

GOVERNMENT 310L

SPRING 2011

#38735 TTH 8:00-9:15 IN MEZES 1.306

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Prof. David V. Edwards

Office Hours in Batts 3.126:

Tuesday 11-12 & 2:15-3:15 and Thursday 11-12

And by appointment via 471-5121 or dedwards@austin.utexas.edu
or whenever you find me in my office

Teaching Assistants and their office hours and email addresses:

Joshua Blank (joshmblank@gmail.com) Office hours in Batts 1.118:

Monday 8-11) Marco Paoli (marco.paoli@mail.utexas.edu) Office hours in
Batts 1.118: M&W 2-3:30

Course Description and Objectives

Our basic goal in this course is to help you develop analytical skills, concepts and knowledge useful in understanding American politics in general and current events in particular. We believe that these skills and concepts will help you to be a better critical and creative thinker about politics, and a more effective participant in politics should you decide to do this at any time.

To achieve this goal we shall focus on disputes that divide political actors (individuals, groups, and institutions), which we shall analyze using tools that you can also apply to situations in your own everyday life. We shall learn to examine American politics in terms of *disputes over claims to the authority to decide what is, what causes what, what's right, what works, and what should be done by whom in politics*. We will apply this framework to the major institutions (Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts), the "inputs" into their operations (public opinion, participation, parties, interest groups, social movements, the media), and the "outputs" (civil liberties, civil rights, human rights, and various domestic and global public policies). We shall also apply this framework to understanding Texas politics from time to time.

Class Sessions

Class sessions will be devoted to a combination of lectures and discussions on the topic for the day and on current events from the daily *New York Times* (which will be required reading Monday through Friday all semester). Lectures will expand upon or relate to the readings assigned for each session, but *they will not summarize these readings*. Instead, **lectures and discussions will be based on the assumption that you have done the reading assignments before class**. Lectures will not summarize the textbook readings. **Please bring your copy of the day's *New York Times* to class every class day so we can refer to it.**

Required Reading

Most of your reading assignments will be in **the textbook: Greenberg & Page: The Struggle for Democracy, 10th edition**, published last week in paperback by Longman Pearson. New copies should be available at the Coop and on the web from Amazon and other sellers. If you prefer, you can purchase an electronic online edition of the book instead of the printed version, at a price approximately half that of the printed edition. At the end of this syllabus you will find instructions on accessing MyPoliSciLab, which includes various study aids and an electronic version of the book and is made available to those who purchase a new copy of the printed book by means of an access code that comes with the book. **MyPoliSciLab is optional, not required.** In addition, I am putting multiple copies of the book on reserve in PCL for those who prefer to read the book that way.

Class session topics and reading assignments, along with scheduled exam dates, are listed at the end of this syllabus.

The other major required reading is ***The New York Times***, daily Monday through Friday through the end of the semester, starting Monday January 24 and ending Friday May 6, which will be made available by special reduced student-rate. The sheet attached to the end of this syllabus gives you details on ordering, but here are the basic facts:

To subscribe at the special classroom rate, call 1-888-NYT COLL (1-888-698-2655). You can choose Monday through Friday at \$35.00 for the semester from January 24 through May 6 (no delivery during Spring Break), or seven days a week for \$90.25. (The newsstand cost is \$2.00 a day and \$6.00 on Sunday, so the rate you get is a very major savings.) You are only required to read it Monday through Friday, but the Sunday paper is full of interesting and valuable sections with many relevant articles, and I encourage you to read it too, which you can do on the web. In most cases, the paper will be delivered to your home, arriving before 7 am. If you live on campus or in a large apartment complex, you will have to select a campus lockbox from the options the operator will give you at which to get your paper each day Monday through Friday; weekend delivery is not an option on campus. You may also read the *Times* online at www.nytimes.com. However, I recommend that you clip and file important articles so that you will have them at hand when we deal with their topic and to use in preparing for exams. It would be very costly to print all those articles, and hard to manage them online if you don't print them out.

There will also be occasional brief class "downloads" that will be "delivered" via our course website on Blackboard, or perhaps occasionally on a course website on the General Libraries' **E-Res** system (which we will explain if we use it). Some of these downloads will be required reading, and others will be optional supplementary materials; I will indicate which are required and which optional.

