

PLSC 2305.701

American National Government

Online

Fall 2020

Rank: Assistant Professor of Political Science  
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**Course Description:** This is an introductory course in American National Politics and Government. For that reason, this course is not meant to be a complete recounting of American politics. Consequently, this course covers the most important topics regarding political development, institutions, and behavior in the United States.

Regarding political development, we will discuss the nation's founding, its constitution, federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights. In the second part of the course, we will discuss political behavior in the United States including, but not limited to, political parties, public opinion, interest groups, as well as political campaigns and elections. In the third part, we will discuss political institutions including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government. In the final part of the course, we will examine the Federal Reserve, the federal budget, fiscal policymaking, and economic policymaking.

**Text(s):** *American Government: Power and Purpose*, 14<sup>th</sup> Brief Edition

**Author(s):** Lowi, Ginsberg, Ansolabehere and Shepsle

**ISBN-13:** 978-0-3283778

## Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course. Additionally, students should expect to spend roughly 6 hours a week in the course. This is just an estimate as some students may complete the work in less or more time; it depends on the student.

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†Certain information in this syllabus is subject to change. This includes due dates, tentative course schedule, and office hours. Students will receive changes to the syllabus in writing through e-mail.

## **COVID-19 Statement and Policy**

As of writing (July 2020), COVID-19 has taken the lives of 516,000 people which does not include the likely millions of deaths not reported by the People's Republic of China under the control of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In Texas alone, the number stands at 2,520 and, as a result, the lives of all Americans have been greatly affected including the incredible economic impact of the pandemic.

As a result, this course will grant considerably leniency to all students who believe they are sick, are currently awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test or recently tested positive for COVID-19. If you have been affected by the pandemic in this manner, please let me know as soon as possible and I'll grant whatever extensions are needed so that you can get healthy first and second complete the course to the very best of your ability. The university also possesses considerable resources to help students affected by the global pandemic and I can point you in the direction of those resources, if needed.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

## **Course Requirements**

There are four sections of the course. Each consists of multiple lectures and several chapters of reading from the text. Students' proficiency of course material and information is measured by performance on multiple choice examinations, written assignments and discussion.

### **Assignments**

Each assignment asks students to complete several tasks relating to lectures and readings. Each Assignment (4) represents 2.5% of your final grade. Collectively, all four assignments comprise 10% of the final grade. Students will submit those through the Canvas Learning Management System.

### **Discussions**

Each discussion asks students to complete several tasks relating to lectures and readings. Each Discussion (4) represents 2.5% of your final grade. Collectively, all four discussions comprise 10% of the final grade. Students will submit those through the Canvas Learning Management System. In order to receive full credit, students must complete 3 posts: 1 in response to the prompt and two other posts to other students as responses.

### **Exams**

Each exam asks students a series of multiple choice questions. Each consists of 40 questions which students must complete with 50 minutes. Each exam 20% of your final grade. Collectively, all 4 exams comprise 80% of the final grade.

## **Course Objectives**

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe what governments do
- Identify the differences among types of governments
- Describe the historical context behind the making of the U.S. Constitution
- Explain the basic structure of the U.S. Constitution
- Review how the concept of federalism operates in the U.S.
- Discuss the Constitutional issues at stake in major Supreme Court cases dealing with civil liberties
- Identify how the mass media affect the political agenda in the U.S.
- Describe the history of political parties in the U.S., and the major issues confronting political parties today
- Explain how the electoral system in the U.S. operates, and of the demographic factors shaping voter turnout
- Discuss how interest groups function and how lobbying works
- Discuss and explain how the U.S. Congress is structured and what factors shape the legislative process
- Identify the office of the president and how presidents use their powers to shape policy-making
- Explain and Discuss the structure of the judicial branch and how it operates
- Explain the structure of the federal bureaucracy and identify factors shape policymaking within the federal bureaucracy
- Explain the budgetary process
- Describe and discuss the primary components of economic policy: fiscal policy and monetary policy.

