GOV 374N: POLITICAL INTERNSHIPS
Fall 2024
Department of Government
The University of Texas at Austin
Unique: 37450

INSTRUCTOR: James Henson
OFFICE: Mezes 2.302E
EMAIL: j.henson@austin.utexas.edu

OFFICE HOURS (subject to change):
Tuesday 10:00 – 11:30 am
Wednesday 1:30 – 3:00 pm
+ by appointment

Office hours will be held in person, though in some instances might be held virtually. Watch Canvas announcements for any schedule or venue changes to office hours, which happen more than I'd like. Students planning on attending office hours are strongly encouraged to make an appointment ahead of time, even during regular office hours.

TEACHING ASSISTANT: Olgahan Cat
EMAIL: olgahan@utexas.edu
OFFICE HOURS (subject to change):
via Zoom – see link in Canvas
Wednesday 3 – 4:30 pm
Thursday 3 – 4:30 pm

OFFICE HOURS (subject to change):

CONTACT POLICY

When it comes to electronic communication, it's best to contact the instructor or teaching assistant via email rather than through the messaging system in Canvas. We will try to answer emails sent during ordinary working hours (9 am to 5 pm on weekdays) as soon as possible. Messages received after 5 pm may not receive a response until the next business day, and weekend emails may not get a response until Monday morning.

COURSE FLAG: GOV 374N carries the Independent Inquiry flag.

CLASS MEETINGS/TIMES: None. Students are required to view video recordings and complete all assignments in Canvas.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Government Department internship program provides students an opportunity to combine work experience in government and politics with academic coursework for credit. This course emphasizes guiding students through the design and execution of a carefully defined small-scale research project, and an analysis of their research that can be communicated intelligibly to a public audience using evidence-based argument. The coursework is designed to sharpen students' ability to use basic academic research skills as tools in a professional environment, and to convey the results of their research in ways that contribute to public discourse about politics, policy, and government. Based on these course assignments and the weight assigned them in your final grade, the course carries the Independent Inquiry flag.

Most of students' time will be directed toward performing the duties of their internships in a manner that reflects positively on them and on The University of Texas at Austin. A solid performance as an intern provides a rich learning experience, the possibility of future intellectual and professional opportunities, and also reflects well on the program, paving the way for future students to have the same opportunities current interns enjoy.

However, interns should be clear about the nature of this course. Students are not receiving credit from the Government Department primarily for fulfilling their internships. Students receive grades and credit for completing the internships <u>in conjunction with guided course work</u>. **Supervisor evaluations are taken into account in assigning grades per the grading criteria below, but 75% of your course grade is based on assessment of academic work completed for the course.**

The academic work associated with the course is the basis for the Independent Inquiry flag assigned to the course. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work, independent of the time spend on your internship.

As has been the case for several semesters, there are no in-person meetings for this course. All the necessary information for the course, including pre-recorded guidance for the assignments, are in Canvas.

TEXTBOOKS
None.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS
- Completion of 4 assignments connected to research project

- Completion of 6 ungraded exercises related to the research project, due one week prior to the first three components of the research assignment.
- Work hours: at least 10 hours per week, beginning the first week of semester, concluding the last week of the semester. The minimum total hours worked should be 150 hours. How you track this is up to you and your supervisor/employer, but it should be verifiable if necessary. If you want to work more hours, this is at your discretion.
- Submission of two evaluations by internship supervisor
- Creation of a free Medium account prior to end of semester.

All requirements must be fulfilled to receive credit and a passing grade for the course.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS
All students are required to have access to an internet-enabled laptop or desktop computer, running either Windows or macOS operating systems. Tablets and smartphones are NOT supported. Your computer should meet the following requirements:

- Modern and up-to-date operating system (MacOS or Windows)
- Browsers: Chrome is highly recommended (If using Safari or Firefox, be prepared to use Chrome as a backup)
- Internet Download Speed: 5 Mbps (check here: https://www.speedtest.net/)

Confirm that your computer is able to stream the video lectures by visiting https: www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php

GRADE CALCULATION

Course component	Percent of final grade
Project assignment #1: Proposal	15%
Project assignment #2: Data Graphic Prototype	15%
Project assignment #3: Text Draft	15%
Project assignment #4: Final Research Project	25%
Practice assignment exercises	5%
Mid-term supervisor evaluation	10%
Final supervisor evaluation	15%

Grade scale for final grades:
A 94-100%
A- 90-93%
B+ 87-89%

B 84-86%
B- 80-83%
C+ 77-79%
C 74-76%
C- 70-73%
D+ 67-69%
D 64-66%
D- 60-63%
F 59 and below

Again: Students <u>must complete all of the assignments</u> in order to receive a passing grade for the course. Decimal points will be rounded.

