POLS 2311-005

**Spring 2018**

**Government of the United States**

**Room: University Hall 115**

**T/TH: 11:00am-12:20pm**

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 2:00-3:20pm and by appointment

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Tiffany Nicasio

**Description of Course Content:**

This course introduces students to the central processes and institutions of the American political system. Students will study and analyze fundamental concepts and themes that emanate from questions such as: What are the primary functions of particular branches within the U.S. government? How do ordinary individuals and citizens contribute to the functioning of the American political system? How are political institutions responsive to what constituents want? On the other hand, how are individuals and institutions induced to pursue collective goals when necessary? As students will learn, one major theme running throughout the course is how political institutions are designed to overcome collective dilemmas of various kinds. Students will also learn how the American political system compares to systems in other countries.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** By the end of the course, students should:

* Have a well-rounded knowledge about the American political system.
* Be able to understand how political scientists conduct analyses of the political system.
* Be able to think critically and analytically about politics
* Be able to reflect upon how the concepts and analytic tools in this course apply or relate to past and current events.

**Blackboard**: We will make extensive use of our course page in Blackboard, available at:

<http://www.uta.edu/blackboard/students/index.php>

**Required Books:**

* ***Main Textbook***:Ken Kollman, core 3rd ed. *The American Political System*, York: W.W. Norton & Co. ISBN: 978-0-393-63117-3
* ***Other required readings will be available on Blackboard.***

# *Optional Course Reader*: Ken Kollman, 3rd ed. *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives.* New York: W.W. Norton & Co. ISBN: 978-0-393-93674-2

Although most of the lecture material will come from the textbook and other required readings, I will occasionally complement lectures with content from the optional course reader. Readings in the course reader include abbreviated versions of landmark decisions handed down by the Supreme Court and *short* excerpts of seminal works written by leading experts in the discipline. Students are NOT required to purchase the optional course reader in order to pass or do well in the class.

**Description of Assignments and Examinations:** Students are required to complete weekly online reading quizzes, 2 midterm exams, and a final exam. Students will also be assessed for participating in class.

*Exams*: Both midterm exams and the final exam will cover assigned reading material as well as material delivered during lecture and class discussions. The midterm exams will not be cumulative. However, the final exam will be cumulative, but most of material being tested on the final exam will be content that was covered after the second midterm exam. Exams will be composed exclusively of multiple-choice questions. Therefore, students are required to bring a #882-E UTA scantron form and #2 pencil to each exam. Students are required to take all exams and complete them in the allotted period.

*Reading Quizzes*: Reading quizzes will be available on Blackboard approximately every week. They will be available on Tuesday and are due the following Tuesday by 11:59pm, unless otherwise specified. These quizzes are intended to help you understand key concepts from the textbook and familiarize you with the type of questions that may appear on the exams. You may discuss the readings and quizzes with other classmates. While twelve quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester, your two lowest quiz grades will not be calculated into your final quiz grade.

*Participation*: The abilities to communicate effectively and to work cooperatively with others are integral to being successful in one’s personal and professional life. Therefore, class participation will allow you to make use of and improve these skills. Participation can occur in the following ways:

* Students individually ask questions and respond to questions I present to the class.
* Occasionally, students will work in small groups in class to respond to a political dilemma or question I pose.
* Students visit my office hours or send me links to interesting articles or news that relate to the course material.

**In-class Discussions:** Occasionally, we may discuss political issues and current events related to the course content. Some of the subject matter may be controversial and/or elicit different perspectives. Thus, students are expected to express their thoughts in a civil, respectful, and professional manner. I may occasionally push students to further elaborate on a viewpoint or ask others to provide an alternative perspective. However, this does NOT reflect any attempt on my part to persuade students to adopt a particular opinion. Rather I am encouraging students to think critically and consider various sides of an issue.

**Extra-credit assignment**: Students will be given opportunities throughout the semester to complete assignments for extra credit points. Instruction for extra credit assignments and their due dates will be posted on Blackboard. Extra credit points will be added to your overall final class score.