Course Organization, Requirements, and Grading

There will be three exams in the course, the first two given during class time as specified on the reading assignments and class topics sheet and the third, the final exam, given at the date and time determined by the Registrar. There will also be two or three quizzes given in class at various times during the semester. The quizzes together will count 10 percent of your grade, and should help you discover whether you are studying effectively. The first class exam will count 20 percent, the second 30 percent, and the final 40 percent, so that you will get additional benefit from whatever

improvement you achieve in your performance during the semester. There will be one comprehensive makeup exam and one comprehensive makeup quiz, described below, for the entire semester.

The exams will include some multiple choice questions and probably some fill-in-the-blank questions, but the greater part will consist of short essay questions, and you will likely have limited choice among these essay questions. The exams will cover the lectures, readings in the textbook, material from the *New York Times*, videos and audios from class, and any required “downloads.” There are no exams on file for you to examine because each exam is tailored to the current readings and other materials plus this semester’s classroom happenings and current political developments. However, I will give you in class sample questions along with guidance on how to answer them effectively before each exam, so you’ll know what sort of questions to expect.

Attendance will not be a part of your grade, but class sessions will include lecture material and video clips for which you will be responsible on exams, so regular attendance is highly recommended. In addition, there may be occasional extra credit opportunities in class available to students attending that day.

Grades will be assigned on a ten-points per letter grade basis, including pluses and minuses as specified by University regulations. **We do not curve grades**, so you are not competing directly with your fellow students; your good work will be rewarded on its own merits.

There will be a special review session just before each exam conducted by the TAs.

We are unable to make provisions for your submitting extra work for extra credit, so be sure you do your best work on the quizzes and exams.

The Comprehensive Makeup Exam

There will be one makeup exam, given sometime after the second exam and covering the entire semester’s work to that point, to substitute for and count the same percentage as either exam you missed with a valid excuse.

You must have a valid excuse—observance of a religious holy day, a death in the immediate family, a serious medical problem, or required absence for participation in a University-sponsored event, academic or athletic—for missing one of the regular exams in order to be allowed to take this makeup, and you must clear this excuse with your TA or me, furnishing appropriate documentation, in advance of the exam you miss or immediately upon your return to campus in the event of an emergency.

Contacting Us with Questions

I have prepared this detailed syllabus to serve as a course guide throughout the semester. If you have questions the syllabus does not answer, please feel free to ask me or a TA after class or during office hours, or by email. You will be held responsible for all the course requirements and procedures described here, so please be sure to familiarize yourself with them.

If you have any questions about the reading assignment for a given day, you may raise them with me or a TA before or after class. Otherwise, you may raise questions in my office hours or either of your TAs’ office hours. **Please feel free to raise your hand and ask a question in class during lecture or discussion if you believe an answer to it might be helpful to others as well as to you.** If you do not ask questions about course materials, we shall have to assume that you understand them.

We also encourage you to bring questions and problems to us in our office hours in a timely manner, because the earlier we address them, the better for your experience of the course as well as for your course grade. If you cannot see us during our office hours, we can make special arrangements. The best way to do this is to email us. My contact information and that of your TAs are on this syllabus.

Availability of Grades and Exams and Keeping of Records

Your exam grades will be posted on Blackboard. Your exams will be returned in class or you may pick them up in your TA's office hours, where you may discuss your performance on them during office hours, or by appointment. Your TA keeps the records of all your grades, and is therefore the one you should consult first if you have any questions about them.

Appealing Your Grade

If you believe an error or an incorrect judgment or assessment has been made in grading your exam, please follow these procedures in a timely manner:

- Discuss the matter with your TA during office hours or by appointment.
- If you are dissatisfied with your TA's decision, you may appeal to me. I will then re-grade the entire exam, and you will receive whatever grade I assign to you, whether it is higher or lower than that which you received from your TA. I will also be glad to discuss our decisions with you personally.

Dropping the Course

University requirements for dropping a course are listed in the Academic Calendar on the University website. I observe those regulations.

Honesty, Dishonesty, and Plagiarism

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses punishable by failure of the course. The administration asks that you familiarize yourself with the U.T. Honor Code and the nature of plagiarism by consulting the following site: <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/qi09-10/ch01/index.html>.

Disabilities

If you have a learning disability or another disability that requires special arrangements for examtaking, you may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, following which you should consult with your TA well in advance of each exam to work out appropriate approved arrangements.

