

GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES (POLS 2311-014) FALL 2012

PROFESSOR A.B. BAYRAM

**Office Location:** 405 University Hall

**Office Hours:** Tu 3-4:30 PM

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E-mail is the best way to reach me. Please allow 48-hour response time.

**Time and Place of Class Meetings:** M-W 3-4:20 PM 115 University Hall

**The Syllabus:**

It is essential that you carefully read and understand all parts of the syllabus. The syllabus should be regarded as a contract between us.

**Description of Course Content:**

This course offers an introduction to the constituent units and workings of the American government, and provides an overview of the politics of the United States. In the first part of this course, we will examine the relationship between citizens and the government, explore the U.S. Constitution and Federalism, and learn about civil rights and liberties. The second section of the course is devoted to the key actors in American politics, such as the media, interest groups, and political parties. In the third part, we will learn about the institutions of the American national government, and specifically focus on the Congress, the Presidency, and courts. Before we wrap up the semester, we will also explore domestic and foreign policy making processes.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

After taking this course, students will 1) demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of American government and politics, 2) acquire knowledge of the key actors in American politics and institutions of the national government, and 3) develop the ability to critically analyze current debates in American politics.

These outcomes will be achieved through lectures, class discussions and activities, and appropriate examinations.

**Requirements:**

Requirements for this course include: Attendance & participation, a quiz, two mid-term exams, and a final exam.

**Required Textbooks:**

-Gingsberg, Benjamin; Lowi, Theodore; Weir, Margaret and Spitzer, Robert. 2011. We The People: An Introduction to American Politics. Eight Essentials Edition. Norton (WTP hereafter)

-Rourke, John T., ed. 2012. You Decide! 2012: Current Debates in American Politics. Boston: Longman (YD hereafter)

**Description of Major Assignments & Examinations:**

Attendance & Participation: 10%

Quiz 10%

Mid-Term I 25%

Mid-Term II 25%

Final Exam 30%

All exams are closed-book and will be written in class. I will grade your scantron. Please mark your answers carefully on the optical form.

**Course Format:**

This course uses a mixed format that combines lectures with class discussions and class activities. Typically, the first meeting of the week will be lecture-oriented while the second meeting will be devoted to class discussions and exercises. The lecture component of the course will provide a comprehensive review of the scheduled chapters from the course textbook. Lectures will sometimes include additional information. The discussion part of the course will draw upon current debates in American Politics. We will assess the merits and drawbacks of alternative viewpoints and engage contemporary issues. I will also encourage you to form your own opinions. Different classroom activities will be scattered across sessions as needed. These activities are designed to facilitate hands-on learning.

Student engagement and active learning will be emphasized at all times. Even lecture-oriented sessions will be interactive and solicit student-input.

Students should be engaged in the course at all times. This means, being familiar with all content, completing the assigned readings before class, actively take part in class discussions, and contacting me if you need help.

My power-presentations will guide us in class by offering an outline of the themes we will cover. I will make these available to you on BB. It is your responsibility to print them out.

**Attendance:**

I expect you to attend all sessions. Class attendance and participation are critical to succeed in this course. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from your classmates.

I do not provide lecture notes. Powerpoint slides on BB will remain accessible until the end of the semester.

**Participation:**

I expect you to do the readings before class, be prepared to discuss them, and ask/answer questions based on the course material. I may sometimes call on you. It is your responsibility to be prepared.

Please note that participation is an important component of your grade and plays a critical role in learning. Participation includes, among others, asking and answering questions, commenting on the readings or other students' points, being engaged in class discussions and class activities as well as taking ownership of your own learning by asking for my help if you need assistance.

The classroom is an open forum. We value and respect all opinions.

**Absences:**

Missing class due to illness, family emergency or similar extraordinary situations will not affect your grade. Consistently missing class will negatively reflect upon your grade. I will periodically take attendance.

**Grading:**

There is no extra-credit work in this course. I may decide to offer extra credit but I am not obligated to do so. Extra credit opportunities will be announced in class and made available to the entire class to ensure fairness. I will hold review sessions before the mid-terms to help you succeed. Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels.

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

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

**Make-up Exams:**

No make-up exams will be given except in cases of documented medical or family emergencies. There are no exceptions to this rule. Documentation must be submitted as required by the university and is subject to verification.

**Etiquette:**

Cell phones and other gadgets should be turned off or switched to silent in the classroom. Computers should not be used for surfing the internet or for extra-curricular activities.

Civility in discussions and discourse is expected at all times.

**Student Feedback:**

If you have questions, comments, concerns, or suggestions, please feel free to contact me. If you happen to experience difficulties with understanding the material, do not hesitate to see me during office hours. I am here to help you.

**E-mail Policy:**

Please to conform to proper e-mail etiquette (E.g. LOL is not a good idea) and address me as your professor. Make sure to include your name and the course you are taking. It is important that your e-mail provides sufficient context. Please note that coming to my office hours may serve you better if you have a complex question.

I will normally respond to e-mails within two business days. This means e-mailing me a few hours before class will not work. If you have an emergency, please inform the Department of Political Science Administrative Office.

When you e-mail me, please try to have a somewhat formal subject line so that I do not accidentally miss your e-mail or confuse it with junk mail. (For example: POLS Course Number: Your reason for e-mailing (E.g. POLS 2311: Question about the Mid-term)).

**Communication:**

Students are responsible for regularly checking their university e-mail and Blackboard for announcements. When I send an e-mail to the class or post an announcement on Blackboard, I will assume that everyone got the message. Failure to be aware of course news may have negative consequences.

**Drop Policy:**

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**

I rely on the Office for Students with Disabilities for accommodations.

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). All

instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:**

I rely on the Office of Student Conduct for addressing academic misconduct. Academic misconduct will not be tolerated. It is the student's responsibility to know what constitutes academic misconduct and be aware of the university's honor code.

All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

Instructors may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services:**

UT 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. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication:**

UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Student Feedback Survey:**

At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:**

A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the class syllabus. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Disclaimer**

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus and/or course content as needed.

## SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS

August 27 First day of our class

- Introduction to the course
- Discussion of course format and requirements
- Time to discuss student expectations
- \*\*College professionalization crash course, also called freshman's path to success (hopefully a useful gift from me to you)
- No Reading

### Foundations

August 29 The Citizen and Government

- WTP Chp. 1

September 3 Labour Day Holiday

September 5 The Founding and the Constitution

- WTP: Chp. 2

September 10 The Founding and the Constitution Cont.

- YD: Chp. 1
- BB Quiz, opens on the 10<sup>th</sup> at 8 AM - closes on the 11<sup>th</sup> by Noon
- Study only chapters 1 & 2 of WTP

September 12 Federalism

- WTP: Chp. 3

September 17 Federalism Cont.

- YD: Chp. 2

September 19 Civil Liberties and Rights

- WTP: Chp. 4

September 24 Civil Liberties and Rights Cont.

- YD: Chp. 4

September 26 Mid -Term Review

October 1 Mid-Term Exam I

- In Class, Please Bring Pencils and Optical Forms (Form 882 E)

### Actors

October 3 Public Opinion

- WTP: Chp. 5

October 8 Public Opinion Cont.

- Journal Article: Douglas C. Foyle, "Leading the Public to War? The Influence of American Public Opinion on the Bush Administration's

Decision to Go to War in Iraq." International Journal of Public Opinion Research 16, No.3 (Autumn 2004): 269-294. (Available online via the Library)

October 10 The Media

-WTP: Chp. 6

October 15 Taking Stock-Classroom Group Exercise

-No Reading, just show up

October 17 Parties and Elections

-WTP: Chp. 7

October 22 Parties and Elections Cont.

-YD: Chp. 9

October 24 Interest Groups

-WTP: Chp 8

October 29 Interest Groups Cont.

-YD: Chp. 8

October 31 Mid-term Review

November 5 Mid-Term Exam II

-In Class, Please Bring Pencils and Optical Forms (Form 882 E)

### **Institutions**

November 7 Congress

-WTP: Chp. 9

November 12 Congress Cont.

-YD: Chp. 11

November 14 The Presidency

-WTP: Chp. 10

November 19 The Presidency Cont.

-YD: Chp. 12

November 21

-TBA

November 26 The Judiciary

WTP: Chp. 12

November 28 The Judiciary Cont.

-YD: Chp. 14



**Overview of Policy Processes and Actors**

December 3: Domestic and Foreign Policy

-WTP: Chps: 13 & 14

December 5 Last day of classes

-TBA

**Final Exam**

December 10, Monday 3-5:30 PM, Please Bring Pencils and Optical Forms  
(Form 882 E)

Time and date of the final exam is scheduled by the university. I am not able to change the day/time of the final.