

American Government

GOV 310L 38520

Spring 2012

Instructor: Shannon Bow (O'Brien), PhD
Meeting Time: MWF 12pm-1pm
Location: GAR 0.102
Office Hours: 3.226 Mezes. 232-7213 (but I really prefer email)
MWF 10:45-11:45, M 3:30-4:30
I am also available by appointment.
If class is cancelled/not being held, office hours are cancelled too.

Email: shannonbow@hotmail.com

Be sure to include something about the noon 310 American Government class in the subject line. I am teaching both American Government and Urban Politics this semester so an email saying 'question about class' needs to be more specific.

Please routinely check Blackboard for this class. I post Powerpoint slides, notes and information I feel are important to the class. In addition, we will post your grades online.

Teaching Assistant:

Rodolfo Disi, Office Hours: Tues 9:30 - 11:00 am, Fri 9:30 - 11:00 am in Batts 1.118
Email address: rdisi@utexas.edu

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to American Government. It is designed to give you a basic idea of the functions, activities, and interactions of our federal system. Our government is a dynamic entity that has evolved over time and shaped by both internal and external forces. The goal of this class is to provide you with tools to understand American Institutions. Through learning the duties, powers, and limitations of government, you can better appreciate the impact of current events upon America.

Required Readings:

There is ONE (1) book required for this course. You can purchase it either as a hardcopy version from the bookstore or as an electronic version.

AM GOV 2011. Losco/Baker. Publisher is McGraw Hill ISBN 9780077394363

Note I have moved to this book because it is significantly cheaper than the text I previously used and covers the same material (mostly). I am using the 2011 edition NOT the 2012 edition so you should be able to find a used copy

Students who wish to purchase an eBook can go to www.coursesmart.com and search for ISBN 9780077394417. You can purchase the eBook version online for \$37.25. The eBook is the same as the hardcopy of the book, but it is an electronic version only. I do not care which version you use for the class. Some students prefer eBooks now because they can download them onto their computer or portable handheld of choice.

I reserve the right to assign additional readings from time to time if I feel they are needed. Any additional readings will be added Blackboard and also announced in class.

Grades:

Grades will be based on the following:

Test 1	Feb 8 (Wed):	20%
Test 2	Mar 7 (Wed):	20%
Test 3	Apr 11 (Wed):	25%
Test 4	May 4 (Fri):	25%

Paper Assignments: Total Weight is 10%, or 5% each

Paper Assignment 1 FEB 15 (WED)

Paper Assignment 2 MAR 21(WED)

If attendance becomes extremely low, or if I think pop quizzes are in order, I do may begin to take attendance or give quizzes. If I do exercise this option, I will announce it in class and on Blackboard as well as with the re-weighted grade scale. However, attendance is NOT required for this course.

I also reserve the right to make any changes to the grading system I see fit during the semester. This may include, but is not limited to additional paper assignments (if I determine they are needed), or moving the test dates to accommodate unforeseen circumstances (think hurricanes and natural disasters, not doctor's appointments).

Grade Scale:

The University uses a plus/minus system. Here is the scale I will use for the class for grades. I do NOT round up or negotiate grades. You will receive your earned grade based on performance.

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

Paper Assignments

You will have *two* paper assignments. These assignments will be posted on Blackboard prior to their due date and passed out in class.

Assignment One will involve collecting information about your U.S. House of Representatives member (district, committees, subcommittees, issues important to them, etc) and collecting similar information about one of your members of the United States Senate.

Assignment Two will involve collecting information about the legislator who represents you in the State House of Representatives and (perhaps) State Senate.

ONLY *paper copies* of the assignments will be accepted.

Late papers will be penalized. For every calendar day a paper is late (including weekends), it will be penalized 5% of the total grade a day until 50%. Additional late penalties will not be assessed after 50% though you may be graded lower than 50% for incorrect information.

Late papers are only accepted until April 20, 2012. No paper assignments will be accepted after that day.