**Attendance:** For this course, attendance will not be recorded. However, students who do not attend class or who attend class sporadically will, on average, do worse on exams than students who attend class on a regular basis. Furthermore, frequent absences will result in a poor participation grade. Thus, students are expected to come to class having read and thought about the material.

**Grading:**

**Student grades will be calculated as follows:**

Exam 1: 50 points

Exam 2: 50 points

Final Exam 60 points

Quizzes (12 total; 2 lowest scores dropped) 5 points each (50 points total)

Class Participation: 10 points

Letter grades will be assigned as follows:

198-220 points: A

176-197 points: B

154-175 points: C

132-153 points: D

Below 132 points: F

**Grading Questions:** All questions regarding grades or exam questions must be submitted in writing and include a reasonable explanation for consideration.

**Office Hours:** I highly encourage students to come see me during my office hours with questions related to the course material and/or assessments. If you cannot meet with me during my scheduled office hours, please contact me over email so that we can set up a time that works for the both of us during university business hours.

**Electronic Devices:** Laptops and tablets are permitted in class. However, I expect you to use these devices solely for the purposes of taking notes or participating in class activities. Therefore, please refrain from using your devices to engage in activities that are unrelated to class (emailing, checking Facebook, purchasing items online, playing games, etc.). Cell phones are NOT permitted for use during class. Additionally, please keep all cell phones on silent for the duration of the class.

**Makeup Exams**: Any make-ups for the first or second midterm exams will be at the time and place of the final exam unless the student has a university-excused absence. (Making up a missed exam during the time of the final exam does NOT excuse you from also taking the final exam). If a student has an approved or university-excused absence, then the make-up for that exam will be scheduled as soon as possible after the regular exam.

**Expectations for Out-of-Class Study**: This is entirely up to you, but plan on spending an average of 3 to 6 hours per week reading and studying the concepts learned from lectures, the textbook, and other required readings.

**Incompletes:** Incompletes will be given only in extraordinary circumstances and at the discretion of the instructor.

**Recording**: Audio or video recording of the instructor’s lectures or during any portion of the class is not permitted except under special circumstances.

**Bad Weather:** Any class cancellations issued by the University as a result of bad weather will result in the scheduled topic or exam being held on the next class day.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through selfservice 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 through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/).

**Disability Accommodations:** UT 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), The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation 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 disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or calling 817-272-3364. 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).

Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) www.uta.edu/caps/ calling 817-272-3671 is also available to all students to help increase their understanding of personal issues, address mental and behavioral health problems and make positive changes in their lives.

**Non-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://www.uta.edu/hr/eos/index.php)*.*

**Title IX Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington (“University”) 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 Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or [jmhood@uta.edu](jmhood%40uta.edu).

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses 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 in their courses by 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. Additional information is available at <https://www.uta.edu/conduct/>.

**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.

***Communicating with the Instructor:***

*I can only read emails from students using their MavMail accounts. Therefore, do not send me emails using non-university accounts, such as Gmail, Yahoo, or Hotmail.* I will try to respond to emails as quickly as possible during normal business hours (Monday-Friday 9am – 5pm), usually within 24 hours. However, please note that emails sent after hours, on weekends, and over University holidays may have a longer response time. Every email you send should have “Government of the US” and the specific question/concern within the subject line. If I think your question or concern cannot be adequately addressed over email, I will ask you to come to my office hours.

**Campus Carry:** Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those 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/>

**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.

**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.

**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, which is located immediately to the right of the classroom door. 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 individuals with disabilities.

**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 http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php.

**Schedule of Topics**

**Syllabus Changes**: As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course.

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Readings** |
| **Week 1** |
| Jan 16 (T) | Introduction, syllabus, discuss class expectations | Online syllabus quiz (*Quiz 1*) due Jan 23 (T) |
| Jan 18 (TH) | Key Concepts for Studying American Politics | **Textbook**: Chapter 1  |
| **Week 2** |
| Jan 23 (T) & 25 (TH) | The American Founding and the Constitution | **Textbook**: 1. Chapter 2
2. The U.S. Constitution (in textbook)
3. *The Federalist 10* (in textbook)

**Online Quiz:** *Quiz 2* due Jan 30 (T) |
| **Week 3** |
| Jan 30 (T) & Feb 1 (TH) | Federalism | **Textbook**: Chapter 3 **Online Quiz:** *Quiz 3* due Feb 6 (T) |
| **Week 4** |
| Feb 6 (T) & 8 (TH) | Civil Rights and Liberties | **Textbook:** Chapter 4 (pgs. 101-135)**Blackboard:**Adam Liptak, “Supreme Court Says Police May Use Evidence Found After Illegal Stops,” *The New York Times,* June 20, 2016**Online Quiz:** *Quiz 4* due Feb 13 (T) |
| **Week 5** |
| Feb 13 (T)  | Exam Review |  |
| Feb 15 (TH) | **Midterm Exam 1** | (Covers material from Chapters 1-4) |
| **Week 6** |
| Feb 20 (T) & 22 (TH) | Congress  | **Textbook:** Ch. 5 **Online Quiz**: *Quiz 5* due Feb 27 (T) |
| **Week 7** |
| Feb 27 (T) & Mar 1 (TH) | Presidency | **Textbook:** Chapter 6 **Blackboard:**Alan Dershowitz, “Opinion: Can the President Pardon Himself?” *The Hill,* July 26, 2017**Online Quiz:** *Quiz 6* due Mar 6 (T) |
| **Week 8** |
| Mar 6 (T) & 8 (TH) | The Bureaucracy | **Textbook:** Chapter 7 **Blackboard:** Perry Bacon Jr., “Why Did Trump Fire Comey?”fivethirtyeight.com, May 10, 2017**Online Quiz:** *Quiz 7* due Mar 20 (T) |
| **Week 9** |
| Mar 12– 16 | Spring Vacation!  |  |
| **Week 10**  |
| Mar 20 (T) & 22 (TH) | The Judiciary | **Textbook**: Chapter 8 **Online Quiz:** *Quiz 8* due Mar 27 (T) |
| **Week 11** |
| Mar 27 (T) | Review for Exam |  |
| Mar 29 (TH) | **Midterm Exam 2** | Exam covers Chapters 5-8 |
| **Week 12** |
| Apr 3 (T) & April 5 (TH) | Public Opinion | **Textbook:** Chapter 9 **Blackboard:**Vogel, Kenneth and Alex Isenstadt “How Did Everyone Get It So Wrong? Polls and Predictive Models Fail to Predict Trump’s Strength” *Politico* Nov 9, 2016**Online Quiz:** *Quiz 9* Due Apr 10 (T) |
| **Week 13** |
| Apr 10 (T)  | Political Participation | **Textbook:** Chapter 10  |
| Apr 12 (TH) | Interest Groups & Social Movements | **Textbook:** Chapter 11 **Online Quiz**: *Quiz 10* Due Apr 17 (T) |
| **Week 14** |
| Apr 17 (T)  | Finish Interest Groups/ Start Political Parties | **Textbook:** Chapter 12  |
| Apr 19 (TH) | Political Parties | Online Quiz: *Quiz 11* Due Apr 24 (T) |
| **Week 15** |
| Apr 24 (T) & 26 (TH) | Campaigns and Elections | **Textbook:** Chapter 13 **Blackboard:**German Lopez, “A Major Study Finding That Voter ID Laws Hurt Minorities Isn’t Standing Up Well Under Scrutiny” *Vox,* March 15, 2017**Online Quiz:** *Quiz 12* due May 1 (T) |
| **Week 16** |
| May 1 (T) | Economic Policy | **Blackboard:** TBD |
| May 3 (TH) | Wrap-Up/Review for Final Exam |  |
| Finals Exam Period: May 7-11, 2018 | **Final Exam** | **Day: May 08, 2018 (Tuesday)** **Time: 11:00-1:30pm** **Location: UH 115** |

**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. Non-emergency number 817-272-3381