

# Course Syllabus

## GOV 310L: American Government

Spring 2012

M,W 4:00-5:30pm

MEZ 1.306

Unique # 38542

### **Professor Stephen Jessee**

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Office Hours: W 2-4, Th 2-3

Batts 4.128

### **Teaching Assistant:**

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Office Hours: M, W 2-3:30

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### **Course Description and Format**

This course provides an introduction to American government and politics. Topics include the structure of government, theories of electoral campaigns, public opinion and legislator behavior. Because of the size of the course, it will primarily be a lecture format, but I will also try to involve students through discussions of relevant topics. Students should feel free to ask questions if anything is unclear or if they would like further information on any topic.

While the course material is introductory in nature, I also hope that throughout the semester you will come to understand some of what it means to be a political scientist and to do modern political science research. With this aim, we will be discussing not only basic structures, rules and concepts in the American political system, but will also be looking at theories, hypotheses and evidence in the study of politics.

## Grades

The course will include four exams, which will likely be comprised of some mixture of multiple-choice, short answer and short essay questions. There will be no final exam and the exams will not be cumulative. Each exam will cover all material presented in lectures and assigned readings since the previous exam. All exams will be weighted equally in computing final grades (each exam will count for 25% of the final course grade). All exams will be in class in the regular lecture time and place. Students will have the entire 75 minute class period to complete each of the exams. No materials other than pen and pencil should be used during the exams. Students do not need to bring blue books to the exams.

Exam 1	Monday, 2/13
Exam 2	Wednesday, 3/7
Exam 3	Monday, 4/9
Exam 4	Wednesday, 5/2

The following grade cutoffs will be used to calculate final course grades:

93-100 points	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
Below 60	F

The professor reserves the right to adjust students' grades based on in-class behavior including participation, absences and disruptive or disrespectful actions.

## Laptops and Other Classroom Technology

Students are welcome to bring laptops to class to take notes. Any students using laptops in a distracting or inappropriate manner will receive one warning. A second offence will result in a loss of laptop privileges for the remainder of the semester.

**There is no reason that any student should have a cell phone, music player or video game device out during lecture. All such devices should be put away in pockets or bags before entering the classroom and kept there for the duration of the class.**

## Academic Honesty and Integrity

Issues of academic dishonesty will be taken very seriously and any finding of cheating or other unethical behavior will be pursued to the full extent possible under university policy. Students should consult the University of Texas Honor Code.

**THERE WILL BE NO MAKEUP EXAMS WITHOUT \*\*PRIOR\*\* WRITTEN CONSENT BY THE INSTRUCTOR.** Makeup exams will be granted only for valid medical or other serious reasons, defined at the professor's discretion. Students who miss exams and provide an excuse afterwards will **NOT** be granted a makeup and may be given zero percent on the exam in question.

## Special Needs

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/>

All students needing special accommodations must contact both the students with disabilities the teaching assistant for this course **at least two weeks prior to the examination** in order to assure special accommodations can be made. Students not taking action by this time may be required to take the exam in the standard time and place.

## Required Textbook

“The New American Democracy, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition (Alternate Edition)”, Fiorina, Peterson et al. Longman Publishing.

**NOTE:** This edition of the textbook does not contain the policy chapters (which we do not use) and is therefore cheaper than the standard edition. You are free to use the full version (7<sup>th</sup> Edition), but this will cost more and be identical except for the extra chapters which we will not be covering.

While the bulk of the readings will come from the main text, the instructor will also assign other materials such as scholarly journal articles and excerpts from other books, which will be announced in class or over email and posted on Blackboard.

We will also rely on the online Texas politics text from the College of Liberal Arts. This can be found at: <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu>

## Class Schedule

Professor may make changes to this schedule. Any changes will be announced in class. Unless otherwise stated, all chapter references are to the main textbook (Fiorina et al.).

- Wednesday, 1/18
  - First class: Introduction
- Monday, 1/23
  - Ch. 1: Democracy in the United States
- Wednesday, 1/25
  - Ch. 2: Establishing a Constitutional Democracy
- Monday, 1/30
  - Ch. 3: Federalism
- Wednesday, 2/1
  - Ch. 4: American Political Culture
- Monday, 2/6
  - Ch. 5: Public Opinion
- Wednesday, 2/8
  - Chapter 6: Individual Participation
- Monday, 2/13
  - **FIRST EXAM**
- Wednesday, 2/15
  - Ch. 7: Interest Group Participation in American Democracy
- Monday, 2/20
  - Ch. 8: Political Parties
- Wednesday, 2/22
  - Ch. 9: The Media
- Monday, 2/27
  - Ch. 10: Electing the President
- Wednesday, 2/29
  - Presidential Voting Continued
- Monday, 3/5
  - Ch. 11: Choosing the Congress
- Wednesday, 3/7
  - **SECOND EXAM**
- Monday 3/12
  - Spring Break

- Wednesday, 3/14
  - Spring Break
- Monday, 3/19
  - Ch. 12: The Congress and Its Work
- Wednesday, 3/21
  - Congress Readings 1 (posted on Blackboard)
- Monday, 3/26
  - Congress Readings 2 (posted on Blackboard)
- Wednesday, 3/28
  - Congress Readings Continued
- Monday, 4/2
  - Ch. 13: The Presidency: Powers and Practice
- Wednesday, 4/4
  - Ch. 14: The Bureaucracy
- Monday, 4/9
  - **THIRD EXAM**
- Wednesday, 4/11
  - Ch. 15: The Courts
- Monday, 4/16
  - Court Cases 1 (Readings on Blackboard)
- Wednesday, 4/18
  - Court Cases 2 (Readings on Blackboard)
- Monday, 4/23
  - Ch. 16: Civil Liberties
- Wednesday, 4/25
  - Ch. 17: Civil Rights
- Monday, 4/30
  - Courts and Cases (continued)
- Wednesday, 5/2
  - **FOURTH EXAM**