

University of North Texas – Dallas

SYLLABUS

Fall 2015

American Government 1040.002.826.864

Saturday 9:00 – 12:00

Fall 2015

Professor: Levi H. Davis
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Dallas, Texas 75241

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Also available by appointment

Description: This course is an introduction to Government and politics through the study of the political theory, constitutional practice, and legal history of the United States of America and the State of Texas. As a citizen or resident of U.S.A. there are very few subjects that are of greater importance for your future. As we discuss various topics this semester, your opinions are welcome as long as you are prepared to have them critiqued by others.

Office Hours:

Office hours will be set after the first day of class. I will try to maximize my availability to students. Office hours will be posted on the course Web page. There are no dedicated hours for each class – first come is first served. Making an appointment will guarantee you access at the times that fit your schedule.

Syllabus: This syllabus is not an unchangeable contract and *assignments may be altered* if circumstances require.

Required Text:

Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics. Published by W.W. Norton & Company. (Anthony Champayne – Univ. of TX at Dallas & Edward J. Hargham - Univ. of TX at Dallas)

The American Political System. Published by W.W. Norton & Company, Ken Kollman, University of Michigan.

Course Goals or Overview:

Learning Objectives/Outcomes: At the end of this course, the student will:

1. Be able to discuss the different approaches taken by the framers of the United States and Texas constitutions and the motivations behind the structure of each charter.
2. Demonstrate the ability to write cogently about major issues in American and state government and public responses to those initiatives.
3. Define roles and processes used in governing institutions in Texas and the United States.

4. Identify past, current and future issues of American and Texas government, including differences and similarities in state and federal approaches to major policy initiatives.

General Education Objectives:

1. The course is designed to enhance critical thinking through inquiry and analysis and the creative linking of disparate or similar concepts.
2. The course is designed to enhance written, oral and reading skills to promote communication.
3. The course is designed to ensure UNT Dallas graduates are socially responsible, interculturally competent, and civically engaged through enhanced knowledge of local and global governments and issues, and through various culture-based approaches underlying government institutions and policy.
4. The course promotes personal responsibility through discussions of ethical problems and reasoning in the public sphere.
5. Taken together, these general education objectives are designed to achieve the ultimate goal of the university, to provide a foundation and skills for you to continue learning long after you have left the university.

Electronics: Lap-top Computers, Hand-Held Tablets, Cellular Phones, and other similar electronic devices are **not allowed** in class without prior permission from the Professor or Teaching Assistants.

Annoying Things: No Newspapers, hats, or noisy gum.

Class Discussion: Questions and comments are always welcome in this class. Please be courteous with your fellow classmates. You are allowed and encouraged to express your opinion on the condition that you understand other classmates will disagree with it.

Grading Matrix:

| Instrument | Value (points or percentages) | Total |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| Midterm exam 2 | 15 percent | 15 |
| Final exam | 20 percent | 35 |
| • Issue Presentations | 20 percent | 55 |
| Chapter and public affairs quizzes | 15 percent | 70 |
| Class participation | 10 percent | 80 |
| • Class Debates | 20 percent | <u>100</u> |
| • These Assignments are Team Projects | | |
| Total: | | 100 Percent |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| A | 90 - 100 |
| B | 90 - 89 |
| C | 70 - 79 |
| D | 60 - 69 |
| F | Less than 60 |

Assignments

Week 1: August 29

- Introduction
- The American Political System (APS), Pages 1-20 in Textbook I

Week 2: September 5

- The American Political System (APS)
- Chapter 1 Introduction
- Chapter 2 The Constitution

Week 3: September 12

- Chapter 3 Federalism (APS)

Week 4: September 19

- Chapter 5 Congress (APS)

Week 5: September 26

- Chapter 6 The Presidency (APS)

Week 6: October 3

- Chapter 7 The Bureaucracy (APS)
- Mid Term Exam Review

Week 7: October 10

- Chapter 8 The Judiciary
- Mid Term Exam

Week 8: October 17

- Chapter 12 Political Parties (APS)

Week 9: October 24

- Class Presentations

Week 10: October 31

- Chapter 13 Elections and Campaigns (APS)

Week 11: November 7

- Chapter 1 Governing Texas Text (II)
- Chapter 3 Governing Texas; The Texas Constitution

Week 12 November 14

- Chapter 4 and Chapter 5

Week 13 November 21

- Chapter 13 Local Governments in Texas
- Chapter 7 Texas Legislature and Executive Boards
- Final Exam Review

Week 14: November 28

- No Class (Thanksgiving Holidays)

Week 15: December 5

- Comprehensive Final

Appendix

Learning Outcomes: Students who complete this course will be able to

- Explain the origins, development, and effects of the constitution of US and Texas;
- Explain the dynamic relationship between the three branches of government;
- Explain the process of recognizing civil rights and civil liberties from the time of the American founding to contemporary politics;
- Explain the effect of interest groups on American politics;
- Identify the institutional constraints and impact upon the selection and election of government officials;
- Recognize the stages of the policy making process;
- Evaluate the need for governmental regulation; explain and critique select topics of U.S. domestic policy and foreign policy.

Attendance: Your attendance in this class will be recorded and function as a large portion of your participation grade. More than two unexcused absences could result in being dropped from the course. Excused absences are defined by the UNT Registrar.

Religious Holidays: The observance of your personal Religious Holidays will be recognized as excused absences.

Make-Up Exams: You will only be allowed to make up an exam with a University excused absence.

Missed Assignments: A one letter grade penalty will be assessed for each day after an assignment is due. Exceptions will be made for excused absences if approved by the UNT Registrar.

Disability: If you require an accommodation for a disability, you must provide me with documentation from UNT's ODA before I can assist you.

- The Political Science Department cooperates with the Office of Disability Accommodation to make reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request on or before the fourth class day.

Plagiarism and Cheating: The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying others' tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one's own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty. Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of "F" on the assignment with the possibility of an F in the class. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary course work may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Undergraduate Studies Committee. These committees, acting as agents of the Department Chair, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if they determine that the case warrants it. In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case. Students may appeal a decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.

Withdrawal: Students wishing to withdraw must notify the Registrar's Office by completing a Petition for Course Drop. The last date to withdraw without instructor consent is **September 9, 2015**.

Grade Disputes: If a student wishes to dispute a grade, he or she must do so by e-mail within **7 days** of the assignment being graded. The email must contain the following: a) the precise reason/question which is supposedly in error and b) a citation for evidence of the answer you say is correct (Text book page, or link to reliable website) and c) be sent from a UNT sponsored address (either blackboard or your university email account). Merely "wanting" or "needing" a higher grade is not a sufficient reason.

Extra Credit: TBA

Remember: *"Whence is thy learning? Hath thy toil o'er books consumed the midnight oil?"*
Author: John Gay Shepard, a Philosopher, 1728