Counseling and Related Assistance

The UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC): <http://cmhc.utexas.edu/> has asked that we make available the following information about valuable campus resources available to you:

- --For information about students with urgent needs :
<http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/talktosomeone.html>
- --CMHC's 24/7/365 Telephone Counseling Line: 471-CALL/2255;
<http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/24hourcounseling.html>
- --To find out about making an appointment:
<http://cmhc.utexas.edu/appointments.html>
- --For information about our Be That One Suicide Prevention Program, check out
<http://www.cmhc.utexas.edu/bethatone/>

* Behavior Concerns Advice Line- Concerned about someone on campus?
BCAL provides a central resource for UT faculty, students, and staff who may have concerns about the behavior or well-being of another member of the campus community. BCAL is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For more information contact 512-232-5050 or www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal

Courtesy

Please refrain from talking or causing other distracting disturbances during class. If you will have to leave class early, please sit near a door and exit quietly. If you must be late, please enter quietly. Please observe the university regulations prohibiting food and drinks other than water in the classroom.

Evaluations and Suggestions

We invite your suggestions of ways we can improve the course throughout the semester, and will conduct a midterm evaluation for this purpose as well as our own detailed end-of-semester evaluations. Please feel free to offer criticisms and suggestions, either in person or by note or email (anonymously, if you wish), to me or to your TA at any time during the semester. Students often have extremely valuable ideas to offer, and the sooner you let us hear from you, the sooner we can make whatever changes are desirable and feasible.

Also, if you know of an interesting website relevant to our course materials, please let me know, and feel free to share such information with classmates via the email system in Blackboard. (However, please do not use that system for partisan political purposes, which is against University regulations.)

A Final Note

We find American politics fascinating, and hope you will, too—especially in this year in which power is changing hands in the House of Representatives and major policies on economic recovery, healthcare reform, and energy and environment, among other topics, continue to be debated. We will try to make all aspects of this course as interesting and informative as possible. We depend on you to be attentive to the readings and classroom happenings, and hope you will participate as actively as the size and structure of the course—over which none of us has control—allow, and that you will feel free to share your views—and any interesting materials on our subject that you come across. Your decision to make the course a valuable one for yourself will help to make it valuable for others as well.

We hope you will find the course both interesting and enjoyable.

Edwards/American Government/Spring 2011

CLASS SESSION TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

No.	Date	Day	Topic	Reading Assignment
1	Jan 18	T	Introduction to the course	
	Part I:		FOUNDATIONS	
2	Jan 20	Th	Studying American politics via the <i>N.Y. Times</i>	<i>N.Y. Times</i> Wed. Jan 19 paper or online
3	Jan 25	T	Studying American politics & democracy	Chapter 1
4	Jan 27	Th	Studying the Founders & Framers and the Constitution	Chapter 2
5	Feb 1	T	Studying federalism	Chapter 3
6	Feb 3	Th	Deeper foundations of American politics	Chapter 4
	Part II:		LINKAGES & INPUTS	
7	Feb 8	T	Public opinion	Chapter 5
8	Feb 10	Th	The news media	Chapter 6
9	Feb 15	T	Interest groups	Chapter 7
10	Feb 17	Th	Social movements	Chapter 8
11	Feb 22	T	FIRST EXAM	
12	Feb 24	Th	Political parties	Chapter 9
13	Mar 1	T	Participation, voting, and elections	Chapter 10
	Part III		INSTITUTIONS	
14	Mar 3	Th	Congress, part I	Chapter 11
15	Mar 8	T	Congress, part II	To be announced
16	Mar 10	Th	Presidency, part I	Chapter 12
			SPRING BREAK	ENJOY
17	Mar 22	T	Presidency, part II	
18	Mar 24	Th	Bureaucracy	Chapter 13
19	Mar 29	T	Courts & the legal system, part I	Chapter 14
20	Mar 31	Th	Courts & the legal system, part II	To be announced
21	Apr 5	T	SECOND EXAM	
	Part IV:		OUTPUTS: POLICIES	
22	Apr 7	Th	Civil liberties	Chapter 15
23	Apr 12	T	Civil rights and human rights	Chapter 16
24	Apr 14	Th	Studying public policy	Chapter 17: 548-553
25	Apr 19	T	The federal budget and taxes	Chapter 17: 563-574
26	Apr 21	Th	Economic policy	Chapter 17: 553-563
27	Apr 26	T	Energy and environment	To be announced
28	Apr 28	Th	Foreign and military policy	Chapter 18
29	May 3	T	Conclusions 1: What can be done?	To be announced
30	May 5	Th	Conclusions 2: What can we do?	To be announced
	May 17	T	FINAL EXAM	<i>9-12 am</i>