

POLS 2311: Government of the United States

Fall 2020

Instructor: Dr. Kayla Canelo

Email: kayla.canelo@uta.edu

Office: TBD

Office Hours: Thursdays from 1-2 p.m. on Microsoft Teams and by appointment

Time and Location of Class: Remotely via Canvas

Political Science Department Phone Number: 817-272-2991

Canvas: <https://uta.instructure.com/>

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions and processes of American government at the federal level. Students will first gain an understanding of the founding of the Constitution and the general function and responsibilities of the three branches of government. Next, students will learn about the importance of citizen interaction with government and will gain an understanding of how citizen preferences are expressed and whether and how the government responds to them. Finally, students will work to sharpen their critical thinking skills by evaluating U.S. politics. Through this, students will learn to analyze the quality of information by differentiating between statements based on assumptions compared to those based on facts and will be exposed to diverse perspectives in order to gain an understanding of the different values emphasized in American politics.

Intended Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Communicate a thorough factual understanding of the structure and operation of the American political system.
2. Understand fundamental elements of the U.S. Constitution
3. Demonstrate knowledge of the central questions, theories, approaches, and findings political scientists use to understand American politics.
4. Comprehend and critique contemporary debates in American politics.

Required Materials:

Textbook: Geer, Herrera, Schiller, and Segal. *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government* 4th Enhanced Edition. Cengage.

ISBN: 9781337799805

- Please note that there are several options for purchasing this textbook. I encourage you to shop around for the best deal. This includes renting, purchasing used, or purchasing electronically.
- Please refer to the semester calendar for required reading, as we do not read the chapters in order.

Additional Readings: Additional required readings are assigned below and will be made available on Canvas. The readings listed for that day should be completed before class.

Technology Requirement:

Since this course is administered online via Canvas, you are responsible for having a computer with internet access and sound and access to the features used on Canvas. Exams require the use of the LockDown Browser.

Course Modality

This course is online and fully asynchronous meaning there are no live sessions. The semester calendar includes weekly topics and assignment due dates. The COVID-19 situation is rapidly changing, and this syllabus is subject to change. Any and all changes will be announced in Canvas. Please make sure you log in regularly to keep up with course details, as you are responsible for being aware of any changes.

Assignments and Grading:

Overall course grades will be composed of the following elements:

Exams 80% of your overall grade

Midterm Exam #1: 25% (125 points)

Midterm Exam #2: 25% (125 points)

Final Exam: 30% (150 points)

There will be three multiple-choice examinations administered on Canvas. Midterms are not cumulative, and exams will cover any content discussed in class, the assigned reading, and current events. Exams cannot be made up unless there is a documented medical emergency or death in the family. Make up exams are subject to include short answer and essay questions. This assignment will assess your comprehension of SLOs 1, 2, & 3.

Research Letter 15% of your overall grade (75 points)

This course requires a research letter worth 15% of your overall grade. Here you will choose a topic that is important to you and write a 1-2 paged letter to any U.S. Senator or member of the House of Representatives from Texas. This letter must be supported with evidence from reliable external sources and will be based on topics we cover in class. Additional information and requirements will be posted to Canvas early in the semester. This assignment will assess your comprehension of SLOs 1, 2, 3, & 4.

The research letter will be penalized a full letter grade per 24 hours it is late. After 48 hours late submissions will not be accepted.

Plagiarism Quiz 5% of your overall grade (25 points)

During the first two weeks of the semester there will be a module provided by the UTA Library that covers plagiarism. Following this, you will take a plagiarism quiz worth 5% of your overall grade.

Extra Credit

Extra credit quizzes and discussion activities that cover the required reading and module content will be made available throughout the semester. These assignments are worth up to 5% of extra credit in total (5 @ 5 points each). These assignments will appear with the modules and are not listed in the semester calendar.

Grading Scale:

- A: 450 – 500 points (90+%)
- B: 400 – 449 points (80 – 89%)
- C: 350 – 399 points (70-79%)
- D: 300 – 349 points (60-69%)
- F: 299 points and below (59% or below)

Important Dates & Deadlines:

- September 7th: Labor Day Holiday
- November 6th: (4 p.m.) - Last Day to Add/Drop Classes
- November 25th- 27th: Thanksgiving Holiday
- December 8th: Last Day of Classes
- December 10th – 16th: Final Exams

Policies:

Attendance:

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required but attendance is a critical indicator of student success. Each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. Given this is course will be administered remotely, I do not formally take attendance. However, it is essential that you log into the course regularly, review the content each week, and participate in assignments. While UT Arlington does not require instructors to take attendance in their courses, the U.S. Department of Education requires that the University have a mechanism in place to mark when Federal Student Aid recipients "begin attendance in a course." UT Arlington instructors will report when students begin attendance in a course as part of the final grading process. Specifically, when assigning a student a grade of F, faculty report must the last date a student attended their class based on evidence such as a test, participation in a class project or presentation, or an engagement online via Canvas. This date is reported to the Department of Education for federal financial aid recipients.

Late & Make Up Work: Exams cannot be made up unless there is a documented medical emergency or death in the family. The research letter will be penalized one letter grade per 24 hours it is late. *Assignments that are more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.*

Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be reported. More information on UTA's policies pertaining to Academic Integrity can be accessed here: <http://www.uta.edu/conduct/academic-integrity/index.php>.

Special Accommodations: All UTA instructors are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a

letter certified by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD). Please contact me within the first two weeks of class, if possible. All conversations on this matter will remain confidential. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting: **The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD)** www.uta.edu/disability or calling 817-272-3364 or **Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS)** www.uta.edu/caps/ or calling 817-272-3671.

Only students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored.

