

GOV 310L: American Government

UTC 4.124
TTH, 9:30 – 11:00am
Fall 2019

Professor: Derek Epp

How should we evaluate governments and the politicians that run them? What do we expect successful governments to do or not to do? In answering these questions, not everyone will reach the same conclusion. Differences in what we consider a successful government go a long way toward clarifying the multitude of political opinions that find voice among the American public. But having a sensible answer (or at least being able to meaningfully engage with the question) is part of being a responsible citizen in a democracy. The objective of this course is to provide some of the background information that may help you clarify your own expectations of government, whatever those may be. Specifically, this course will serve as an introduction to American (and Texas) politics by examining important political institutions, processes, and actors.

Like other academic fields, the study of government demands skepticism (not cynicism) and critical thinking. We will seek to develop these attributes throughout the semester and apply them to governments, politicians, and institutions. The goal, through readings, class discussions, and homework assignments is not to promote any specific worldview, but to emphasize the importance of approaching politics with a critical eye.

Grades

Your grades will be based on the following assignments:

Exams (100%): There will be three exams – two midterms and a final – each of which will be worth 1/3 of your total grade. None of the exams are cumulative.

Exams that are not taken will be graded as a 0. If you are experiencing a personal crisis (or one in your immediate family) then accommodations can be made, but it is crucial that you contact me as soon as possible. After-the-fact emergencies will not be considered. In some instances, a note from your dean may be required.

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

The grading scale in percentages is as follows:

93-100 (A)
90-92.99 (A-)
87-89.99 (B+)
83-86.99 (B)
80-82.99 (B-)
77-79.99 (C+)
73-76.99 (C)
70-72.99 (C-)
67-69.99 (D+)
63-66.99 (D)
60-62.99 (D-)
0-59.99 (F)

Students with Disabilities

Any disabled student may request appropriate academic accommodations from the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (512-471-6259) or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/accommodations-and-services/>

Those with documentation for accommodations should contact me as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

By taking this class, the student agrees to abide by the University of Texas regulations concerning cheating. Simply put, all submitted materials (homework assignments, written papers, and exams) must be original and done exclusively by the student whose name is attached to it. If students observe others cheating, they are honor bound to contact the TAs or professor. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services Web site: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

Reading

There are two required books for the course:

- (1) *The American Political System* (3rd Edition) by Ken Kollman
- (2) *Readings in American Politics* (4th Edition) by Ken Kollman

It is your responsibility to obtain these books. There is an ebook option for the main text, which is less expensive, and, of course, you should look around for used copies, just be sure that you purchase the correct editions. Any additional readings will be available on the course website.

Reading & Exam Schedule

Below is the reading and exam schedule. The letter **T** denotes chapters from the textbook and **R** denotes chapters from the reader. Outside readings are available on the course website.

Lecture	Date	Topic	Reading
1	Aug. 29 th	Couse Introduction	
2	Sept. 3 rd	Collective Action	T Chapter 1
3	Sept. 5 th	The Constitution	T Chapter 2; R Chapter 2.3
4	Sept. 10 th	Federalism	T Chapter 3
5	Sept. 12 th	Civil Rights & Liberties	T Chapter 4; R Chapter 4.1
6	Sept. 17 th	Congress	T Chapter 5
7	Sept. 19 th	Congress	R Chapter 5.1 & 5.2
8	Sept. 24 th	The Budgetary Process	R Chapter 5.3
9	Sept. 26 th	The Presidency	T Chapter 6
10	Oct. 1 st	Review Day	
11	Oct. 3rd	Midterm #1	
12	Oct. 8 th	The Bureaucracy	T Chapter 7
13	Oct. 10 th	The Judiciary	T Chapter 8
14	Oct. 15 th	Public Opinion	T Chapter 9
15	Oct. 17 th	Public Opinion	R Chapter 9.1 & 9.3
16	Oct. 22 nd	Political Participation	T Chapter 10
17	Oct. 24 th	Political Participation	R Chapter 10.1
18	Oct. 29 th	Review Day	
19	Oct. 31st	Midterm #2	
20	Nov. 5 th	Elections & Campaigns	T Chapter 13
21	Nov. 7 th	Elections & Campaigns	R Chapter 13.1
22	Nov. 12 th	Political Parties	T Chapter 12
23	Nov. 14 th	Political Parties	R Chapter 12.1 & 12.2
24	Nov. 19 th	Interest Groups	T Chapter 11; R Chapter 11.3
25	Nov. 21 st	Mass Media	T Chapter 14
26	Nov. 26 th	Economic Policy	R Chapter 15.1
27	Dec. 3 th	Review Day	
28	Dec. 5th	Final	