

**POLS 2311-010**  
**Spring 2023**

**Government of the United States**  
**T/TH 12:30-1:50PM**  
**Room: UH 116**

Instructor: Dr. Brent Boyea

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00-10:45AM

Microsoft Teams link: [https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3aHsf\\_dR5-fJKCCsYJufRTqgPVdyCz19v5OVGRjcJvj1Q1%40thread.tacv2/conversations?groupId=aa7080ba-0307-43bc-b059-7367d4c128e1&tenantId=5cdc5b43-d7be-4caa-8173-729e3b0a62d9](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3aHsf_dR5-fJKCCsYJufRTqgPVdyCz19v5OVGRjcJvj1Q1%40thread.tacv2/conversations?groupId=aa7080ba-0307-43bc-b059-7367d4c128e1&tenantId=5cdc5b43-d7be-4caa-8173-729e3b0a62d9)

Graduate Teaching Assistant: John Lam

## **I. Introduction**

The objective of this course is to familiarize students with the basic organization and processes of American government. Fundamentally, there are two goals for this course. First, each student will develop an understanding of the functions and responsibilities of each branch of government. Second, the course will explain how citizens control and relate to their government. The class begins by developing an analytical framework that provides tools for each student to understand and evaluate American political institutions. The following section focuses on the structures and functions of the three branches of the American government. After developing an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the national government, we will then explore the linkages between political institutions and mass public preferences, which are expressed through voting, political parties, and interest groups. Again, the objective of this course is to increase each student's ability to comprehend the workings of American government thus providing a framework to analyze and interpret national institutions and the actors operating in American politics.

## **II. Course Modality**

Per university policy, this is generally an in-person class. We will meet each Tuesday and Thursday in UH 116 unless noted otherwise in the schedule below. If the university changes classroom policies, I will adjust as necessary. If the university transitions to online format, we will use Microsoft Teams for synchronous classes and Canvas for asynchronous classes.

Though the course is in-person, several classes, as noted in the schedule below, will be online and asynchronous. Presentation modules for those classes are stored in Canvas. With each module, video and audio (generally found at the upper right corner of a slide) are embedded in the files. To view and listen to the media content, students must download the file from Canvas and open in Microsoft PowerPoint or Keynote. Where students attempt to review in Canvas, neither video nor audio will be accessible and important points will be missed.

## **III. Course Goals**

Students will (1) demonstrate a well-rounded knowledge of American government and politics; (2) demonstrate an understanding of how political scientists analyze and interpret the foundations, institutions, processes, and actors that constitute American government and politics; and (3) demonstrate critical thought about American government and politics.

#### **IV. Learning Objectives/Outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, students are expected to be able to (1) define fundamental concepts associated with American politics through appropriate responses on exams; (2) describe the structure and function of the differing branches of American Government; (3) explain the theoretical and historical underpinnings of the U.S. Constitution; (4) demonstrate understanding of the theory and practice of American politics by providing appropriate responses on exams; (5) identify the evolving history and character of civil rights and civil liberties in America; and (6) identify the influence of socio-political movements, interest groups, political parties, campaigns and elections have on American politics.

To these ends, POLS 2311 students will (1) read text that focuses on the foundations, institutions, processes, and actors that constitute American government and politics, (2) employ the appropriate interpretive, critical, and empirical frameworks and methods in order to analyze, interpret, and synthesize material relevant to the study of American government and politics, (3) be tested with regard to recall (remembering terms, facts), comprehension (understanding meanings), application (using information in different situations), analysis (to ascertain the key elements of a theory, structure, institution, process, or event), synthesis (to generalize or create new ideas from existing sources), and evaluation (to discriminate and assess the value of evidence).

#### **V. Required Text**

There is one required textbook, which will be available at the university bookstore or through an online bookseller. If purchasing online, be sure that it is shipped promptly as readings will begin immediately.

1. James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh. 2020. (Brief 5th Edition, Paperback). *By the People: Debating American Government*, Brief Edition. New York: Oxford University Press. (Paperback ISBN 9780197545829 or Looseleaf ISBN 9780197545836).

#### **VI. Course Requirements**

Student grades for this course are a function of three online examinations (two mid-term examinations and a final examination) and a research letter. Further, six online quizzes will occur throughout the semester with points earned reflecting extra credit opportunities. The extra credit quizzes – each with four multiple-choice questions – will be announced in Canvas the week of the quiz. Each quiz will last ten minutes and will be fully administered through Canvas with students given access for 24 hours. Questions on the quizzes will be formed from the lecture material, textbook readings, assigned videos, and current events either discussed in class or assigned to follow. Failure to take a quiz will result in a non-grade (0). With the online format of the quizzes and examinations, it is important that students use a wired or strong wireless connection to avoid having their quiz stopped prematurely. There will be *no* make-up opportunities for missed quizzes regardless of the reason, including where access to a quiz stopped due to a poor wireless connection.

