

**POLS 2311-001
Spring 2018**

**Government of the United States
MWF 10:00-10:50AM
Room: 116 University Hall**

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I. Introduction

The objective of this course is to familiarize each student with the basic organization and processes of American government. Fundamentally, there are two goals for this course. First, each student should 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 within American politics.

II. 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.

III. 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).

IV. Required Text

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

1. James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh. 2017. (3rd Edition, Paperback). *By the People: Debating American Government*. New York: Oxford University Press. (ISBN 9780190298418)

An alternative ebook version is available at <https://www.redshelf.com/book/570342/by-the-people-570342-9780190298463-james-morone-rogan-kerish> (ISBN 9780190298463).

V. Course Requirements

Student grades in this course will be a function of three examinations (including two mid-term examinations and a final examination) and a research letter. Further, several (4-8) unscheduled quizzes will occur throughout the semester with points earned reflecting extra credit opportunities. The extra credit quizzes will occur at random throughout the semester and will be announced in class prior to the quiz. Each quiz will last a maximum of ten minutes and will be fully administered on Blackboard with students having access for 24 hours once the quiz begins. Questions on the quizzes will be formed from the lecture material and the textbook readings. Failure to take a quiz will result in a non-grade (0) for that quiz. There will be *no* make-up opportunities for missed quizzes regardless of the excuse.

Related to the three examinations, their format will consist of multiple-choice questions. With the multiple-choice format of the examinations, students are required to purchase and bring the official version of scantron form #882-E to each test, as well as a #2 pencil. Scantron form #882-E can be purchased at the university's bookstore. Wrong or non-official scantron forms will not be accepted since they sometimes cannot be scanned by the College of Liberal Art's scantron machine. If a student fails to bring the correct scantron form, that scantron will not be graded resulting in a grade of zero for the examination.

Each examination will cover both lectures and assigned readings. 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 partially cumulative. All students will take the examinations in the classroom at the designated times with no make-up exams allowed except for situations such as a medical emergency or a 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. When tests are returned, they will be brought to just two consecutive classes. Tests thereafter must be picked up from my office (UH, room 409) during office hours.

During the semester, there will also be a research letter assignment worth 10 percent of the course grade. With that assignment, each student will be 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 both the US House of Representatives and US Senate. The letter must be based on facts and ideas presented in class, 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 in class on Friday, January 26th and letters will be due in class (not by email) on Friday, March 9th.

Make-up Examination Policy

Where make-up exams are permitted, those examinations will be scheduled prior to the final examination on May 7th from 8:00-9:15AM. As such, make-up exams are generally 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, since they are never applied to a make-up exam.

Exam Tardiness Policy

Students entering late disturb other students and will not be allowed to take the exam. Further, tardiness permits students to ask exiting students about the content of an exam – that is obviously not fair for students that have arrived on time. Unless a prior arrangement has been made, students will receive a grade of zero when tardy for an examination.

VI. Grading

Grades will also posted on Blackboard. To access the extra-credit quizzes and your grades on Blackboard, log in with your UTA NetID and password at <https://elearn.uta.edu/webapps/login/>. If you have difficulty with Blackboard, visit <http://www.uta.edu/blackboard/students/index.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 – 30%
2. Midterm Examination #2 – 30%
3. Final Examination – 30%
4. Research Letter Assignment – 10%
5. Extra Credit Quizzes – Up to 10 extra points added to the semester grade
 - a. E.g., 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

VII. Current Events

With the national government and Washington, DC providing a steady stream of events, we will discuss events as they unfold. Where current events are relevant, they will be included in both the extra credit quizzes and the examinations. I will integrate political and policy debates into the material of this course, as they provide a method for understanding the topics relating to the U.S. Constitution, the Congress, the presidency, political participation and elections and other topics. Otherwise, where students have questions, I will be happy to set aside time when convenient to discuss political and policy matters.

VIII. Class Schedule

Subject 1: Introduction and American Political Culture

January 17-22 (1 intro and 2)

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 1 (The Spirit of American Politics)
- Morone and Kersh, chapter 2 pp. 22-39 (The Ideas that Shape America)

Subject 2: The Founding and the Constitution

January 24 – February 7 (6)

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 2 pp. 41-55 (The Ideas that Shape America)
- Morone and Kersh, chapter 3 (The Constitution)

Subject 3: Federalism

February 9-16

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 4 (Federalism and Nationalism)

Midterm Examination #1: February 19th

Subject 4: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

February 21 – March 2

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 5 (Civil Liberties)
- Morone and Kersh, chapter 6 (The Struggle for Civil Rights)

Subject 5: Congress

March 5-23

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 13 (Congress)

Research Letter Assignment Due: Friday, May 9th

Spring Recess: March 12-16

Subject 6: The Presidency

March 26-30

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 14 (The Presidency)

Subject 7: The Federal Courts

April 2-9

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 16 (The Judicial Branch)

Midterm Examination #2: April 11

Subject 8: Public Opinion

April 13-16

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 7 (Public Opinion)

Subject 9: Political Participation and Elections

April 18-25

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 8 (Political Participation)
- Morone and Kersh, chapter 10 (Campaigns and Elections)

Subject 10: Political Parties

April 27 – May 4

- Morone and Kersh, chapter 11 (Political Parties)

Final Examination: Monday, May 7th from 9:15-10:30AM

IX. 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 a combination of recurrent attendance, frequent class participation, and 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. You are in charge of your education. If something is unclear to you, it is your responsibility to seek the 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 such, you are responsible for checking your e-mail regularly. Per university policy, I will not respond to non-university 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.

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. As a result of student complaints, 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 also 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, a majority of students use their laptops to access the web for non-related material, play games or read email rather than paying attention to the lecture. Where I see a laptop being used, I assume (rather accurately) that it is being used for something other than class purposes.

X. Special Notes

1. Cell Phones and Electronic Devices – Students are instructed to turn off their cell phones prior to class. See the comments about cell phone usage in the Citizenship section. Usage of a cell phone or other non-permitted electronic device during an examination or quiz will result in a grade of zero on that examination or quiz.
2. Test Conduct – All materials must be removed from one's desk during an examination or quiz. Additionally, headwear (e.g., hats), sunglasses, and earphones are not permitted during an examination.
3. 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.
4. Inclement Weather – If a class is canceled due to inclement weather, its subject 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.

5. 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 can be found to the left and right behind the lecture podium. 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.
6. 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/>.
7. Students with Disabilities - Any student with a documented disability needing academic accommodations is requested to speak with the instructor during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential.
8. 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.
9. 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 Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or jmhood@uta.edu.
10. 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.
11. Syllabus Changes – The instructor reserves the right to change the syllabus at any time during the semester.