

Government of the United States (POLS: 2311)

Fall 2026

Mondays and Wednesdays 1:00 - 2:20 PM in [Nedderman Hall](#), room 100

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Teaching Assistants

- **Jake Flowers:** jmf3765@mavs.uta.edu

For questions about the course, please reach out to the teaching assistants.

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the core concepts of American (US) government and politics. The emphasis of this course will be placed on approaching topics associated with government and politics as *social scientists*; therefore, this course will be organized around social science concepts and methods.

The course consists of three parts:

Part I: The Constitutional Order and the American Political System

The first part of the course provides a foundational understanding of the system of government in the United States, including the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and its origins, the US system of federalism, civil liberties, civil rights, and political culture.

Part II: Formal Institutions

The second part of the course examines the formal institutions of the US federal government, including Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the courts. We end this part of the course with a discussion of the federal budget.

Part III: Individual Agency and Mediating Institutions

Finally, in the third part of the course we discuss individual agency and actions in the US context. In this section, we will discuss public opinion and political participation. Building up from individuals, we then move to mediating institutions, which are institutions that exist between individuals and the government. These include political parties, elections and campaigns, and interest groups.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the central principles, institutions, procedures, and decision-making processes of the American political system.

2. Evaluate the basic strengths and weaknesses of the American political system through the application of political concepts and ideas.
3. Relate historical events and/or developments to contemporary political issues, debates, and outcomes in the United States.
4. Develop an analytical, social science disposition toward American politics.

Course Information

[Canvas](#) is the course management software we will use for this class. It will be used to provide the syllabus, class materials, and grades for each assignment, which will be regularly posted. Check [Canvas](#) regularly.

Readings and Required Texts

The following book is **required**. It can be purchased at the [UTA Bookstore](#).

- Wilson, James, John DiIulio Jr., Meena Bose, and Matthew Levendusky. 2025. *American Government: Institutions & Policies*. 18th ed. Cengage Learning.
- Additional Readings:
 - [The Declaration of Independence](#)
 - [The Constitution](#)
 - [Madison: Federalist 10](#)
 - [Madison: Federalist 51](#)
 - [Madison: Federalist 55](#)
 - [Madison: Federalist 62](#)
 - [Hamilton: Federalist 68, 70, 72](#)
 - [Hamilton: Federalist 78](#)
 - [Introduction to the Federal Budget Process](#)

Technology Policy

You may bring a laptop or tablet to class; however, during class lectures and discussions, please put away your computer, phone, and tablet to ensure a focused learning environment. Tablets are allowed if you are taking notes with an Apple Pencil, stylus, or similar device. *You should take notes by hand, using a pen and paper.* [You learn better that way.](#) Also see [Why You Should Stop Bringing Your Laptop to Class](#). I recommend taking notes using the [Cornell Method](#). I will consider exceptions if you send me an email explaining why you need a laptop to take notes in class.

Please keep cell phones stored and remove earphones or AirPods from your ears during class.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be taken for each class session using aPlus+ attendance in [Canvas](#). *Each class session is worth four points.* Attendance will be taken at different times during class, and you must be present when attendance is taken to receive the points.

Late Work Policy

Late work will not be accepted. Make-up exams are available only if 1) you let me know beforehand, or 2) a true emergency occurs that is beyond your control.

Extra Credit

There will be no opportunities for extra credit in this course.

AI Use

In this course, the focus is on developing independent critical thinking and mastering subject-specific content. To ensure that all submitted work accurately reflects personal understanding and original thought, **the use of Generative AI (GenAI) tools in completing assignments or assessments is strictly prohibited.**

This policy supports our commitment to academic integrity and the direct measurement of each student's learning against the course's Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Any work found to be generated by AI will be subject to academic review.

Course Requirements and Grading

Performance in this course will be evaluated based on quizzes, two exams, a comprehensive final exam, and class attendance. Points will be distributed as follows:

Assignment	Possible Points
Quizzes (10 at 20 points each)	200 (total)
Exam 1	100
Exam 2	100
Final Exam	200
Attendance	100
Total	700

Letter grades will be based on the earned percentage of possible points. The grading scale:

Earned %	Letter Grade
90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Students are expected to track their performance throughout the semester, which [Canvas](#) facilitates, and seek guidance from available sources, including the instructor, if their performance drops below satisfactory levels. Refer to the Student Support Services section below.

Assignments

Quizzes: There will be 11 multiple-choice quizzes given on [Canvas](#). *I will drop your lowest quiz grade.* Each quiz will consist of 10 questions, each worth 2 points for a total of 20 points. *The quizzes are timed, and you will have five minutes to complete each quiz once you begin.* The quizzes will be available on Monday mornings, and they must be completed by Friday at 11:59 PM each week they are due. *Quizzes cannot be made up.* The quiz questions will cover material from the readings and/or class discussion.

Exam 1: The first exam will be given on **Wednesday, September 23, and will be taken in class during the regular class period.** All material from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions is fair game for the exam. The exam will consist of 25 multiple-choice and true/false questions, and will be taken on a scantron.

