

POLS 2311-003: GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON, DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE FALL SEMESTER 2015 COURSE OUTLINE

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Class location: University Hall 121

Class time: Mon/Wed/Fri, 11:00-11:50

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Office hours: Wednesday, 10:00-10:50, or by appointment

Please note: the easiest way to reach me is by email.


COURSE CONTENT AND DESCRIPTION:

Albert Einstein argued that the purpose of a university education is not to teach students just facts, but to teach them to think. To this end, this course will introduce students to the politics of the United States. It is divided into five sections: Section A introduces the course through a conceptual discussion of politics and American government. Section B considers American political culture, as the underlying foundation of politics in the country. Section C examines the main institutions of American government and politics. Section D explores the conduct of American politics at the public and elite levels. Section E focuses on the politics and some of the practice of American foreign policy.

It is advisable that students keep up with current developments in American politics. Although this is not a course on current events per se, these will of necessity be part of the general discussions and may be used as examples to highlight a particular point or issue. Students can follow developments on-line in all major media outlets—such as *CNN*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Politico.com*, and so on.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course students will be familiar with the organization of and various processes within American politics. To meet these goals the course has the following objectives:

 *Describe* the main elements and structures of the US government and its politics so that students can identify and classify the primary actors, processes, and ideas that shape the contemporary United States.

 *Compare* key concepts used for investigating contemporary American politics in order to more effectively explain political structures, processes, and developments.

✦ *Think critically* about how we think about American politics in order to identify, analyze, and work to resolve problems in the country as well as in the broader world.

FORMAT:

The course is conducted within a lecture framework. But class time will be used for general discussions, in order to give students more time to discuss their own ideas and to understand the material through dialogue. Because this is a university course, students are expected to actively participate in class discussions, and are encouraged to question and debate with the instructor and each other on the various issues. This must be done in a productive and civil manner. Personal attacks and polemics will not be tolerated. The purpose of a freer flow of dialogue is to better understand and absorb the materials covered in class, and offensive actions and ideological or political agendas impede this process. Students who engage in such activities will have to leave the class.

PowerPoint will be used, but only to provide a skeletal outline of the lectures; students must pay attention to and take notes on what is discussed in class. Otherwise, they will not learn what is necessary for the course and the assignments.

The lectures are based in part on the readings, but will not necessarily directly discuss them; it will be assumed that students have done the readings.

Both the professor and the students have obligations and responsibilities in this course. **(Please see the course Blackboard for more on the DOs and DON'Ts of student interactions with the professor.)**

My responsibilities include making clear the objectives and material of the course; training students to think critically; returning assignments within a reasonable period of time with adequate comments and suggestions for improvement; treating students with respect and a willingness to hear their opinions and ideas; and keeping my own personal politics out of the classroom.

Students' responsibilities include taking seriously the purposes and assignments of the course; preparing themselves adequately for the lectures; handing their assignments in on time; treating each other and the professor with respect and a willingness to hear other opinions and ideas; and a readiness to think about the material with an open mind while keeping their own personal politics out of the classroom. (It is easy to take a stance on a given issue, but more difficult to defend that stance in a logical manner that rests on a judicious, nuanced, and open-minded foundation of understanding.)

All cell phones, gadgets for listening to music, playing games, or contacting other people, and all similar devices must be turned off prior to the beginning of class. Students who engage in such activities will have to leave the class. Laptops and other electronic devices are acceptable for taking notes, but I reserve the right to prohibit their use if I determine they are being used for other activities.

Please note that the syllabus and course content may change, depending on unforeseen circumstances. Any such changes are at the instructor's discretion. If there are any changes, they will be announced in class; students then are responsible for knowing whether and when any changes have been made.

Attendance Policy:

Students are responsible for their own attendance and participation in class; I will not call the roll. Students who do miss class are responsible for obtaining the material discussed in class from their colleagues. I will not provide notes from lectures or discussions, but I am happy to discuss the material with a student who has already obtained the information. Poor attendance and poor participation will reflect on your final grade.

Communicating by E-mail:

Outside of class, email is the best way to reach me. Note that students must use their UTA MavMail account when communicating by email with me; I will **not** respond to any correspondence sent by a non-UTA email account. Students are responsible for regularly checking their UTA accounts, for information and correspondence both from the university and from me regarding course matters.

Please use standard polite greetings and address me not as a close friend but as your professor (i.e., Professor or Dr. Sasley). Please note that one-line comments or questions are not enough for me to know what you are trying to say: be sure your email provides enough detail and explains the context of your comment or question, including which course you are emailing about.

