

**Government 310L**  
**American Government**  
38680

Spring 2013  
MWF 2-2:50  
MEZ B1.306

Professor Albertson  
Office: Batts 4.124  
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Office Hours:  
Monday 10-12  
Wednesday 1-2

This course provides an introduction to American politics. The course topics include an introduction to America's constitutional foundations, the relationship between the mass public and politics (public opinion and participation), the role of intermediary organizations (interest groups, media, parties), and the function of institutions (Congress, Presidency, Courts). In addition to mastering a set of basic facts about American government, students will learn theories addressing "big questions" in American politics, and will explore critical assessments of the evidence brought to bear on these questions. Some of these topics will also be examined in the context of Texas politics.

**Teaching Assistants:**

Dana El Kurd  
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**Readings:**

Fiorina, Peterson, Johnson and Mayer. 2011. The New American Democracy, Alternate 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Pearson. (NAD)

Supplemental readings available on Blackboard.

One note of the supplemental reading: They are a mix of traditional political science and opinion pieces. Please note that opinion pieces are included because they apply ideas from political science to a contemporary issue in an interesting way.

**Assessment:**

90%: 3 in class exams (30% each)  
10%: 5 in class writing exercises (2% each)

Midterm and Final Exams:

These 3 exams will each count for 30% of your final grade. The final exam is NOT cumulative. Exams will contain multiple-choice questions and/or identification of terms.

In Class Writing Exercises:

Several times during the course I will pose a question to the class and ask you to get out a piece of paper and write a paragraph (1/2 page). These are opportunities for you to express your opinion about a question relevant to our course and for me to learn more about your ideas. A thoughtful response

will earn the writer full credit (2 points), a messy, incomplete response will earn half credit (1 point), and no response will earn no credit. Students will earn a maximum of 10 points this way, for 10% of their total grade. The dates for these writing exercises will not be announced in advance. I understand that your lives are busy and complicated. However, I cannot offer “make ups” for this portion of the course. Therefore, I will offer at least 7 opportunities to earn these 10 points. Students who write in class exercises for more than 5 will receive a point extra credit on the final for each additional assignment (maximum 2).

Extra Credit: I encourage students to learn more about politics by attending some of the many political events on campus, and offer extra credit for students who 1) attend the event and 2) write up a one page, double spaced report. The report should describe what you’ve learned at the event, and explain whether it complements or challenges anything you’ve learned so far in class.

Eligible events: I will announce political events on campus that are eligible for this opportunity. If you hear about something happening on campus, great! Let me know in advance and I will announce it to the class. Political events that have not been announced to the entire class are NOT eligible as an extra credit opportunity. Events with a specific political agenda are eligible, and I do not restrict events on the basis of political content.

Extra credit limit: Please attend as many events as you’d like. However, each report is worth 2 points, and I limit extra credit points to 2 per exam.

Grading:

A	93-100%	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	Below 60%

**Class Policies:**

Power Point Slides: Power Point slides will be posted on Blackboard.

Review Sheets: I’ll post a review sheet for each chapter on Blackboard. These are meant to help you focus your studies on the most important topics -- **\*\*WARNING\*\*** simply memorizing a short definition for each of the terms WILL NOT leave you prepared for the exam.

Disability Accommodations: 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/>. If you require accommodation, it is your responsibility to bring your note to me EARLY in the semester so we can work our arrangements.

Academic Integrity: Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student. Plagiarism is using someone else’s language without quotations and attribution or using someone else’s idea (even in different language) without attribution. We expect that you will know and follow the University’s policies on cheating and plagiarism. If you are unsure about the

standards of academic integrity, it is your responsibility to ask the professor or the t.a. Any suspected cases of academic misconduct will be handled according to University regulations. A copy of the University's Honor Code can be found here: <http://registrar.utexas.edu/catalogs/gi09-10/ch01/index.html>.

Make-up Policy: Full credit make-up exams will only be allowed for (1) University sanctioned events (verification required) (2) extraordinary circumstances (verification -- e.g., physician's note -- required) or (3) religious observances. Make-up exams are any exams taken before or after the scheduled exam time. Make-up exams requested for any other reason will be decided on a case by case basis, and will be subject to a 10% grade penalty. I do not approve make-up exams under any circumstances for vacations or early departure for breaks. Make-up exams will be given within one week of the exam and will be offered at only one time. If you know you are going to miss an exam, notify me as soon as possible BEFORE the exam – no later than 14 days prior to the exam date. Students who miss exams without prior notification will face a 20% grade penalty, and will be given the chance to participate in the make-up ONLY if they contact me before the make-up administration.

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.

Professor's Pet Peeves:

- #1) Cheating: I haven't caught a UT student cheating in my 310 class yet -- don't be the first!
- #2) Talking during lecture: I encourage you to engage in class discussion - ask questions, and volunteer when I ask questions. However, I ask that you do not engage in side discussions during lecture.

**Course Schedule:**

January 14	Introduction
January 16	NAD, Chapter 1: Democracy in the United States
January 18	NAD, Chapter 2: Establishing a Constitutional Democracy
January 21	No Class, University Holiday.
January 23	Federalist Papers: 10, 51 (abbreviated versions are available in the appendix of NAD)
January 25	NAD, Chapter 3: Federalism: Division of Power Among National, State, and Local Governments
January 28	Rauch, Jonathan, "A More Perfect Union: how the founding fathers would have handled gay marriage."
January 30	NAD, Chapter 4: American Political Culture

February 1 Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone*, selections

February 4 NAD, Chapter 16: Civil Liberties

February 6 NAD, Chapter 17: Civil Rights

February 8 Lincoln, The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions  
King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail

February 11 Review Session

February 13 **EXAM 1, IN CLASS**

February 15 NAD, Chapter 12: The Congress and Its Work

February 18 Mayhew, David R. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, selections

February 20 NAD, Chapter 13: The Presidency: Powers and Practice

February 22 Samuel Kernell, *Going Public*, selections

February 25 NAD, Chapter 14: The Bureaucracy

February 27 NAD, Chapter 15: The Judiciary

March 1 Bush v. Gore

March 4 Olson, Mancur, *The Logic of Collective Action*, selections

March 5 NAD, Chapter 7: Interest Group Participation in American Democracy

March 8 “Last Man Standing”

Break

March 18 NAD, Chapter 8: Political Parties

March 20 NAD, Chapter 8: Political Parties – may be subbed for additional parties reading.

March 22 Review Session

March 25 **EXAM 2, IN CLASS**

March 27 NAD, Chapter 5: Public Opinion

March 29 Bartels, Larry, “Is Popular Rule Possible?”

April 1 Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink*, “The Warren Harding Error: Why we fall for tall, dark and handsome men.”

April 3 NAD, Chapter 9: The Media

April 5 Pew Report: Public Knowledge of Current Affairs Little Changed by News and Information Revolutions

April 8 “The Persuaders”

April 10 Hillygus & Shields, “*The Persuadable Voter*” chapter 3

April 12 No Class – Professor is out of town for a conference.

April 15 NAD, Chapter 6: Individual Participation

April 17 NAD, Chapter 6: Individual Participation

April 19 Wattenberg, Martin P. *Where Have All the Voters Gone?*, The New Generation Gap.

April 22 Why Iowa? Selections.

April 24 NAD, Chapter 10: Electing the President  
April 26 NAD, Chapter 10: Electing the President  
  
April 29 NAD, Chapter 11: Choosing the Congress  
May 1 Review Session  
May 3 **EXAM 3, IN CLASS**