LATE PENALTIES: For all assignments, late submissions (after 11:59 PM Central Time on due date) are subject to a 10 percent reduction on points assigned per day and/or fraction of a day late. No exceptions without prior approval at least 48 hours prior to the due date.

FALL 2024 SCHEDULE / IMPORTANT DATES

August 26	First day of classes	Your internship should be set up and you should start working this week if you haven't already.
September 6	Internship information form due	Submit completed form using DocuSign link (in assignment modules)
September 25	PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE	Submit via Canvas
October 16	Midterm supervisor evaluation due	Contact your supervisor, provide them link to online Google form
October 23	DATA AND GRAPHICS ASSIGNMENT DUE	Submit via Canvas
November 13	TEXT DRAFT DUE	Submit via Canvas.
November 25-29	Fall/Winter break	
December 5	FINAL DIGITAL PROJECT DUE	Post to web, submit URL in Canvas
December 9	Final supervisor evaluation due (LAST REGULAR DAY OF CLASSES)	Contact your supervisor to provide a link to online Google form. **Be sure your supervisor is aware of this deadline and provided with the appropriate form, as there will be little margin for late evaluations given grade submission deadlines.**

* All assignments within a module must be submitted by 11:59 pm CDT on the due date. No exceptions.

RESEARCH PROJECT

This project is designed to sharpen students' abilities to independently research and analyze questions related to politics and government, and to present the results of your efforts in a way that is both **informative *and* accessible to a public audience.** The final product of the research assignment will incorporate original text and graphic presentation of data presented in a webpage or other digital document posted on a publicly accessible location on the Internet. The default platform for producing the final product will be the public publishing platform Medium, at Medium.com, unless students request and receive instructor approval to use another platform that meets the requirements of the assignment.

Your project will focus on a question related to politics and/or government, preferably in Texas. The final product of the project will combine polished textual explanation accompanied by research-based digital graphics. The result should convey your interpretation of your research in a way that would be of interest to readers in the general public.

The project is organized into a series of assignments. Each assignment will generate feedback to be incorporated in the next stage of the project. The descriptions below provide an overview of the assignments and their point values. All stages of the assignment are graded on a 100-point scale, then weighed as indicated in your final grade. Specific rubrics used to grade submissions can be found in each assignment's module in Canvas.

Description of Required Assignments

Due dates for each assignment may be found in the class schedule and in Canvas. Log into Canvas to find the specific assignment pages and grading rubrics for each assignment.

Research Assignment #1: Project proposal
 Value: 15% of final grade   Length: 250-500 words

Assignment #1 is a written description of the specific question your research addresses, and how you will go about answering that question. The proposal should indicate what question you seek to answer, why it is relevant to Texas government and politics, and specific identification and justification of your primary data sources. You will need to identify a very specific question to address, which requires extensive background research for the assignment.

Your final product will not be a major research project but a relatively short exploration of a relevant problem, using relevant data, for a general (*not* an

academic) audience. That said, students are expected to do thorough research. **Keep in mind that the rest of your assignments are heavily informed and guided by the proposal, so it is crucial to work extensively on it while taking the rubric into consideration.** Your justification should avoid partisan advocacy. Stay focused on why the question you are answering is relevant for policy, government, or the political system. You should list both primary and secondary sources with your proposal, whether you quote them directly or not. **Reports based solely or mainly on another researcher's specific analysis of primary source data are not sufficient primary sources, even though other people's work should provide the <u>context</u> for the work <u>you</u> are doing.** The grading rubric is designed such that overreliance on these sources will result in a penalty equivalent to at least one letter grade at each stage of the project. This project is supposed to push students to engage with relevant data, not to summarize analysis published by someone else. Please clarify with the instructor or teaching assistant if you have questions about what [MOU1] counts as original compilations of data for your assignment.

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<u>Research Assignment #2: Data and graphics</u>
 Value: 15% of final grade

Description: Assignment #2 requires students to compile data you have gathered for analysis in a spreadsheet, and to produce initial versions of graphics that may be used to present data in the final published version of your work on the web. This should include presenting your data in tabular form (e.g. a spreadsheet in Excel or Google Spreadsheets) <u>and</u> initial attempts at graphical presentation of all of your data (i.e. plot, chart, etc.). You should ***not*** reproduce numbers, averages, or percentages from a single secondary based on someone else's analysis, even if you can put it in tabular form yourself. The best assignments will

find raw data from governmental or research sources and compile a spreadsheet or spreadsheets of the data. In some cases, students may need to compile spreadsheets using multiple primary or secondary sources which may include reports as well as tabular data from official sources. In the latter cases, over-reliance on data compiled by others will be evaluated as less satisfactory than compilation of raw data. The work product must be in digital form - you can upload either an Excel spreadsheet with graphics created in the file, or link to a Google Spreadsheet using your UT Google account. **You MUST provide verifiable source information -- via citation and when possible URL -- for all data presented.** All graphics should be clearly and comprehensively labeled.

