

**UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN**  
**Department of Government**  
**SPRING 2020**  
**GOV 310L, Unique Number: 37845**  
**M/W/F 10:00 – 11:00 AM, MEZ B0.306**

## **American Government**

Joseph Francesco Cozza, MSc

Office Hours: Monday 8:30 – 10:00; Wednesday 1:30 – 3:00

Office Number: MEZ 3.206

Email: Joseph.Cozza@utexas.edu

### **Course Description:**

This course provides an introduction to American politics. The class examines the American political system as well as the Texas political system, where appropriate, while also placing these systems in comparative perspective. Course topics include an introduction to America's constitutional foundation, 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). Throughout the course, these topics will be explored in comparison to political systems across the world. This course is also taught with a particular emphasis on constitutional arrangements and Supreme Court case law. In addition to mastering a set of basic facts about American government, students learn theories addressing "big questions" in both American and global politics. We also explore critical assessments of the evidence brought to bear on these questions.

### **Course Goals:**

In this course, our objective is to understand the fundamentals of government and its role in American society. Additionally, our goal is to understand how the American political system compares to systems in other parts of the world so that we may be better able to analyze and evaluate our system of government. From this understanding, you will be equipped to contribute intelligently to ongoing civil conversation about American and global politics. You will learn how to state arguments about these issues thoughtfully and carefully. You will learn how each side of these debates are structured. You will be creative.

### **Class Structure:**

Class meetings will be primarily lecture-based. You are expected to attend all sessions and you should come to class having completed all readings and prepared to apply that knowledge to lecture content. On occasion you will be expected to participate in individual and group activities in class.

Materials for the various parts of this course (i.e. lectures, readings, and assignments) are designed to integrate with one another. This means that lectures will not be mere recitations of

the readings, nor will the readings repeat lecture material. In order to succeed in this class, students will need to complete the reading assignments and attend all class sessions.

### **Technology:**

Computers or other electronic devices may not be used in the classroom except when explicitly permitted. Their use during the rest of class is not compatible with the teaching method. Phones, laptops, tablets, or other internet connected devices must be put away. I enforce this policy and sitting in the back of the lecture hall does not give you an excuse to ignore this rule. Should you be found using an electronic device, you will any quiz points for the day.

While I understand that it is increasingly common to take digital notes, my experience has been that students who use pen and paper find class more engaging and better grasp the material. Additionally, research in education and psychology finds that taking notes by hand facilitates recall and comprehension of course material.

Students who require the use of a laptop for learning accommodations should discuss this with me as soon as possible and in all cases before using a laptop in class. Outside such an accommodation, exceptions are rarely granted and must be approved by me in advance.

### **Course Communication**

Course materials, including additional readings, will be posted on the course Canvas page. Readings outside the textbook will be posted at least one week in advance of when they are due. All important course communication outside of class time will be posted as an announcement on the class Canvas page. I do not anticipate using this feature frequently, but I would encourage you to check the Canvas page daily or change your Canvas settings to email you when an announcement is posted. You will also use Canvas to submit the paper and the constitute assignments.

*Office Hours:* Office Hours are your time. I will be in my office. You are welcome to stop by and discuss course material, current events, or simply talk politics. If you need to meet outside my posted office hours, please email me with two suggested times. I will do my best to accommodate these requests, but they should only be used in circumstances where attendance to my normal office hours is impossible.

*Email:* The easiest way to contact me is via email or in office hours. Please understand that emails are professional communications that are retained by the university as part of the public record and should be structured as such. I will respond to emails during business hours (8-5pm, M-F). Should you email me outside of this time, please do not expect a response until business hours resume.

### **Texts:**

*Politics in America, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition* Keith Gaddie and Thomas R. Dye, Pearson. (required)

Note: The online edition is usually much more cost effective than the hard copy. If you read assignments in advance of class, the online version should suffice. Earlier editions are usually available, but please understand that you will be responsible for any material

in the new edition should you chose to use an older edition. I do not advise using an older edition before 2014.