Laptops, iPads, Tablets, etc:

I encourage students to use paper and pen rather than electronic devices for taking notes in class. There are several reasons for this: Studies suggest use of electronic devices hinders learning, as students tend to write down everything the instructor says without thinking more carefully about the material; these devices encourage students to browse their email accounts, social media, and other online activity, which means they—and those around them—are distracted from the learning process; they lead to rudeness, as professors can see when a student is not paying attention to the discussion.

Social and Electronic Media Policy:

The rapid expansion of electronic social media—including its use by instructors in the classroom—has blurred the lines between public and private lives of professors. Although I firmly believe in a strict separation between my personal preferences and what I teach in the classroom, I am active on Twitter and in blogging, two of the most prominent forms of social media, as well as in publishing my research online. I consider it necessary, then, to set out a coherent guideline for these media.

I use both primarily for analytical commentary, and students who are interested in more discussion and debate on issues related to international relations and Middle East politics are welcome, if they wish, to subscribe to my Twitter feed and blogs.

Students are also welcome to respond to any tweets or blog posts. I expect respectful, reasoned responses or posts, without profanity; any violation of these guidelines will result in the student being blocked in the relevant method.

I must emphasize that this is not mandatory—it is not even “optional” in the context of the course. I mention this as a general comment only, in the context of a public domain that now encompasses the university and the classroom. Students' grades are not in any way connected to this.

Letters of Recommendation:


I am happy to write letters of recommendation for students, but certain criteria must first be met. **Please see the course Blackboard for specific information** on what students must do in order to be eligible for a reference letter.


Student Feedback Survey:


At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online 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>.

REQUIRED READINGS:

There are three sources of mandatory readings for this course:

 Thomas E. Patterson, *We the People*, 11th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2015.

 Journal articles (in PDF form) available on e-reserves at the library. To access these, log in with your UTA NetID and password to the library's website (“Catalog,” then “Course Reserves”). Library reserve readings will be referred to as (Library).

 Specific URLs available on the course Blackboard. To access these, log in with your UTA NetID and password at <https://elearn.uta.edu/webapps/login/>. Blackboard readings will be referred to as (Blackboard).

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

There will be **five** 50-minute tests. Four of them will be written in the regular class period: **Monday, September 21**, on **Wednesday, October 14**, on **Friday, October 30**, and on **Monday, November 23**. The last test will be written during the university's final exam period, on **Wednesday, December 16, from 11:00-11:50am only**. Note that this last test is **not** an exam but the same in format, length (50 minutes), and grade as the previous tests. It will also be written in the same classroom. Students who show up after 11:50 will not be allowed to write the test.

Each test is **worth 20% of the final grade**, and is based on the different sections of the course. Tests are not cumulative. The first test will cover the material up to and including the classes on September 18; the second test will cover the material from then up to and including the classes on October 12; the third test will cover the material from then up to and including the classes on October 28; the fourth test will cover the material from then up to and including the classes on November 21; the fifth test will cover the material from then up to and including the class on December 9.

All lectures, class discussions, readings, and any other materials included in the course will be covered in the tests. The format for the tests is **multiple-choice**. Students must purchase Scantron forms (882-E) for the tests; they will not be provided. Students may not use books, notes, electronic devices, or anything else to help write their tests; phones or other electronic devices are also not allowed. Students who are late to a test will **not** be given extra time to finish.

There will be **no** make-up tests, barring a very serious development or illness. Common but invalid excuses include (but are not limited to): car troubles; visiting friends or relatives; having other work. If there is an illness, students will have to provide a medical note—not one in which a doctor writes that the student confirms he/she was sick, but a detailed note explaining that the doctor knows for a fact that the student was sick on the day of the test and could not be expected to write. Documentation must be provided for any missed test within three school days after the missed test, regardless of the reason, and is subject to verification. Any requests for a deferral must be made *before* the date of the test for a make-up to be considered, and are at the professor's discretion. A missed test must be made up **within three school days** after the date of the original scheduled test. No make-up will be allowed after that, and a grade of zero will be assigned for that test.

Please note that no extra credit work is provided or allowed, regardless of circumstances. Please also note that not completing a given test and instead re-weighting the worth of the other course tests is **not** an option.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

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.

UT Arlington faculty members 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.

DROPPING THE COURSE:

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.** The last day to drop the class is November 4. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

Test #1:	20% (Monday, September 21, in class)
Test #2:	20% (Wednesday, October 14, in class)
Test #3:	20% (Friday, October 30, in class)
Test #4:	20% (Monday, November 23, in class)
Test #5:	20% (Wednesday, December 16, 11:00-11:50am)

GRADING SCALE:

A	80-100%
B	70-79%
C	60-69%
D	50-59%
F	0-49%

COURSE SCHEDULE:*Section A: Introduction*

Friday, August 28: Introduction to course

Patterson, pp. 1-7.

Monday, August 31: What is politics?

Patterson, pp. 16-24.

Wednesday, September 2: *How to write a test for this class*

No readings.

Section B: Political Culture

Friday, September 4: Why do we need government?

Patterson, pp. 500-508, 512-539.

Monday, September 7: ***Labor Day—No class***

Wednesday, September 9: American political culture

Patterson, pp. 7-16.

Friday, September 11: The founding of America

John O'Sullivan, "Annexation." *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17, no.1 (July-August 1845): 5-10. (Blackboard)

Monday, September 14: ***Rosh Hashanah—No class***

Wednesday, September 16: The founding of America, cont.

Patterson, pp. 28-38.

Friday, September 18:	The founding of America, cont. Ibid.
Monday, September 21:	<i>Test #1 (in class)</i>
Wednesday, September 23:	<i>Yom Kippur—No class</i>
Friday, September 25:	The Constitution Patterson, pp. 39-62.
Monday, September 28:	The Constitution, cont. Ibid.
Wednesday, September 30:	Federalism Patterson, Chapter 3.
Friday, October 2:	Federalism, cont. Ibid.
Monday, October 5:	Civil liberties Patterson, Chapter 4.
Wednesday, October 7:	Civil liberties, cont. Ibid.
Friday, October 9:	Civil rights Patterson, Chapter 5.
Monday, October 12:	Civil rights, cont. Ibid.
Wednesday, October 14:	<i>Test #2 (in class)</i> <i>Section C: Institutions</i>
Friday, October 16:	Congress Patterson, Chapter 11.

Monday, October 19: Congress, cont.

Ibid.

Wednesday, October 21: Presidency

Patterson, Chapter 12.

Friday, October 23: Presidency, cont.

Ibid.

Monday, October 26: Bureaucracy

Patterson, Chapter 13.

Wednesday, October 28: Bureaucracy, cont.

Ibid.

Friday, October 30: **Test #3 (in class)**

Section D: Politics

Monday, November 2: Public opinion

Patterson, Chapter 6.

Jonathan Martin and John F. Harris, "A New Era of Innuendo," Politico.com, April 28, 2011. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, November 4: Public opinion, cont.

Patterson, ibid.

Friday, November 6: Political parties

Patterson, Chapter 8.

Monday, November 9: Political parties, cont.

Ibid.

Wednesday, November 11: Interest groups

Patterson, Chapter 9.

Friday, November 13: Interest groups, cont.

Ibid.

James Madison, "Federalist No.10." In Patterson, pp. 595-599.

Monday, November 16: Elections and voting behavior

Patterson, Chapter 7.

Barbara Bradley Hagerty, "The Tea Party's Tension: Religion's Role in Politics," *NPR*, September 30, 2010. (Listen to the story [5.59 minutes] or read the transcript.) (Blackboard)

Wednesday, November 18: Elections and voting behavior, cont.

Patterson, *ibid.*

Friday, November 20: The 2008 & 2012 presidential elections

Patterson, Chapter 10.

Maggie Haberman, "9 Takeaways from the 2012 Election." *Politico.com*, November 6, 2012. (Blackboard)

Monday, November 23: **Test #4 (in class)**

Section E: Foreign Policy

Wednesday, November 25: Contours of American foreign policy

Patterson, Chapter 17.

Walter Russell Mead, "The Carter Syndrome." *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2010. (Blackboard)

Friday, November 27: **Thanksgiving—No class**

Monday, November 30: Influences on American foreign policy

Michael A. Cohen, "Power Grab." *Foreign Policy*, March 28, 2012. (Blackboard)

Julie Hirschfeld Davis, "It's Either Iran Nuclear Deal or 'Some Sort of War,' Obama Warns." *New York Times*, August 5, 2015. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, December 2: Influences on American foreign policy, cont.

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. (Library)

Friday, December 4: US hegemony

G. John Ikenberry, "Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5, no.2 (August 2005): 133-152. (Library)

Monday, December 7: Foreign policy toward the Middle East

US President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President on a New Beginning," Cairo, Egypt. 4 June 2009. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, December 9: US policy and the Arab Uprisings

President Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya," *The White House, Office of the Press Secretary*, March 28, 2011. (Blackboard)

Josh Rogin, "Why Has Obama Not Called For Assad to Go Yet?" *Foreign Policy—The Cable*, August 16, 2011. (Blackboard)

Wednesday, December 16: **Test #5 (11:00-11:50am)**

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:

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*. 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 or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

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, or view the information at www.uta.edu/resources.

EMERGENCY EXIT PROCEDURES:

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

TITLE IX:

UT Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law “Title IX” such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information: www.uta.edu/titleIX.