EXAMS

Four multiple choice exams will be given. They will cover material presented in lectures and in the readings from the text, as well as any other material assigned/presented in class (including videos if I show any). The final exam is **NOT** cumulative and will only cover material presented since the previous exam. However, most of concepts in this course build upon each other so you will be expected to retain information from earlier portions of the class.

Each exam will be machine graded. I will supply the answer sheets. Students are required to bring a number 2 pencil and picture identification.

The test days are fixed and announced the first day of class. They will not be changed or negotiated. If these test days do not fit your personal schedule, do **NOT** enroll in this course. There are too many students in this course to work with you to make these dates fit vacations, trips, or other such matters. While I will abide by university approved absences and work with students, make up exams may not be the same exam given to the majority of the class and could be an essay exam if I decide one is best to test the information.

I do not return tests in this class though I return Assignments 1, 2. You are **always** welcome to come in any time during the semester to look at your tests (Yes, you can still look at test 1 after the 3rd exam if you wish). The professor will keep the copies of your tests in her office. The teaching assistant will have test information as well. They can go over your scores and what you miss from the testing output we receive from the scantrons. If you plan to attend the teaching assistant's office hours and want to look at your physical test, email the professor and she will place the test in his mailbox. Please try to let the professor know at least a day ahead of time. The teaching assistants have a limited amount of space and I have a large filing cabinet in my office to store the tests. The mailboxes are close to my office so it is relatively simple to drop it off

All assignment grades can only be questioned or challenged for 2 weeks after the date I pass them back in class. If you skip class that day, the time still starts counting. If the grade is not questioned or challenged in this time frame, it stands as recorded. This is designed to encourage students to retrieve their papers and also to not question grades in December that were handed back in October because they decide they do not like their final class grade.

Academic Dishonesty/Cheating

You will be expected to adhere to the UT Honor Code: *The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.*

Though obvious, cheating is not allowed on any assignments or exams. Cheating involves transmitting or receiving any information from any electronic device, paper, hand signals, or other means of communication during a test. Plagiarism is also prohibited. It refers to copying any work from any source (electronic, paper, etc) without noting/citing where it is originally from. It is important to note that using ideas (and not just quotes) from other sources without proper citation also counts as plagiarism. Any assignments turned in will be assumed to be the final version of the assignment and any inappropriate material will be considered intentional and not accidental.

You will be asked to remove hats and sunglasses while taking an exam. The use of cellular phones/beepers/palm pilots/wi fi/text messaging/etc are PROHIBITED during lectures and tests. Students will be asked to leave class if they fail to comply with this rule. Furthermore, if a cellular phone goes off during an exam, we will collect the exam immediately and the student will not be allowed to complete the test. If we discover any student using or receiving messages from any electronic device during the exam, they will automatically fail the exam and be referred to the proper University authorities for cheating. In addition, any student caught cheating in any conventional manner (i.e. using notes, cheat sheets, looking at another student's paper) will also fail and be referred to the proper authorities for cheating.

Students are allowed to use laptops during lectures for **note taking only**. Students who need such electronic devices because of a disability are allowed to use them during the exam in the appropriate centers for disability/modified testing (these students are only allowed to use devices to facilitate learning and are forbidden to use them for scholastic dishonesty). You can contact the office at: <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/contact.php> if you need to talk to them about scheduling tests (but I need to know as well).

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, visit the Student Judicial Services web site <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>.

Blackboard

I will attempt to use Blackboard as a way to provide information to the class. In the past, I have regularly made RTF versions of my Powerpoint slides available prior to class. However, if I encounter problems utilizing Blackboard, I may shift my materials (including test guides and other things) to another website devoted to making material available to the class. I will announce any changes of this sort to the class.

I will try to post on Blackboard review sheets prior to each exam. These sheets should not be considered the definitive study guide for the test. Rather, they are a list of major concepts and ideas you should definitely know for the exam.

Additional information

Do NOT phone or email me about a grade (i.e. "What did I get?"). We will post grades electronically as soon as practical.

If you need extra time on a test and/or require special physical accommodations, please contact me in confidence as soon as possible at the beginning of the course. Every effort will be made to accommodate your needs within the guidelines set forth by the University.