Additional materials on Canvas: I will assign a few secondary articles in this class based on current events as well as some supplemental readings to place our discussions of US politics in comparative perspective. I will announce these readings at least one week in advance of class and will be specific about whether or not material in the supplementary material will be testable.

### **Grading:**

#### **EXAMS (3) (60% Total) (20% each)**

Exams cover material in the assigned readings and from lecture. These exams are not cumulative. Primarily, the exams will be in a multiple-choice format.

If you foresee problems with the exam dates, see me after class, during office hours, or contact me by e-mail at least two weeks *before* the assigned dates.

#### **PAPER (1) (15% Total)**

To link what we study in the classroom to political events in real time, each student will select a political news story and analyze the event in the context of our study of that institution or process. How has the material from the course illuminated our understanding of the event? Or how has political science failed to offer an explanation for what is occurring? The assignment should be no longer than 750 words or around two double-spaced pages. Papers will be accepted via Canvas on a rolling basis beginning after the first exam until the beginning of class on 4/24. Papers WILL NOT be accepted via email. Additional details will be posted on Canvas.

#### **CONSTITUTE PROJECT (10) (15% Total)**

We will use the Constitute Project to compare what we learn about American politics to political structures of other countries. At the beginning of the semester, you will pick the country you want to study. Each assigned week, you will write a 4 sentence response post on canvas comparing your chosen country's constitutional structure to the institutions/topics we discussed that week in the American context. These will be assigned for 13 weeks out of the semester and will you will be required to respond to ten of these prompts. You must post your response by 10AM on the listed due date. Posts cannot be made until one week prior to the due date. Late posts will not count. Additional details can be found on Canvas.

#### **QUIZZES (10% Total)**

There will be about 10-12 quizzes throughout the semester. I will announce most of these quizzes in advance but also reserve the right to administer pop quizzes if I feel attendance is low.

These quizzes will ask a short question about the readings assigned for that class.

You must have a piece of paper and a pen ready for each class in case we have a quiz. I will put the question on the board and will give you 3-5 minutes at the beginning of the class to answer the question. If you arrive late, you will not be allowed to take the quiz.

You will receive a grade out of 5 for each quiz. I will post the grades on Canvas but not hand

back these quizzes. If you like to see your quiz you must see me in office hours. At the end of the semester, your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

While there is no attendance grade in this course, you are expected to attend all sessions. The exams will heavily rely on what we will discuss in class. There are more details beyond the textbook we will discuss in class, particularly as it relates to comparisons to systems outside of the United States, and you will be responsible of those details in the exams. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to come to class.

In addition, given the frequency of the quizzes in class (see above) it is a good idea to come to class.

I would like to strongly emphasize the following two points:

- **Given that some of you may be on the other side of the campus for an earlier class, you can be a few minutes late to the class. However, you should not be late to class for more than a few minutes (unless there is an exceptional circumstance like an exam, which should be notified in advance to the TA or the professor). Please do not be late and disturb the class. Also, the quizzes will take place in the first 5 minutes of the class, and if you are late, you will not be allowed to take the quiz.**
- **You are NOT allowed to leave the class early. If you must leave early this can happen only once or twice during the semester AND you must let me know in advance. You will only be allowed to leave within the last 10-15 minutes of the class. If you leave the class without my approval in advance and if we had a quiz in that class, you will receive 0 points for that quiz.**

Class participation is different from attendance. Throughout the course students are encouraged to raise questions and relevant discussion topics in class, and expected to contribute to class discussions. Students are expected to do the assigned readings *before* we discuss the topic in class, and arrive at class ready to discuss the readings. Adequate preparation is particularly important when we discuss case law, as I will employ the Socratic method in teaching these classes.

While there is not a participation grade, I will use my personal judgment based on your in-class participation to bump your grade up if your final grade ends up very close to the higher letter grade.