The three examinations will be multiple-choice format and administered through Canvas. The online exam times for midterm examinations #1 and #2 will be 12:30-1:50PM on the days designated in the class

schedule. The exam time for the final examination will be May 4th from 9:15-10:30AM. Examinations will cover class presentations, assigned readings and videos, and current events discussed in class. The midterm examinations are non-cumulative and will cover topics only from the beginning of the course or the most recent examination. The final examination, however, will be partly cumulative. All students will take the examinations at the designated times with no make-up exams allowed, except for situations relating to a medical emergency or death in one's family. In relation to examination absences caused by medical emergencies, students are required to contact me no later than the day of the exam and will be required to present proof of a physician's examination. Failure to do so will result in a grade of zero for that examination. As with the quizzes, a wired or strong wireless connection is required to complete the examinations. While preliminary grades will be displayed by Canvas after each test, I reserve the right to add points to exam grades. Where modifications occur, final grades will be reported within one week.

During the semester, there is also a research assignment worth 10 percent of the course grade. With that assignment, each student is required to write a one-page letter about a current national policy controversy. The letter will be addressed to any member of the Texas delegation to the US Congress, including a member of the US House of Representatives or US senator from Texas. The letter must be based on facts and ideas presented in class presentations, the textbook, and from valid external sources; however, the purpose is for each student to express an idea that is both personal and well researched. An assignment handout with additional information will be distributed on Tuesday, January 31<sup>st</sup> and letters will be due in Canvas on Tuesday, March 7<sup>th</sup> before 12:30PM.

#### *Make-up Examination Policy*

Where make-up exams are permitted, those examinations will be scheduled prior to the final examination on May 4<sup>th</sup> from 8:00-9:00AM and will be administered through Canvas. Make-up exams are more difficult due to the time that has passed since the discussion of the graded material. Further, make-up exams will include both essay and short answer questions, may be comprehensive, and will require specific, detailed answers. An additional disadvantage relates to the extra points sometimes added to the regular exam, which are never applied to make-up exams.

## **VII. Grading**

Grades will be posted on Canvas. To access the extra-credit quizzes and your grades on Canvas, log in with your UTA email address and password at [uta.instructure.com](http://uta.instructure.com). If you have difficulty with Canvas, visit <https://www.uta.edu/provost//Canvas/uta-canvas-login.php> or contact the Office of Information Technology Help Desk at 817-272-2208. The grade components of the course are:

1. Midterm Examination #1 – 20%
2. Midterm Examination #2 – 35%
3. Final Examination – 35%
4. Research Letter Assignment – 10%
5. Extra Credit Quizzes – Up to 10 extra points added to the semester grade
  - a. For example, if a student earns an 88 as a semester grade based on their midterm and final examinations performance, they may earn up to a 98 semester grade with their extra credit points added.
  - b. The value for the extra credit sum reflects the average quiz performance. For example, if five quizzes are given and 12 of 15 questions (80%) are answered correctly, then 8 extra credit points (the product of 80% multiplied by 10) will be earned.

The grading scale is as follows:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

### VIII. Current Events

With the national government and politics providing a steady stream of events, including developments for the Biden administration, Democratic-majority US Senate, and Republican-majority US House of Representatives, I will discuss events as they unfold. Where current events are relevant and discussed in class, they may be included in the extra credit quizzes and examinations. I will integrate political and policy debates into the course, as they provide a method for understanding topics relating to the U.S. Constitution, Congress, presidency, political participation, elections, and other topics.

### IX. Class Schedule

Subject 1: Introduction and American Political Culture

January 17-19

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 1 (Ideas that Shape American Politics)

Subject 2: The Founding and the Constitution

January 24 – February 2

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 2 (The Constitution)
- **February 2<sup>nd</sup> is an asynchronous online class – “The Constitution #4” in Canvas**

Research Letter Assignment Handout: January 31<sup>st</sup>

- Distributed in class

Subject 3: Federalism

February 7-9

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 3 (Federalism and Nationalism)
- February 7<sup>th</sup> Assignment: Frontline’s [The Storm](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/storm/) - <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/storm/>
- **February 9<sup>th</sup> is an asynchronous online class – “Federalism #2” in Canvas**

Review of Midterm Examination #1

- Asynchronous online review opens on February 9<sup>th</sup> at 2PM and closes on February 14<sup>th</sup> at 12PM in **Canvas**

Midterm Examination #1: February 14<sup>th</sup>

- Administered through **Canvas**, 12:30-1:50PM

Subject 4: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

February 16-23

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 4 (Civil Liberties)
- Morone and Kersh, chapter 5 (The Struggle for Civil Rights)
- Morone and Kersh, pages A15-A16 (The Bill of Rights, Amendments I-X)
- **February 23<sup>rd</sup> is an asynchronous online class – “Civil Rights and Civil Liberties #3” in Canvas**

Subject 5: Congress

February 28 – March 7

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 10 (Congress)
- **March 7<sup>th</sup> is an asynchronous online class – “Congress #3” in Canvas**

Research Letter Assignment Due: March 7<sup>th</sup>

- Submitted through Canvas, due at 12:30PM

Subject 6: The Presidency

March 9-23

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 11 (The Presidency)