**Grade Distribution:**

Written Assignments (4)	10%
Discussions (4)	10%
Objective Examinations (4)	80%

**Letter Grade Distribution:**

>= 89.5	A	79.5-89.4	B
69.5-79.4	C	59.5 - 69.4	D
<= 59.4	F		

**Secondary Authentication**

- Additionally, students must satisfy a secondary authentication method as required by University of Texas of the Permian Basin policy:
  - The University of Texas of the Permian Basin (UTPB) maintains policies and procedures to ensure that each student who registers for a distance or correspondence course is the same student who participates in, completes, and receives credit for the course. UTPB’s

Distance Education Policy requires faculty members to authenticate student identity by employing at least two methods of verification. To access online courses students must login to the Canvas learning management system to establish their identity by using their unique personal identifying username login and a secure password. UTPB's Distance Education Policy allows faculty multiple options for satisfying the second method of validating student identity. This course satisfies the second method of student verification by requiring the following (non-graded but mandatory):

- A clear image of yourself
  - In color
  - Well lit, and no shadows on your face or your ID that can obscure your image
  - Must be taken on the day you submit the photo to reflect your current appearance
  - Taken in full-face view directly facing the camera
  - With a neutral facial expression and both eyes open
- Then a picture of your ID (can be a UTPB ID or government issued ID) with only your name and picture showing (Picture ID card in which the ID number has been covered (tape over any numbers)).
- Make sure to attach both image files in either JPEG or PNG format to the assignment BEFORE you submit it.

## Course and Instructor Policies

### University Policies

- Students with Disabilities
  - Students with Disabilities: The University of Texas of the Permian Basin in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act provides “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities. Any student with a disability who is requesting an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter from the ADA Officer for Students. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored.

ADA Officer for Students: Mr. Paul Leverington  
Address: Mesa Building 4243  
Voice Telephone: 432-552-3702  
Email: Leverington\_P@utpb.edu

- Office of the Registrar (Course Incomplete/Withdrawal/Grade Appeal)

- All students are required to complete the course within the semester they are signed up. Incomplete grades for the course are rarely given, will only be granted if the student provides a valid, documented excuse for not being able to complete the course on time, and has contacted the instructor prior to the scheduled last class to request an extension. The student signs a contract that includes the incomplete course activities and the new due dates.
- Find information and dates regarding drops and withdrawals at
  - \* <http://www.utpb.edu/services/academic-affairs/office-of-the-registrar/adds-drops>
- For grade appeal process go to
  - \* <http://www.utpb.edu/campus-life/dean-of-students/grievances>

## Course Communication

There are times when a student may need to contact the instructor. You may need to email me or call my office.

That being said, I much prefer email. I answer all emails within 24 hours excepting weekends and holidays. I usually only answer my office phone during my office hours.

Do not send multiple emails on the same day with the exact same message. I will answer your email within the time frame established in the syllabus.

This semester, I will hold virtual office hours through Microsoft Teams. You may call and conduct a video conference at any time during my posted virtual office hours.

## Academic/Scholastic Dishonesty

Academic Dishonesty is not permitted in this course. According to the UTPB Handbook of Student Conduct:

“Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses (without the prior permission of the instructor) or the attempt to commit such acts.”

Any student suspected of academic dishonesty will receive notification through secure communication either verbally or via email. The student may exercise the right to explain themselves or explain how the instructor made an error in judgment regarding the suspicion. If I agree with your reasoning, I will grade your assignment without penalty. If not, you will face one of the following sanctions at the instructor’s discretion..

- A written warning
- A grade of 0 on the assignment
- A reduction of the final course grade by one letter
- A grade of F for the course

## Exam Dates

The deadlines in this course may be moved at the instructor's discretion. Additionally, I do not provide make-up exams without documentation. I may be flexible if you inform me before an exam date, but I am under no obligation to do so.

## Grades

Grades are maintained in the Canvas course shell. Students are responsible for tracking their progress by referring to *Grades*. If you have a question regarding any grades, feel free to email me.

## Extra Credit

**There is no extra credit in this course for any reason.** If I offer extra credit to one student, I must offer it to all students. This means I could receive many additional items to grade that would frankly result in an unwanted headache. In this course, the work is what it is. Make sure you perform the best you can from the beginning as there are no second chances.

## Feedback Regarding Submitted Work

I will return all work within one week of the exam date.

## University Services

The university provides a number of services to students. Make sure you take advantage of these services:

- ADA Accommodation/Support (432) 552 2630
- Advising UTPB E-Advising
- Bookstore: (432) 551-0220
- Email, Outlook 365, my.utpb.edu Information Resources Service
- Financial Aid and Scholarship (432) 552-2620
- Library (432) 552-2370
- Registrar (432) 552-2635
- Student Services
- Technical Support Canvas 1-866-437-0867
- Tutoring & Learning Resources If you are taking courses through UTPB the following links provide services: Smarthinking Online Tutoring (provides tutoring services), SmarterMeasure (measures learner readiness for online course).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This source will not help you in any way shape or form with this course. It is only in the syllabus at REACH's behest.

