students should be able to demonstrate:

- familiarity with terminology used to study political science and American government
- basic knowledge of the historical evolution of American governmental structures
- an understanding of the constitutional, institutional, political and legal processes and structures of the United States
- comprehension of the interrelationships of American governmental institutions
- awareness of basic values of American political culture
This class will heavily utilize Blackboard. This is where all course materials; quizzes, news analyses, midterm and final exams, and your grades will be posted. You will need to log in to Blackboard and make sure that this course is listed as one of your courses. If this course does not appear, let me know ASAP.

It is strongly recommended that you attend all face-to-face classes and complete all online assignments. Material covered during the face-to-face classes and online lectures will comprise a fair portion of your exams. Any lecture outlines posted on Blackboard will not include all the necessary details. This class is about more than just “facts.” Learning is a group process. If you skip the process, then you are skipping the rewarding part of the process and only engaging the more monotonous part. Education is not the transmission of information or ideas. Education is the training needed to make use of information and ideas. As information breaks loose from bookstores and libraries and floods onto computers and mobile devices, that training becomes more important, not less.

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 will be considered when assigning final grades for the course.

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.

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. However, criticizing for the sake of criticizing is rarely productive. 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.

Grading

Your grade in this class will consist of four components:

1) Reading Quizzes (100 points) – these will be posted on Blackboard one week before the reading is due and will close at the start of class on the due date. These quizzes are intended to help you prepare for the exams and to provide a basis for discussion during class. I will drop your two lowest scores and average the remaining scores. More detailed instructions for the quizzes may be found on Blackboard.

2) Exams (200 points) – there will be a midterm and a final. Each will have 50 multiple choice questions and be worth 100 points.

3) Critical Review Essays (150 points)-There are three academic texts in addition to the primary textbook. We will be discussing each book for several weeks in class before the essays are due. Each essay is worth 50 points for a total of 150 points possible. We will discuss this in further detail in class but the general outline is located below.

4) News Analyses and Responses (50 points). These will be posted on Blackboard (under “News Analyses”). Each student will be place in a group of his or her choosing during the first week of classes or randomly assigned a group to discuss three national news articles on the same topic in order to critically analyze the news media. For example, how did the New York Times, Washington Post, and USA Today report the story of Iran’s new President’s willingness to...
negotiate with the United States? Your job will be to read each article and discuss with your group the differences that you notice between the three versions. Then, write a report with your conclusions, using textual evidence to support your findings. You will also be required to respond to at least three of your classmates' posts (not including your group post). To earn any of these points you must do the group work and the individual portion. New posts must be posted on blackboard each week. (Further instructions will be provided in class and on Blackboard).

- Formatting your Critical Review Essay: At the top of the page give a full citation of the book you are reviewing. For example:

Underneath write:

Reviewed by INSERT YOUR NAME, INSERT EXACT COURSE NUMBER, INSERT TIME AND DAYS OF THE WEEK YOUR CLASS MEETS

For example:
Reviewed by: Amentahru Wahlrab, POLS 2305.04, 2-3:15 T/Th

A good review will introduce the author’s main argument at the beginning of the review. You may even want to use a nice quotation from the text here. I advise using the model of the five paragraph essay that you learned in high school. The first sentence should state the author’s main argument. The next sentence or two should describe the evidence that the author provides. Next, summarize the conclusion in a sentence. In one or two sentences, state your problems or your agreements with the text.

The supporting paragraphs should specifically address one example of the evidence that the author uses to make his argument. Be sure to use at least one good quotation and then discuss how the example you’ve chosen captures the larger argument made by the author. The paragraph should be clearly linked to something mentioned in the first paragraph.

The third paragraph should be similar to the second except that it should cover a different example from the book. Be sure to use citations.

The final paragraph should be your own conclusions based upon the reading. Why should others read this text? Why should they avoid it? Again, here you may want to use a short quotation (make sure to provide page numbers for all of your quotations). “I think this book was boring” is not a particularly useful criticism. Tell your readers why it was boring (at the very least). Better still, if you think the book was not convincing, do you have an alternative source for them to turn to?

Finally, remember that you are writing a review of a book and that your job is to demonstrate a clear understanding of the argument and how the evidence that the author uses furthers that argument. Each supporting paragraph should clearly link the ideas and evidence back to the main argument of the book.

Remember, you only have two pages so stay focused, say what you need to say, and omit needless words. I am not interested in reading two pages of summary. This is a review not a report. Ask yourself: Why is this book relevant, why should someone read it?

- All quiz grades will be posted immediately after you take the quiz. All exam grades will be posted within one week of taking your exam. All critical review essay and news analysis grades will be posted within two weeks of handing in your assignment.

**Final grades will be posted as follows:**

- 450-500 = A
- 400-449 = B
- 350-399 = C
- 300-349 = D
- 0-299 = F

**Office Hours and Email Response Time**

My office hours are “walk-in” which means that you do not need to make an appointment if you come during scheduled office hours. If you cannot make scheduled office hours then please schedule a time with me that works for both of us. I really enjoy meeting with student during office hours and encourage all students to stop by. I have traditional office hours [see office hours times listed at top of syllabus] in Business Room 224. I am also fairly available by email and will respond to your emails within one working day.
Late/Make Up Work

As quizzes and news analyses are available online over a one-week period and do not require class attendance, they cannot be made up.

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. You must provide evidence such as doctor’s note, coach’s letter, etc.

Academic Dishonesty

The UT Tyler community regards 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.

University Policies

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://www2.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php

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 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
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<tr>
<th>Important Dates</th>
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<td>Classes begin</td>
<td>August 25</td>
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<td>Labor Day</td>
<td>September 1</td>
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<td>Census Date</td>
<td>September 8</td>
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<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>November 24 - 29</td>
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<td>Final day to drop/withdraw</td>
<td>October 27</td>
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<td>Study Day</td>
<td>December 8</td>
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<td>Final Exams</td>
<td>December 9 - 13</td>
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<th>First Critical Review Essay Due</th>
<th>September 19 end of day</th>
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<td>Second Critical Review Essay</td>
<td>November 7 end of day</td>
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<td>Third Critical Review Essay</td>
<td>December 5 end of day</td>
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<th>Midterm Exam</th>
<th>October 17 (online)</th>
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<td>December 11 (online)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topics and Assignments</th>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>October 28 (Online) 30 (F2F)</td>
<td>Read and Discuss: <em>A Single Roll of the Dice</em>: Chapters 5-10</td>
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| Week 11 | November 4 (Online) 6 (F2F) | Read and Discuss: *A Single Roll of the Dice*: Chapters 10-12  
Suggested Movie: *Why We Fight*  
Topic: Public Opinion, Political Socialization, Interest Groups, Political Parties  
Read: *American Government and Politics Today*, Chapter 6  
Quiz 9 due before class  
2nd CRITICAL REVIEW ESSAY DUE November 7 at end of day |
| Interest groups | Week 12 | November 11 (Online) 13 (F2F) Interest Groups  
Read: *American Government and Politics Today*, Chapter 7  
Suggested Movie: *Why We Fight*  
Topic: Public Opinion, Political Socialization, Interest Groups, Political Parties  
Read: *American Government and Politics Today*, Chapter 8  
Quiz 10 due beginning of class |
Quiz 11 due before class |
| Media and Politics | Week 14 | December 2 (Online) 4 (F2F) | Read and Discuss: *When Media Goes to War*: Chapters 4-9 and Postscript  
Quiz 12 due before class  
3rd CRITICAL REVIEW ESSAY DUE December 5 end of day |
| Week 15 | December (Online) | Final Exam  
Good luck! |