Spring Recess: March 13-17

Review of Midterm Examination #2

- Asynchronous online review opens on March 23<sup>rd</sup> at 2PM and closes on March 28<sup>th</sup> at 12PM in Canvas

Midterm Examination #2: March 28<sup>th</sup>

- Administered through Canvas, 12:30-1:50PM

Subject 7: The Federal Judiciary

March 30 - April 6

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 13 (The Judicial Branch)
- **April 6<sup>th</sup> is an asynchronous online class – “The Federal Judiciary #3” in Canvas**

Subject 8: Public Opinion

April 11

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 6, pp. 182-198 (Public Opinion and Political Participation)
- **April 11<sup>th</sup> is an asynchronous online class – “Public Opinion #1” in Canvas**

Subject 9: Political Participation and Elections

April 13-20

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 6, pp. 198-217 (Public Opinion and Political Participation)
- Morone and Kersh, chapter 8 (Campaigns and Elections)
- **April 20<sup>th</sup> is an asynchronous online class – “Political Participation and Elections #3” in Canvas**

Subject 10: Political Parties

April 25 – May 2

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 9 (Interest Groups and Political Parties)

Review of Final Examination

- Asynchronous online review opens on May 2<sup>nd</sup> at 2PM and closes on May 4<sup>th</sup> at 7:30AM in Canvas

Final Examination: Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup> from 9:15-10:30AM

- Administered through Canvas

**X. Core Expectations, Communication and Citizenship**

### *Expectations of Students*

While an introductory course, I have strong yet reasonable expectations for students. To perform well, students are expected to work - meaning a combination of (1) recurrent attendance, (2) frequent class participation, and (3) careful attention to the readings is required. Students that do not attend class regularly, do not take careful class notes, and do not carefully read the assigned material will have a more difficult time with the exams. Additionally, I encourage students to see me during my office hours. Where questions arise about the content of the course or a student's grade, office hours represent important opportunities for interaction between students and their instructor. Meetings during office hours will always take place in my office (University Hall 446).

### *Communication*

The University has supplied all students with an official email address. All communication will be directed to you through that address, as well as announcements through Canvas. As such, you are responsible for checking your e-mail and Canvas regularly. Per university policy, I will not respond to non-university email addresses. Also, remember to formalize your email by addressing the e-mail, providing a proper subject, and always signing your email. Note that one-line comments or questions are not enough for me to know what you are trying to say - be sure to provide enough detail to allow a sufficient answer on my part.

### *Citizenship*

While each student pays a significant cost to attend this course, sometimes an individual is less interested in learning, and disturbs others during class by talking, reading newspapers, listening to music, receiving or making phone calls, or text messaging. Use of cell phones during class will result in a two-point deduction from a student's final semester grade for each offense (one offense equals 2 points, two offenses equals 4 points, etc.). The instructor reserves the right to ask the students to leave class when cell phone use is observed. Otherwise, do not walk in late, leave early, or push around others to find a seat once class has begun - it disturbs others! Be careful with laptop computers. Unfortunately, most students use their laptops for non-related material rather than paying attention to the lecture. Where I see a laptop being used, I assume that it is being used for something other than class purposes.

## **XI. Special Notes**

1. Test Conduct – Examinations are closed book. Cell phones, textbooks, and open internet sites that are not Canvas are prohibited during examinations.
2. Academic Integrity - All students are expected to obey the civil and penal statutes of the State of Texas and the United States, the Regents' Rules and Regulations of The University of Texas System, the rules and regulations of the University, and the orders or instructions issued by an administrative official of the University or U.T. System in the course of his/her duties, and to observe standards of conduct that are compatible with the University's function as an educational institution. Any student found to engage in cheating, plagiarism, or collusion will be sanctioned.
3. Inclement Weather – If a class is canceled due to inclement weather, its subject will be delayed until the following class. Similarly, all tests canceled due to university closure will be delivered during the following class. For information related to weather related class cancellations please call (972) 601-2049.
4. Campus Carry - Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>.

5. Students with Disabilities - Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with me via Microsoft Teams during the first two weeks of the course. All discussions will remain confidential.
6. Discrimination Policy – The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit [uta.edu/eos](http://uta.edu/eos).
7. Title IX Policy - The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. For information regarding Title IX, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX) or contact the Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091.
8. Student Support Services - The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. Among the support services on campus, the IDEAS Center (2nd Floor of Central Library) offers free tutoring to all students with a focus on transfer students, sophomores, veterans and others undergoing a transition to UT Arlington. To schedule an appointment with a peer tutor or mentor email [IDEAS@uta.edu](mailto:IDEAS@uta.edu) or call (817) 272-6593. For more information, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).
9. Emergency Phone Numbers - In case of an on-campus emergency, call the UT Arlington Police Department at 817-272-3003 (non-campus phone), 2-3003 (campus phone). You may also dial 911. The non-emergency number is 817-272-3381.
10. Syllabus Changes – The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester.