

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Government 310L
Unique: 37955
Professor Eric McDaniel
Professor Daron Shaw
Spring 2023

MEETING PLACE: Online Streaming (<https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1355115>)

MEETING TIME: Monday, Wednesday 1:00-2:30 PM

STUDIO LOCATION: Mezes 2.200

PROF. McDANIEL

OFFICE: BATTs 4.122

EMAIL: emcdaniel@austin.utexas.edu

PHONE: 232-7268

OFFICE HOURS: M 10:00-12:00

W 11:00-12:00

PROF. SHAW

OFFICE: BATTs 4.146

EMAIL: dshaw@austin.utexas.edu

PHONE: 232-7275

OFFICE HOURS: M, W 2:30-4:00

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

OFFICE HOURS:

Kelsi Cox	Students A - Callandrat
Peter Dunphy	Students Campbell - Ealem
Sarah Heise (Head TA)	Students Eaton - Henein
Josh Landry	Students Herd - Loudermilk
Candace Terman	Students Loveless – Newman
Kyle Trojahn	Students Nguyen – Razack
Avery Williams	Students Rearden - Sullivan
Meiying Xu	Students Supapo – Zuvich

T 10:00-11:30AM, F 10:00-11:30AM (Zoom)

W 2:30-5:30PM (Zoom)

T 9:30AM-12:30PM (Zoom)

Office Hours for all TAs will be conducted online via Zoom. See Canvas (Zoom folder, under “Upcoming Meetings”) for times and links.

Contact any/all Teaching Assistants at onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu

Contact technical support at [online tech support chat](#).

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. While our main focus is on the national level, additional attention is paid to the state and local governments of Texas. In some instances, the American case is placed in a comparative context derived from the experience of other western democratic nations. In other instances, we focus on changes over time within the American political system to demonstrate how principles often change with context. At all times, we are interested in a better understanding of how this particular system has developed and what it means for citizens of the United States.

There are three primary objectives in this course. The first is to provide basic descriptive information about the American and Texas political systems by examining important political processes, institutions, and actors. The second is to develop analytical skills with which to understand complex relationships and phenomena. The third is to introduce the work of the political scientist by concentrating on the paradigms and techniques of the discipline.

COURSE MATERIALS

We are using the *Texas Politics* (10th edition) webtext. ISBN 978-1-954890-28-2, Soomo Learning (2022). You can purchase access to the webtext which includes all of the Texas politics content directly through Canvas at \$55 or buy a passkey from the Co-Op bookstore for approximately \$74. The second option will allow you to use your financial aid.

For instructions on how to register for the webtext, use the student quick start guide. You can access it by clicking [here](#).

NOTE: If you have already completed a course that has used the Texas Politics webtext, you can have your payment applied to the total price of the webtext by emailing Soomo Learning's Student Support at support@soomolearning.com. Please provide the course information from your previous course.

In addition to the webtext, we ask you to listen to a select set of podcasts and to watch a select set of videos on particular topics. Please refer to the course schedule below for more information.

COURSE FORMAT

This is the digital version of the American Government course—unlike almost all other courses offered at the University of Texas, more often than not you will be viewing this class online (from the comfort of your own home, library, or coffee joint) rather than in-person. Though delivered via the internet, this course takes place at the official times described in the course schedule: 1:00 – 2:30 PM Mondays and Wednesdays. You are expected to “attend” class by logging into the course site by 12:55 PM on Monday and Wednesday to watch the real-time video stream of our lectures and participate in class activities. It is *very important* that you treat logging into the course website the way you would treat attending a traditional course held in a classroom. You will have the opportunity to pose questions online in real-time, and we will endeavor to respond as best we can. If anyone wants to watch the lectures in person, our studio (in the second floor connector between Batts Hall and Mezes Hall) can accommodate a 12-person studio audience. Please let us know about a week in advance and we can arrange for you to get in.

Before beginning, there are a few important information items to cover. To get to everything associated with the class, simply go to: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1355115>

You can enter directly from the internet or through Canvas (<https://utexas.instructure.com/>). To log in to Canvas and the class website, you will need your UT EID and password. Once you reach the class website, you can navigate your way to other areas. Some of the most important include:

- **Homepage** – The Homepage will have links to the Modules, information regarding technical questions, as well as contact information for the instructors and teaching assistants. On the left-hand side of each page of the Canvas course site are navigation tabs to all parts of the website, including the Syllabus.
- **Modules** – The Modules page includes a listing of the reading assignments, as well as links to the lecture videos, graded assignments, and other course documents. Each module contains the collection of reading, videos, and graded assignments organized around a particular course subject. Note that the readings and links may change up to about a week before the listed date. Due dates for the reading assignments can also be accessed via the **Calendar** feature.
- **Pre-Class Activities** – At top of the homepage, you'll find the Pre-Class Activities Module. You should complete all pre-class activities before the first day of class. A lot of effort has been put into these activities to answer questions you may have about the course. Activities include information

on the syllabus, a FAQ page, a technical requirements and testing page, and other helpful tips for doing well in the course.

- **Announcements Page** – The Announcements feature is the primary mode of communication from the instructors to students. You can access it on the left-hand side of Canvas or through a link on the Homepage. Students should be sure that their Canvas settings enable them to receive announcements via email.
- **Grades** – We organize the gradebook by individual assignment as well as assignment group.
- **Zoom** – On occasion, this is where we will store taped professor and TA recordings (under “Cloud Recordings”).

Most of your activity on Canvas will take place in the **Modules** tab.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

All students are required to have access to a laptop or desktop computer, running either Windows or macOS operating systems. Tablets, smartphones, and Microsoft Surface devices are unsupported. Your computer should meet the following requirements:

- Modern and up-to-date operating system (macOS or Windows)
- Browser: Chrome (highly recommended), Safari or Firefox. If using Safari or Firefox, be prepared to download Chrome (<https://www.google.com/chrome/downloads/>) and use it.
- Internet connection speed: 5 Mbps download speed. Check your speed here: <https://www.speedtest.net/>

Confirm that your computer is able to stream video by visiting:

<https://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php>

For the best experience:

- Close all unnecessary browser windows and tabs and program
 - Streaming music (Spotify, etc.)
 - Social media sites
 - YouTube or other video sites
 - Online/Offline Gaming
- Check your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware
<https://security.utexas.edu/education-outreach/anti-virus>
- Clear the browser's cache before class (<https://www.refreshyourcache.com/en/home/>)

If you experience a technical problem, click on the "[Online Course Tech Support](#)" item in the left-side navigation bar. The Online Course Tech Support chatbot, called "LAITS Bot", will assist with technical problems and can escalate your question to a human if it cannot readily answer your question.

There are multiple computer labs on campus for your use if you do not have a personal computer or laptop. (You can find a listing of these labs [here](#).) If you do not have an internet-enabled device, some inexpensive ones are available at local stores or on the internet, some for as little as \$100.

COURSE EVALUATION

There will be three examinations. They are each worth 100 points (25 multiple choice questions worth two points each; five short answer items worth 10 points each). The exams are NOT cumulative.

In addition, there will be roughly fourteen (14) in-class assignments worth a total of 100 points (your best 10 count, with each being worth 10 points), and fourteen (14) webtext assignments worth 100 points (your best 10 webtext chapters count, with each being worth 10 points).

This yields 500 total points available in the class.

<u>EVALUATION ITEM</u>	<u>POINTS</u>	<u>DUE DATE</u>
Midterm Examinations		
Midterm 1	100	Monday, Feb. 13
Midterm 2	100	Monday, Mar. 27
Midterm 3	100	Monday, Apr. 24
In-Class Quizzes (10 best grades count/Each worth 10 points)	100 points	To be determined
Webtext Assignments (10 best grades count/Each worth 10 points)	100 points	Specified below & in Canvas
TOTAL	500 points	

PLEASE NOTE: To receive credit for this course, students will need to...

- Take all three midterm exams, and
- Complete at least 7 in-class exercises, and
- Complete at least 7 webtext chapters.

These requirements are critical: Even if you have enough points for, say, a C in the course, you need to complete these assignments to pass. Failure to do so will result in a failing grade.

If you have a university-defined and approved excuse (e.g., a medical or personal emergency) that prevents you from taking the exam at the appointed time, please notify us immediately so we can consider an alternative arrangement. There will be no make-ups for any missed in-class exercises or webtext chapters.

Midterms

The midterm exams will cover mostly lecture materials. Items will be equally drawn from Professor Shaw's lectures and Professor McDaniel's lectures, with a smaller percentage coming from the webtext and other course materials. Items will also give equal weight to the different topics covered during the particular trimester.

- As mentioned above, there will be 25 multiple-choice items in all, most often with four response options offered for each item.
- In addition to the multiple-choice items, the exams will ask students to respond to five short answer questions. These items will ask about broad theories and arguments that are critical to the study of American Government. Your answers will most often necessitate offering definitions of key terms, statements explaining the significance of different ideas and arguments, and perhaps a brief analysis or application to a current issue or debate.

In-Class Quizzes

Quizzes will be offered in-class during lecture. These quizzes could be questions, simulations, in-class activities or surveys. There will be roughly one of these every week, which gives students multiple chances to participate. We will use the 10 highest scores for purposes of calculating total points. Attendance and engagement are the main criteria here (as Woody Allen said, 90 percent of life is showing up), and students who participate will more than likely receive full credit. These quizzes **will be due by the end of class (by 2:30 PM Central time) on the day they are offered.**

Webtext Assignments

The webtext will offer study questions and response boards that students will be asked to complete. Each chapter will be worth 10 points, with your top 10 chapter scores contributing to your point total for this element of the course. Each assignment **must be submitted by 5:00 pm Central time on the due date. No exceptions.**

The grading scale is as follows:

Points	Letter Grade	Points	Letter Grade	Points	Letter Grade
465-500	A	385-399.99	C+	335-349.99	D+
450-464.99	A-	365-384.99	C	315-334.99	D
435-449.99	B+	350-364.99	C-	300-314.99	D-
415-434.99	B			0-299.99	F
400-414.99	B-				

Please note that your grade is determined by your overall point total; percentages are used to determine the cut-points, but are otherwise irrelevant for your grade. This can be somewhat confusing, because Canvas automatically produces percentages in their grade scoring algorithms.