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>

Religious Holy Days: 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, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with "Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley" written in the subject line.

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>

Make-up exams/Excused Absences

Absences on exam days may be excused if the student provides verifiable documentation of accident, illness, or university or legal obligation. Unexcused absences from examinations will result in a score of zero for that exam.

I **STRONGLY** encourage you not to miss an exam. The make up may be different from the exam given to the rest of the class. It may include an essay format, but the exam format is at my discretion.

One more thing: If a true emergency occurs that you know you can document, take care of yourself first and we will sort it out later. You do not need to call me from the ER or jail to let us know you won't be there. In those situations, you have bigger problems than this class at that moment in time.

Class Calendar

The readings for this day are the readings I expect you to have done PRIOR to that day. This calendar is based on my best estimation of how long it will take to go through the material. On occasion through the semester, I *may* get behind a day depending on how long it takes to cover the topic. Tests will ALWAYS only cover the chapters noted in the syllabus.

Jan 18 Wed	Introduction to the Course – Pass out Syllabi
Jan 20 Fri	Chapter 1 – Citizenship in Our Changing Democracy
Jan 23 Mon	Chapter 1 – Citizenship in Our Changing Democracy Start Chapter 2 if time
Jan 25 Wed	Chapter 2 – Constitution
Jan 27 Fri	Chapter 2 – Constitution
Jan 30 Mon	Chapter 2 – Constitution/ Federalist 10 (back of textbook)
Feb 1 Wed	Chapter 3 – Federalism
Feb 3 Fri	Chapter 3 – Federalism
Feb 6 Mon	Chapter 3 – Federalism
Feb 8 Wed	TEST ONE (covers Chapters 1, 2, 3)
Feb 10 Fri	Chapter 11- Congress
Feb 13 Mon	Chapter 11- Congress
Feb 15 Wed	Chapter 11- Congress ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE
Feb 17 Fri	Chapter 11/12 Congress/Presidency
Feb 20 Mon	Chapter 12 – Presidency
Feb 22 Wed	Chapter 12 – Presidency
Feb 24 Fri	Finish 12/Chapter 13 – Bureaucracy
Feb 27 Mon	Chapter 13 – Bureaucracy
Feb 29 Wed	Finish 13/Chapter 14 – Courts
Mar 2 Fri	Chapter 14 – Courts
Mar 5 Mon	Chapter 14 – Courts
Mar 7 Wed	TEST TWO (covers Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14)
Mar 9 Fri	Chapter 4 – Civil Liberties
Mar 12 Mon	SPRING BREAK
Mar 14Wed	SPRING BREAK

Mar 16 Fri	SPRING BREAK
Mar 19 Mon	Chapter 4 – Civil Liberties
Mar 21 Wed	Chapter 4 – Civil Liberties ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE
Mar 23 Fri	Chapter 4/5 – Civil Liberties/Civil Rights
Mar 26 Mon	Chapter 5 – Civil Rights
Mar 28 Wed	Chapter 5 Civil Rights
Mar 30 Fri	Chapter 6 Public Opinion
Apr 2 Mon	Chapter 6 Public Opinion
Apr 4 Wed	Finish up Chapter 6/Chapter 7 – Political Participation
Apr 6 Fri	Chapter 7 – Political Participation
Apr 9 Mon	Chapter 7 – Political Participation
Apr 11 Wed	TEST THREE (covers chapters 4, 5, 6, 7)
Apr 13 Fri	Chapter 8 – Interest Groups
Apr 16 Mon	Chapter 8 – Interest Groups
Apr 18 Wed	Chapter 8 – Interest Groups
Apr 20 Fri	Chapter 9 – Parties and Political Campaigns
Apr 23 Mon	Chapter 9 – Parties and Political Campaigns
Apr 25 Wed	Chapter 9 – Parties and Political Campaigns
Apr 27 Fri	Chapter 10 – Media
Apr 30 Mon	Chapter 10 – Media
May 2 Wed	Chapter 10 – Media
May 4 Fri	TEST FOUR (covers chapters 8, 9, 10)