

# American Government

GOV 310L 38361

Fall 2010

**Instructor:** Shannon Bow (O'Brien), PhD  
**Meeting Time:** MWF 11am-noon  
**Location:** WAG 201  
**Office Hours:** 3.212 Mezes. 232-7235 (but I really prefer email)  
Monday, Wednesday 1:45-3:45 pm  
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 11am 310 American Government class in the subject line. I am teaching two 310 courses this semester so it will help to locate you faster or answer questions more effectively*

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.

## 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:

**The Struggle for Democracy**, Greenberg, Edward and Benjamin Page, 2008. 9<sup>th</sup> edition: Longman. (I am assigning just the book for this class, not the online supplement material)

I also 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 based on the following:*

<b>Test 1</b>	Sept 22 (Wed):	20%
<b>Test 2</b>	Oct 18 (Mon):	20%
<b>Test 3</b>	Nov 8 (Mon):	25%
<b>Test 4 (final exam)</b>	Dec 8 (WED) 9am-noon:	25%

## Paper Assignments: Total Weight is 10%, or approximately 3.33% each

Paper Assignment 1	Sept 29 (Wed)
Paper Assignment 2	Oct 13 (Wed)
Paper Assignment 3	Oct 27 (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 *three* 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 a Supreme Court Justices.

Assignment Three 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.

### **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, 3. 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 3<sup>rd</sup> exam if you wish). If my office hours do not work for your schedule but you want to see your test, let me know and we can try to work out a time to meet.

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**

Though obvious, cheating is not allowed on any assignments or exams.

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.

The ONLY exceptions are for students who use laptops during lectures for **note taking only** and students who need such devices because of a disability (these students are only allowed to use devices to facilitate learning and are forbidden to use them for scholastic 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. For further information, visit the Student Judicial Services web site <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>.

### **Blackboard Stuff**

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.

The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic adjustments for qualified students with disabilities. Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students at 471-6259 as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. For more information, contact that Office, or TTY at 471-4641.

*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.

### **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.

<b>Aug 25 Wed</b>	Introduction to the Course – Pass out Syllabi
<b>Aug 27 Fri</b>	Chapter 1 – Democracy and American Politics
<b>Aug 30 Mon</b>	Chapter 2 – Constitution
<b>Sept 1 Wed</b>	<b>Independent Reading Day</b>
<b>Sept 3 Fri</b>	<b>Independent Reading Day</b>
<b>Sept 6 Mon</b>	<b>LABOR DAY – NO CLASS</b>
<b>Sept 8 Wed</b>	Chapter 2 – Constitution
<b>Sept 10 Fri</b>	Chapter 2 & Federalist 10 (back of textbook)
<b>Sept 13 Mon</b>	Chapters 3 – Federalism
<b>Sept 15 Wed</b>	Chapter 3 – Federalism & Federalist 51 (back of textbook)
<b>Sept 17 Fri</b>	Chapter 4 – Structural Foundations
<b>Sept 20 Mon</b>	Chapter 4 – Structural Foundations
<b>Sept 22 Wed</b>	<b>TEST ONE (covers Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4)</b>
<b>Sept 24 Fri</b>	Chapter 11- Congress
<b>Sept 27 Mon</b>	Chapter 11- Congress
<b>Sept 29 Wed</b>	Chapter 11- Congress <b>ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE</b>
<b>Oct 1 Fri</b>	Chapter 12 – Presidency
<b>Oct 4 Mon</b>	Chapter 12 – Presidency
<b>Oct 6 Wed</b>	Chapter 13 – Bureaucracy
<b>Oct 8 Fri</b>	Chapter 13 – Bureaucracy
<b>Oct 11 Mon</b>	Chapter 14 – Courts

<b>Oct 13 Wed</b>	Chapter 14 – Courts <b>ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE</b>
<b>Oct 15 Fri</b>	Chapter 14 – Courts/Catchup
<b>Oct 18 Mon</b>	<b>TEST TWO (covers Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14)</b>
<b>Oct 20 Wed</b>	Chapter 5 – Public Opinion
<b>Oct 22 Fri</b>	Chapter 5 – Public Opinion
<b>Oct 25 Mon</b>	Chapter 6 – News Media
<b>Oct 27 Wed</b>	Chapter 6 – News Media <b>ASSIGNMENT THREE DUE</b>
<b>Oct 29 Fri</b>	Chapter 7 - Interest Groups and Business Corps
<b>Nov 1 Mon</b>	Chapter 7 - Interest Groups and Business Corps
<b>Nov 3 Wed</b>	Chapter 8 – Social Movements
<b>Nov 5 Fri</b>	Chapter 8 – Social Movements
<b>Nov 8 Mon</b>	<b>TEST THREE (covers chapters 5, 6, 7, 8)</b>
<b>Nov 10 Wed</b>	Chapter 9 – Political Parties
<b>Nov 12 Fri</b>	Chapter 9 – Political Parties
<b>Nov 15 Mon</b>	Chapter 10 – Participation, Elections, Voting
<b>Nov 17 Wed</b>	Chapter 10 – Participation, Elections, Voting
<b>Nov 19 Fri</b>	Chapter 10 – Participation, Elections, Voting / Chapter 15 – Civil Rights
<b>Nov 22 Mon</b>	Chapter 15 – Civil Rights
<b>Nov 24 Wed</b>	Chapter 15 – Civil Rights/ Chapter 16 – Civil Liberties
<b>Nov 26 Fri</b>	<b>THANKSGIVING- No Class</b>
<b>Nov 29 Mon</b>	Chapter 16 – Civil Liberties
<b>Dec 2 Wed</b>	Chapter 16 – Civil Liberties
<b>Dec 8 WED</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM WED December 8, 9am-noon ROOM TBA</b>