

**POLS 2311-011
Fall 2021**

**Government of the United States
T/TH 2:00-3:20PM
Room: University Hall, Room 110**

Instructor: Dr. Brent Boyea

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Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 1:00-1:45PM, by email or appointment using Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams link:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/team/19%3a7Y_EfQvWvCvuzVEFhSPCTKyiljYcyopGYqR67lLukOQ1%40thead.tacv2/conversations?groupId=4503a512-6851-4c98-b813-27d1628f4f60&tenantId=5cdc5b43-d7be-4caa-8173-729e3b0a62d9

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Anna Puente

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 primarily an in-person class. We will meet each Tuesday and Thursday in University Hall 110 unless noted otherwise in the schedule below or in class. If the university changes classroom policies, I will adjust as necessary. If the pandemic takes a turn for the worse and the university transitions to online format, we will use Microsoft Teams for synchronous classes and Canvas for asynchronous classes. I hope that won't be necessary. If it does become necessary, I will make an announcement.

Though the course is primarily in-person, several classes, as noted in the schedule below, will be online and asynchronous. Presentation modules for those classes are stored in Canvas. For those classes, they will open early morning on class day. 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. 2018. (4th Edition, Paperback). *By the People: Debating American Government*, Brief Edition. New York: Oxford University Press. (ISBN 9780190928728)

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 (except Quiz #2, which will have access for 48 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 imperative 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 exam times for midterm examinations #1 and #2 will be 2:00-3:20PM on the days designated in the class schedule. The exam time for the final examination will be 3:15-4:30PM on Thursday, December 9th. 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 September 9th and letters will be due via Canvas on October 12th.

Make-up Examination Policy

Where make-up exams are permitted, those examinations will be scheduled prior to the final examination on December 9th from 2:00-3:00PM 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 a make-up exam.

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. 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 incoming Biden administration, I will discuss events as they unfold. Where current events are relevant and discussed in class, they may be included in both 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

August 26-31

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

Subject 2: The Founding and the Constitution

September 2-14

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 2 (The Constitution)
- **Tuesday, September 14th is an asynchronous online class – “Constitution #4” in Canvas**

Research Letter Assignment Handout: September 9th

- Distributed in class

Subject 3: Federalism

September 16-21

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 3 (Federalism and Nationalism)
- September 16th Assignment: Frontline’s [The Storm](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/storm/) - <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/storm/>
- **Tuesday, September 21st is an asynchronous online class – “Federalism #2” in Canvas**

Review of Midterm Examination #1: September 21st

- Meeting through **MS Teams** from 12:00-1:00PM

Midterm Examination #1: September 23rd

- Administered through **Canvas**, 2:00-3:20PM

Subject 4: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

September 28 – October 5

- 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)

- **Thursday, September 30th is an asynchronous online class – “Civil Rights #2” in Canvas**

Subject 5: Congress

October 7-14

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 10 (Congress)
- **Thursday, October 14th is an asynchronous online class – “Congress #3” in Canvas**

Research Letter Assignment Due: October 12th

- Submitted through **Canvas**, due at 12:00PM

Subject 6: The Presidency

October 19-26

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 11 (The Presidency)
- **Tuesday, October 26th is an asynchronous online class – “Presidency #3” in Canvas**

Review of Midterm Examination #2: October 26th

- Meeting through **MS Teams** from 12:00-1:00PM

Midterm Examination #2: October 28th

- Administered through **Canvas**, 2:00-3:20PM

Subject 7: The Federal Courts

November 2-9

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 13 (The Judicial Branch)
- **Thursday, November 4th is an asynchronous online class – “Federal Courts #2” in Canvas**

Subject 8: Public Opinion

November 11

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 6, pp. 182-198 (Public Opinion and Political Participation)

Subject 9: Political Participation and Elections

November 16-23

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 6, pp. 198-217 (Public Opinion and Political Participation)
- Morone and Kersh, chapter 8 (Campaigns and Elections)
- **Tuesday, November 23rd is an asynchronous online class – “Political Participation and Elections #3” in Canvas**

Thanksgiving Recess: November 25-26

Subject 10: Political Parties

November 30 - December 7

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 9 (Interest Groups and Political Parties)
- **Tentative – Tuesday, December 7th is an asynchronous online class – “Political Parties #3” in Canvas**

Tentative Date - Review of Final Examination: Wednesday, December 8th

- Meeting through **MS Teams** from 12:00-12:45PM

Final Examination: December 9th

- Administered through Canvas, 3:15-4:30PM

X. Core Expectations, Communication and Citizenship

Expectations of Students

I have strong yet reasonable expectations for students. To perform well, students are expected to work - meaning (1) careful attention to the readings and (2) participation in class are required. Students that do not carefully read the assigned material or participate in meetings will have a more difficult time with the exams. Additionally, I encourage students to use my virtual office hours via Microsoft Teams. 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. Students are in charge of their education. If something is unclear, it is a student's responsibility to seek an answer in a timely manner.

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 about the context of your comment or question to allow a sufficient answer on my part.

XI. Special Notes

1. Test Conduct – Examinations are closed book. Cell phones, textbooks, and the internet 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 – Though this course is online, if the university is closed due to inclement weather, online meetings will be delayed until the following class. Similarly, all tests canceled because of inclement weather 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.
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 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 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.
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.