### **GRADE APPEALS**

Following the return of graded work, a student must wait **three (3)** days before contacting me about an appeal. After the three day waiting period, a student has **eleven (11)** business days after the return of graded work (MTWHF) to appeal a grade. Appeals must be made in writing (via email is fine) and provide evidence for the change. In total, the appeal time frame is **fourteen (14)** days from the day the graded work is returned. For example, if an exam is returned on Wednesday, appeals may not be submitted until Tuesday of the following week. Between Tuesday after the exam is returned and the following Tuesday, appeals are accepted. On

Wednesday, two weeks after the exam is returned, appeals are no longer accepted. Do not contact me about your grade if fourteen business days have passed. Grade appeals are rare. Do not appeal a grade unless evidence presented is compelling and thoughtfully reasoned.

*Calculating Course Grades:*

Overall course grades are assigned according to the following scale:

93.0% - 100%	A	77.0% - 79.9%	C+
90.0% - 92.9%	A-	73.0% - 76.9%	C
87.0% - 89.9%	B+	70.0% - 72.9%	C-
83.0% - 86.9%	B	60.0% - 69.9%	D
80.0% - 82.9%	B-	0% - 59.9%	F

Final course grades are calculated based on a percentage rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. For example, a final score of 92.95 is rounded to 93.0 and is an A, while an 82.91 is rounded to 82.9 and is a B-. This grading policy is not subject to appeal.

**Course Outline:** I may need to make changes to this schedule. Any changes will be announced in class.

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1/22	Introduction	None
1/24, 1/27	Intro to Politics	Ch. 1 & 2 (30-32; 49-51)
1/29, 1/31	The Founding	Ch. 3; <i>Declaration of Independence</i>
2/3, 2/5, 2/7	The Constitution in Comparative Perspective	<i>Federalist 51</i> ; <i>U.S. Constitution</i>
2/10, 2/12	Federalism	Ch. 4; <i>NFIB v. Sebelius (Section IV only)</i>
2/14, 2/17	The Legislative Branch	Ch. 10
2/19, 2/21	The Executive Branch	Ch. 11 & 12
2/24, 1/26	The Judiciary and Courts	Ch. 13
2/28	Institutions wrap-up and Review	
<b>3/2</b>	<b>First Exam</b>	
3/4, 3/6	Public Opinion and the Media	Ch. 5 (up to pg. 132) & 6
3/9, 3/11, 3/13	Political Parties and Electoral Systems	Ch. 7; <i>Federalist 10</i>
3/23, 3/25	Interest Groups	Ch. 9
3/27, 3/30, 4/1	Campaigns and Elections	Ch. 8; <i>Citizens United v. FEC</i>
4/3	Review	
<b>4/6</b>	<b>Second Exam</b>	
4/8, 4/10	Politics and Personal Liberty	Ch. 14; <i>Griswold v. CT</i>
4/13, 4/15, 4/17, 4/20	Civil Rights: Seneca Falls, Selma, and Stonewall	Ch. 15; <i>Fisher v. University of Texas</i>
4/22, 4/24	Politics and the Economy	Ch. 16 & 17
4/27	US Foreign Policy	Ch. 18
4/29, 5/1	TBD (class vote!)	
5/4	Review	
<b>5/8</b>	<b>Final Exam</b>	

## **Other Class Policies:**

### *Syllabus*

You are responsible for reading this syllabus. By continuing enrollment in this course, I assume you have read this document. In this course, we will learn about the Supreme Court's power of judicial review. I maintain that I have the power of judicial review over the content of this course and this syllabus. This means that I am the final arbiter of what the language in this document means.

### *Academic Dishonesty*

Academic dishonesty will lead to failure of the course and other University disciplinary action. See *General Information Catalog*:

Scholastic or academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and misrepresenting facts. More information about academic dishonesty is given in Appendix C.: Sec 11. Note particularly: **(d)** "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation of, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one's own academic work being offered for credit.

The U.T. Honor code is as follows: The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

### *Accommodation for Religious Holidays*

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, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence

### *Disabilities*

The University of Texas at Austin provides upon request appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259; <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>. If you need an accommodation, please discuss this with me at least ten (10) business days before the exam.

*Emergencies* Links to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [http:// www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency) .

The following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>:

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050

*Syllabus Updates:*

I reserve the right to make changes or update this syllabus document at any time. This will be highly unlikely, but all changes will be announced in class and on canvas.