Expectations of Behavior:

Students are expected to be courteous. In political science courses we at times discuss sensitive content and issues that not everyone agrees on. It is important that everyone is respectful of the views of others. Abusive or disrespectful language will not be tolerated. It is very easy to misinterpret what someone says online, so be mindful of this when completing tasks throughout the course.

The Student Code of Conduct also applies in this course. By staying enrolled in this course, you are agreeing to the terms of this syllabus.

Drop Policy:

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

Title IX Policy:

The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to maintaining a learning and working environment that is free from discrimination based on sex in accordance with Title IX of the Higher Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs or activities; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which prohibits sex discrimination in employment; and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act). Sexual misconduct is a form of sex discrimination and will not be tolerated. For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX or contact Ms. Jean Hood, Vice President and Title IX Coordinator at (817) 272-7091 or jmhood@uta.edu.

Non-Discrimination Policy:

The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran

status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos.

Campus Carry:

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. Under the new law, openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/news/info/campus-carry/>

Student Feedback Survey:

At the end of each term, students enrolled in face-to-face and online classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” are directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback via the SFS database is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. Students’ anonymity will be protected to the extent that the law allows. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly encouraged to participate. Data from SFS is also used for faculty and program evaluations. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Electronic Communication:

UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at [OIT: Student MavMail](#). Emails sent from personal accounts will not receive a response. *Please make sure your emails follow proper etiquette by including a formal greeting, the course you are enrolled in, and by beginning the message with the main reason for reaching out. This will help generate good habits for sending professional emails when you enter the workforce!*

Course Modality:

This course is online and asynchronous meaning we do not meet in “real time” and therefore you can access the content and complete the assignments on your own time (note that there is a semester calendar with due dates, so it is essential you are reviewing the material each week).

The semester calendar includes weekly topics and assignment due dates. The COVID-19 situation is rapidly changing, and this syllabus is subject to change. Any and all changes will be announced in Canvas. Please make sure you log in regularly to keep up with course details, as you are responsible for being aware of any changes. I encourage you to ask questions! Information on office hours is included above. If you have questions on content etc., please feel free to send me a message on Canvas.

Grading Questions: All questions regarding re-grading of written assignments must be submitted in writing and include reasonable justification for consideration. Note that any re-grading of papers could result in a change of grade (higher or lower).

Grade Grievances: Any appeal of a grade in this course must follow the procedures and deadlines for grade-related grievances as published in the current University Catalog.

Student Support Services: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include [tutoring](#), [major-based learning centers](#), developmental education, [advising and mentoring](#), personal counseling, and [federally funded programs](#). For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>.

Final Review Week: for semester-long courses, a period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week unless specified in the class syllabus. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Classroom recordings – With the exception of disability-related accommodations of which I have been informed, I do NOT consent to ANY recording of our class meetings and redistribution of content for this course is not allowed.

Semester Calendar:

* I reserve the right to make changes to this schedule.

| Week/Date | Topic | Reading | Assignments Due |
|------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Week 1: 8/27 | Introduction to the Course | | |
| Week 2: 9/1 & 9/3 | Introduction to American Politics | Chapter 1 | Plagiarism Quiz Due 9/4 |
| Week 3: 9/8 & 9/10 | The Founding and the Constitution | Chapter 2 The U.S. Constitution (Appendix B of textbook) | |
| Week 4: | Federalism | Chapter 3 | |

| Week/Date | Topic | Reading | Assignments Due |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 9/15 & 9/17 | | | |
| Week 5: 9/22 & 9/24 | Civil Liberties | Chapter 4 Bill of Rights and Constitutional Amendments (in Appendix B of Textbook) | |
| Week 6: 9/29 & 10/1 | Civil Rights | Chapter 5 | MIDTERM #1 10/1 |
| Week 7: 10/6 & 10/8 | Congress | Chapter 12 Daniel M. Butler and David W. Nickerson. 2011. "Can Learning Constituency Opinion Affect How Legislators Vote? Results from a Field Experiment." <i>Quarterly Journal of Political Science</i> : 6(1):55-83. | |
| Week 8: 10/13 & 10/15 | Presidency | Chapter 13 | Research Letter Due 10/16 |
| Week 9: 10/20 & 10/22 | Bureaucracy | Chapter 14 | |
| Week 10: 10/27 & 10/29 | The Federal Courts | Chapter 15 Wahlbeck, Paul J., James F. Spriggs, and Forrest Maltzman. 1998. "Marshalling the Court: Bargaining and Accommodation on the United States Supreme Court." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 42(1):294- 315. | |
| Week 11: 11/3 & 11/5 | Political Parties | Chapter 9 | MIDTERM #2 11/5 |
| Week 12: 11/10 & 11/12 | Interest Groups | Chapter 8 Collins, Paul Jr., 2004. "Friends of the Court: Examining the Influence of Amicus Curiae Participation in U.S. Supreme Court Litigation." <i>Law and Society Review</i> 38(4): 807-832. | |
| Week 13: 11/17 & 11/19 | Participation and Voting | Chapters 10 and 11 | |

| Week/Date | Topic | Reading | Assignments Due |
|----------------------------------|--|---|------------------------|
| Week 14: 11/24 & 11/26 | Thanksgiving Holiday | | |
| Week 15: 12/1 & 12/3 | Public Opinion | Chapter 6 Schuldt, Jonathon P., Sara H. Konrath, and Norbert Schwarz. 2011. "Global warming" or "climate change"? Whether the planet is warming depends on question wording." <i>Public Opinion Quarterly</i> 75(1):115-124. | |
| Week 16: 12/8 | The Media | Chapter 7 | |
| 12/10 | FINAL EXAM DUE 12/10 BY 4:30 P.M. | | FINAL EXAM |