Exam 2: The second exam will be given on **Wednesday, October 28, and will be taken in class during the regular class period.** All material *since the first exam* from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions is fair game for the exam. The exam will consist of 25 multiple-choice and true/false questions, and will be taken on a scantron.

Final Exam: **The final exam period is Wednesday, December 9 from 11-1:30.** The final will be comprehensive and all material from the readings, lectures, and in-class discussions throughout the semester is fair game. The exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice and true/false questions, and will be taken on a scantron.

Make-up exams are only allowed in cases of emergencies. Please note that travel plans are not considered emergencies.

Attendance: Attendance will be taken for each class session using aPlus+ attendance in [Canvas](#). *Each class session is worth four points.* Attendance will be taken at different times during class, and you must be present when attendance is taken to receive the points.

University Policies

Institutional Policies

UTA students should review the [University Catalog](#) and the [Syllabus Institutional Policies](#) page for institutional policies and contact the specific office with any questions. The institutional information includes the following policies, among others:

- Drop Policy
- Disability Accommodations
- Academic Integrity
- Electronic Communication

UTA Honor Code

UTA students are expected to adhere to and observe standards of conduct compatible with the University's functions as an educational institution and live by the [University of Texas at Arlington's Honor Code](#). It is the policy of The University of Texas at Arlington to uphold and support standards of personal honesty and integrity for all students consistent with the goals of a community of scholars and students seeking knowledge and responsibility.

Student Support Services

The [Student Services page](#) provides links to many resources available to UTA students, including:

- Academic Success
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Health Services
- Students with Disabilities

- Veteran Services

Students are also encouraged to check out [Career Center](#) resources to enhance their career readiness, find student employment, search for internships, and more. We encourage [Major Exploration](#) and the use of [Experiential Major Maps](#) to keep students on track for graduation. Refer to the [Graduation Help Desk](#) for more details.

Course Schedule

Dates	Topic	Assignments Due
Week 1: Aug 17–19	Course Introduction/American Government	
Week 2: Aug 24–26	The Constitution	Quiz 1
Week 3: Aug 31–Sept 2	Federalism	Quiz 2; No Class Wed, Sept 2
Week 4: Sept 7–9	Civil Liberties	Quiz 3; No Class Mon, Sept 7
Week 5: Sept 14–16	Civil Rights	Quiz 4
Week 6: Sept 21–23	Political Culture	Exam 1 Sept 23
Week 7: Sept 28–30	Congress	Quiz 5
Week 8: Oct 5–7	The Presidency	Quiz 6
Week 9: Oct 12–14	The Bureaucracy	Quiz 7
Week 10: Oct 19–21	The Judiciary	Quiz 8
Week 11: Oct 26–28	Economic Policy/Budget	Exam 2 October 28; Last day to drop Oct 30
Week 12: Nov 2–4	Public Opinion	Quiz 9
Week 13: Nov 9–11	Political Participation	Quiz 10
Week 14: Nov 16–18	Political Parties	Quiz 11
Week 15: Nov 23–25	Elections and Campaigns	No Class Wed Nov 25
Week 16: Nov 30	Interest Groups	
FINAL EXAM	Wednesday, December 9 from 11-1:30	

Readings

Part I: The Constitutional Order and the American Political System

Week 1: Course Introduction and the Study of American Government

- Readings
 - Chapter 1: The Study of American Government

Week 2: The Constitution

- Readings:
 - Chapter 2: The Constitution
 - [The Declaration of Independence](#)
 - [The Constitution](#)

- [Madison: Federalist 10](#)
- [Madison: Federalist 51](#)

Week 3: Federalism

- Readings:
 - Chapter 3: Federalism

Week 4: Civil Liberties

- Readings:
 - Chapter 5: Civil Liberties

Week 5: Civil Rights

- Readings:
 - Chapter 6: Civil Rights

Week 6: Political Culture

- Readings:
 - Chapter 4: American Political Culture

Part II: Formal Institutions

Week 7: Congress

- Readings:
 - Chapter 13: Congress
 - [The Constitution Article I](#)
 - [Madison: Federalist 55](#)
 - [Madison: Federalist 62](#)

Week 8: The Presidency

- Readings:
 - Chapter 14: The Presidency
 - [The Constitution Article II](#)
 - [Hamilton: Federalist 68, 70, 72](#)

Week 9: The Bureaucracy

- Readings:
 - Chapter 15: The Bureaucracy

Week 10: The Judiciary

- Readings:
 - Chapter 16: The Judiciary
 - [The Constitution Article III](#)
 - [Hamilton: Federalist 78](#)

Week 11: Economic Policy and the Federal Budget

- Readings:
 - Chapter 18: Economic Policy

- [Introduction to the Federal Budget Process](#)

Part III: Individual Agency and Mediating Institutions

Week 12: Public Opinion

- Readings:
 - Chapter 7: Public Opinion

Week 13: Political Participation

- Readings:
 - Chapter 8: Political Participation

Week 14: Political Parties

- Readings:
 - Chapter 9: Political Parties

Week 15: Elections and Campaigns

- Readings:
 - Chapter 10: Elections and Campaigns

Week 16: Interest Groups

- Readings:
 - Chapter 11: Interest Groups