## Technical Requirements

- Technical Requirements as stipulated by REACH:
  - <http://www.utpb.edu/online/reach/technical-requirements>
- Students can use cloud version of Word, PowerPoint and other Microsoft products through use of their UTPB Outlook 365 and UTPB email address. For more information refer to Student Services below or visit:
  - <http://www.utpb.edu/services/ird/information-on-computer-accounts-e-mail/office-365>
- To obtain software licensing and media for selected Microsoft titles at very low cost through a software agreement visit:
  - <http://www.utpb.edu/services/ird/information-for-students/software-distribution/microsoft-select>

## Preparation for Emergencies

- Computer Crash:
  - Not having a working computer or a crashed computer during the semester will NOT be considered as an acceptable reason for not completing course activities at a scheduled time. NOTE: Identify a second computer before the semester begins, that you can use when/if your personal computer crashes.
- Complete Loss of Contact:
  - If you lose contact with course connectivity completely (i.e. you cannot contact me via Canvas or email), you need to call instructor, and leave message regarding connectivity loss and contact information.
- Lost/Corrupt/Missing Files:
  - You must keep/save a copy of every project/assignment on an external drive, UTPB Outlook 365 OneDrive, or personal computer. In the event of any kind of failure (e.g. virus infection, student's own computer crashes, loss of files in cyberspace, etc) or any contraindications/problems, you may be required to resubmit the files.

## End-of-Course Evaluation & Instructor Evaluation

- Every student is encouraged to complete an end-of-course evaluation/survey provided by UTPB. During the last few weeks of class, you will receive an announcement through email notifying you that the Course/Instructor Survey is available. You may follow the link in the email to complete the survey using the same credentials to access your courses here. When entering the emailed Survey link you will see a list of surveys for you to complete.
- The survey is anonymous and your responses are confidential. Your feedback is critical to us and to your instructor as we strive to improve our offerings, and our support of you, the students.

## Important Academic Dates

- UTPB Academic Calendar: <http://www.utpb.edu/services/academic-affairs/office-of-the-registrar/academic-calendar>

## Disclaimer & Rights

- Information contained in this syllabus was to the best knowledge of the instructor considered correct and complete when distributed for use in the beginning of the semester. However, the instructor reserves the right, acting within the policies and procedures of UTPB to make changes in the course content or instructional techniques without notice or obligation. The students will be informed about the changes, if any.

## Tentative Course Outline

### Weeks 1 & 2: August 26-September 6

- Lectures
  - Making Sense of American Government
  - The Founding and the Constitution
- Readings
  - Chapters 1 & 2

### Weeks 3 & 4: September 7-20

- Lectures
  - Federalism
  - Civil Liberties
- Readings
  - Chapters 3 & 4
- Section 11 Exam, Discussion, and Assignment due by September 20th, 11:59 P.M.

### Weeks 5 & 6: September 21- October 4

- Lectures
  - Congress
  - The Presidency
- Readings
  - Chapters 5 & 6



## **Weeks 7 & 8: October 5-October 18**

- Lectures
  - The Executive Branch
  - The Federal Courts
- Readings
  - Chapters 7 & 8
- **Section 2 Exam, Discussion, and Assignment due by October 18th, 11:59 P.M.**

## **Weeks 9: October 19-November 1**

- Lectures
  - Public Opinion & Mass Media
  - Elections
- Readings
  - Chapters 9 & 10

## **Weeks 10& 11: November 2-15**

- Lectures
  - Political Parties
- Reading
  - Chapters 11
- **Section 3 Exam, Discussion, and Assignment due by November 15th, 11:59 P.M.**

## **Weeks 13 & 14: November 16-December 1**

- Lectures
  - Interest Groups
  - Introduction to Policymaking
- Reading
  - Chapters 12 & 13

## **Weeks 15 & 16: December 2-December 6**

- Lectures
  - Foreign Policymaking
- Reading
  - Chapter 14
- **Section 4 Exam, Discussion, and Assignment due by Sunday, December 6th 11:59 P.M.**

Sample Syllabus