American Government
GOV 310L (38645)
The University of Texas at Austin
Tuesday & Thursday, 8-9:30AM
Mezes Hall 1.306

Spring 2013

# Professor

Dr. Samuel Workman
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# Course Description

This course provides an introduction to American politics. The course centers on the fundamental role played by the institutions of American government including Congress, the Presidency, Federal Judiciary, and the Bureaucracy in understanding political dynamics in the United States. The course also examines public opinion and participation as inputs to the institutions of American government, and the mediating role of organizations such as interest groups, the news media, and political parties. In addition to mastering basic facts about American government, the course will apply political science theories to the broader questions of democratic government and examine evidence assessing these theories. The course also makes connections between politics at the federal level of government and the political institutions and processes of the state of Texas.

# Pre-requisites

12 hours of college course-work and a passing score on the reading section on the THEA test. The course fulfills the first half of the legislative requirement for Government.

# Course Requirements

Students are required to attend each lecture and participate in class discussions. In addition, students should be prepared to discuss current events related to American politics. The best way to do this is browsing the New York Times or Washington Post online. Finally, students should also be prepared to discuss politics and current events relevant to Texas state politics. Students are also to complete supplemental readings as required and provided by the Professor. The required text for the course is *American Government: Power and Purpose* by Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere Brief 12th Edition. This text is available for purchase at the University Co- Op. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before each meeting of the course. In addition to a concern with the institutions and processes that shape public policy at the Federal level, the course will frequently draw comparisons to, and focus on, state government in Texas including its unique political institutions and political processes. To facilitate this discussion, students will

frequently be asked to become familiar with content maintained on the Texas Politics website at http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/. For the four exams, students need to purchase four blue books and a number two pencil.

# Grading

Grading for the course is based on four exams. Each exam will constitute 25 percent of the students grade. There will be no final examination during the University-scheduled finals week. Each exam is based equally on both the assigned readings and class lecture. This means that things will go drastically wrong for you if you do not read the assigned text(s), attend each class, and take good notes. This course will use plus/minus grading. Grades will not be curved and are not negotiable (do not even think about sending me that email). Attendance during exam sessions is required. Formal attendance for lecture sessions does not make up a portion of your grade. The grading scale is as follows:

| Letter Grade | Percentage | Letter Grade | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | $\geq 93$ | C | 73-76 |
| A- | 90-92 | C- | 70-72 |
| B+ | 87-89 | D+ | 67-69 |
| B | 83-86 | D | 63-66 |
| B- | 80-82 | D- | 60-62 |
| C+ | 77-79 | F | $<60$ |

# Makeup Exam Policy

Attendance is required at regularly scheduled exams. Do not miss regularly scheduled exams. You do not want to take the make-up exam. There will be one makeup exam offered at the end of the semester and students will be permitted to take this exam only under the most extreme and dire circumstances preventing the student from taking the regularly scheduled exam. Students will not be permitted to take the makeup exam without prior documentation and approval by the Professor. The makeup exam is not an optional exam. For illnesses, a Doctor's documentation must be provided. The form letter from University Health Services does not suffice to be granted a makeup exam. Students have one week to notify the Professor following missing an exam. Notifications later than this will not be granted a makeup exam. Students may make-up only one exam with no exceptions. Note that this means failure to take two or more exams results in grades of zero for the second, third, and fourth missed exam.

# Text & Materials

1. Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere. *American Government: Power and Purpose* Brief 12th Edition. New York: W.W. Norton.

2. Texas Politics. http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/

3. Other supplemental readings as selected by the Professor.
4. Four blue books and a number two pencil.

## Contacting the Professor

Read the syllabus. Most questions can be answer by referring to your syllabus. Students should address all questions first to the Teaching Assistants, and only then to the Professor. The Teaching Assistants are there to help students understand the material and field general course questions. In addition, I tend to check my email only once every 24 hours. Depending on when I check my email on a given day, the earliest time at which a response may be expected is within 24 hours. Please be aware that I also do not respond to emails on the weekend.

## Academic Dishonesty

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. During examinations, you must do your own work. Copying and collaboration with others is strictly prohibited. At a minimum, any collaborative behavior during the examinations will result in failure of the exam. A statement regarding UT Honor Code (or statement of ethics) and an explanation or example of what constitutes plagiarism (Link to University Honor Code: http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html).

## University of Texas 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.

## Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd. If you require accommodation, it is your responsibility to bring your note to me early in the semester so we can work out arrangements. It is also the student's responsibility to schedule exams with 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 or an examination 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.

## Emergency Evacuation

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.

## Course Schedule

| Date | Topic | Reading |
|---|---|---|
| January 15 | Syllabus & Overview | |
| January 17 | The Myth's of American Government | |
| January 22 | Introduction & Overview | Lowi et al, Ch. 1 |
| January 24 | Fundamental Tensions of American Government | |
| January 29 | Structure of the American System of Government | Lowi et al, Ch. 2 & 3 |
| January 31 | Special Topics in American Politics | |
| February 5 | Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, & Law | Lowi et al, Ch. 4 |
| February 7 | **First Exam** | Blue Book & No. 2 Pencil |
| February 12 | Introducing American Political Institutions | |
| February 14 | Congress the Institution | Lowi et al, Ch. 5 |
| February 19 | Congressional Decision-making | |
| February 21 | Development & Management of the Presidency | Lowi et al, Ch. 6 |
| February 26 | Presidential Governance & Policymaking | |
| February 28 | Interbranch Politics-The U.S. Budget | |
| March 5 | The Federal Bureaucracy | Lowi et al, Ch. 7 |
| March 7 | **Second Exam** | Blue Book & No.2 Pencil |
| March 19 | The Federal Judiciary | Lowi et al, Ch. 8 |
| March 21 | Organized Interests | Lowi et al, Ch. 12 |
| March 26 | The Media | Lowi et al, Ch. 9 |
| March 28 | Political Parties | Lowi et al, Ch. 11 |
| April 2 | Public Opinion | Lowi et al, Ch. 9 |
| April 4 | **Third Exam** | Blue Book & No.2 Pencil |
| April 9 | Introduction to Public Policy | Lowi et al, Ch. 13 |
| April 11 | Stages of the Policy Process | Lowi et al, Ch. 14 |
| April 16 | Economic Policy | |
| April 18 | Social Welfare Policy | |
| April 23 | The Politics of Public Risks Policy | |
| April 25 | The Politics of Bureaucratic Reform | |
| April 30 | **Fourth Exam** | Blue Book & No.2 Pencil |
| May 2 | **Makeup Exam** | Blue Book & No.2 Pencil |