Research Assignment #3: Text Draft

 Value: 15% of final grade   Length: 750-1000 words

Description: Assignment #3 requires you to write a carefully written and edited draft of the textual presentation of your research, with a clear argument about its implications for the subject of your project. At this stage of the project, you want to move from thinking about your work as research, and move toward composing a short article that is engaging to what you should think about as an interested general reader rather than an academic audience or someone giving you a grade. You need to write an article that tells your reader something interesting through an evidence-based discussion of policy or politics. Don't write as if this is a student paper; rather, write as if it were an article for public consumption – which, when you post the final version to the web, is what it will be. However, you must follow rules of attribution: cite all sources you use for both background information and the data in your analysis. Any thought that did not originate in your mind or in your analysis should be cited with a relevant source. In the draft, you should include a list of sources. You may use whatever established academic citation format you prefer as long as you use it consistently.

Overall, keep in mind the role of this assignment in the overall arc of the research project. The project has been broken down into discrete stages designed to structure your research and thinking. The objective of this stage is to think about the product of your research to date, especially the data and graphics submitted for the previous assignment, and assemble a written analysis based on the data you've gathered, how you are thinking about it, the context of your research (both in terms of public attention and, where appropriate, academic research),and the text you will present in your final public project.

The four key goals of this assignment form the basis of the grading rubric.

1. Refinement of the scope of your project.

2. Understanding the result of your research and analysis.

3. Providing context for the subject of your research, especially the political or policy debate surrounding the topic you are discussing.

4. The production of a finished draft that meets the requirements of the textual component of the final digital media project, **including the exposition of a clear argument or line of discussion.**

Be sure to remember that you need to be clear about the sources of your data and interpretations.

Research Assignment #4: Final digital project
  Value: 25% of final grade   Length: 750-1000 words

Description: A final version that combines your textual analysis with a visualization of your data based on your data graphic prototype, reflects further refinement in your research and thinking, as well as the feedback you received on both. The final project should be constructed in Medium.com, a publishing platform. You may use another platform if you have a good reason to do so – it must be approved in advance by the instructor and it must be readable via a common web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Safari). At this point, using hyperlinks with clear textual attribution is an acceptable option for attribution.

GRADING RUBRIC EXERCISES
The course modules in Canvas include short exercises designed to familiarize you with the expectations of your work during the first three assignments in your research project. You will download a document and use the grading rubric to assign the assignment a grade based on the rubric. These assignments are interwoven into video discussions at each stage. You are required to submit the rubric, but the work is credit/no credit. Completing and submitting all of the rubrics is worth 5% of your final grade in the course. These exercises should be completed by the deadlines listed in Canvas, which are all prior to the due dates of the actual research project assignments.

INTERNSHIP INFORMATION FORM
Complete and submit a brief online form in DocuSign (link in Canvas modules) that provides information about your internship and contact information for your supervisor. This is mandatory and should be submitted no later than January 20 (the Friday of the second full week of class). You will fill out a section of the form, including the contact information for your direct supervisor – **you will need an email address for that person**. Your supervisor will fill out their portion of the form, and it will be sent back to you so that you can confirm the information (including the expectations for your internship), sign it to confirm that information, and then submit it back through the system, where we will record that it has been submitted. You will be able to confirm our receipt of the form within a few days of the due date.

SUPERVISOR EVALUATIONS
Supervisors must evaluate interns twice, at mid-semester and at the semester's end. It is your responsibility to share the Google Form links for each evaluation with your supervisor, and ask them to fill out and submit the form online by the due date.

These evaluations are due October 16 and December 9.

Interns should provide supervisors with plenty of lead-time, and make sure forms are available to them. This is particularly important at the end of the term.

POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

A fundamental principle for any educational institution, academic integrity is highly valued and seriously regarded at The University of Texas at Austin. More specifically, you and other students are expected to maintain absolute integrity and a high standard of individual honor in scholastic work undertaken at the University. This is a very basic expectation that is further reinforced by the University's Honor Code. At a minimum, you should complete any assignments and other scholastic endeavors with the utmost honesty, which requires you to:

- acknowledge the contributions of other sources to your scholastic efforts;
- complete your assignments independently unless expressly authorized to seek or obtain assistance in preparing them;
- follow instructions for assignments, and observe the standards of your academic discipline; and
- avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student.

Students who violate University rules on academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and / or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website
at: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php

NOTICE: students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from Disability and Access in the Division of Campus and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/.