With respect to rounding, we typically round down when determining the cut-points. However, we do **NOT** then go ahead and round student point totals up. We can only take charity so far. In light of this, please refrain from asking us to “round up” your grade at the end of the semester. We cannot do this without offering the same to everyone else, and we are not prepared to thus destroy the integrity of the evaluative process.

We have a formal process for any students who have a complaint with a particular grade. First, they must meet with their TA; usually, a face-to-face explanation resolves the dispute. If not, a student may submit a written (1-page) request for a re-grade to the professors. There are only two reasons for a re-grade: (1) the student was substantively correct (and the professors/TA incorrect) on a substantive point, or (2) the student’s argument was substantively mischaracterized. No other grounds will be accepted. This written request must be submitted within five days of the student’s receipt of the grade. In addition, the entire exam/assignment will be re-considered by the professors. We do not allow “cherry-picked” grievances; just as a single item may have been ungenerously scored, other elements may have been scored too generously.

Finally, we reserve the right to use a curve, which would take the top score in the course and “percentage” off of that number to determine cut-points. For example, say the top score were 495. We might then take 93% of this to set the A range at 460-500, the A- range at 445-459.99 (90% * 495), etc. We emphasize that students should **NOT** expect a curve; it is something that we occasionally use if we think it appropriate given the overall distribution of scores. More information on this will come later in the class, if necessary.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

From the student’s perspective, the basic rules are as follows:

- **Do NOT use the Canvas mail system.** This class is too large to manage student communication through this platform. We will not be checking the Canvas inbox regularly so please send your inquiries to one of the two communication avenues below:
 1. Technical support can be obtained through the "[Online Tech Support Chat](#)" button on the left-hand menu in Canvas (not the professors or the TAs).
 2. Substantive questions about the class, as well as questions concerning accommodations or study habits should be sent directly to the professors and/or TAs at onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu. Or, better yet, come to office hours! Please abide by the rules of respect and decorum described below when participating in any course conversations.

Questions about grades will only be answered in-person during office hours. We will not answer questions about grades by email.

From the professors' and the TAs' perspective, we will communicate important information through the video lectures, as well as the Announcements page on our course website. In light of this, please make sure you check the Announcements page on a daily basis.

INFORMATION AND DATA SECURITY

All examinations, exercises, assignments, and online interactions over the TOWER system will be saved and stored. All information will be kept for educational and general academic research. Any research or data sharing with other researchers will involve de-identifying the data, including the removal of names, UT EIDs, email addresses, or other information. To further ensure that your information is secure, please do not include identifying information in your online interactions with others.

Also, remember that all information is stored on secure UT-Austin computer servers. In online interactions with others, remember that the professors and TAs will have access to all information.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at (512) 471-6259 (voice) or (512) 410-6644 (video phone) or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The online course format allows us to monitor and detect issues involving identity verification, collusion, collaboration and plagiarism. A violation of the course policy may include (but is not limited to) the following:

- Providing your UT EID to another person;
- Collaborating or sharing information with another person on a quiz, writing assignment, or exercise;
- Recording any quiz, assessment or assignment material in any format;
- Failing to properly cite ideas, data, or arguments that are not originally yours.

The University of Texas at Austin Academic Integrity Principles call for students to avoid engaging in any form of academic dishonesty on behalf of yourself or another student:
<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/index.php>

Grade-related penalties are routinely assessed ("F" in the course is not uncommon), but students can also be suspended or even permanently expelled from the University for scholastic dishonesty:
<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>

Honor system for quizzes and assignments. By taking this class, you agree to abide by the University of Texas regulations concerning cheating. While working on your activities, you cannot receive help from others or discuss your short answer assignments with other students. If you observe others cheating, you are honor bound to contact the teaching team.

The University of Texas Honor Code. 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: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php>

TITLE IX REPORTING

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational

institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's [relevant policies](#).

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered “Responsible Employees” or “Mandatory Reporters,” which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **We are Responsible Employees and must report any Title IX related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with us, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit titleix.utexas.edu or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

INTERNET RESOURCES

If you want to use the Internet to keep abreast of what’s happening in politics, we recommend the following sites:

Political News Sites

cnn.com
nytimes.com
washingtonpost.com
latimes.com
onlinewsj.com
realclearpolitics.com
politico.com
nationaljournal.com
texastribune.com

Issues and the Basics

vote-smart.org
archives.gov

For the More Adventurous...

fivethirtyeight.com
washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/
pollingreport.com
fec.gov

COURSE SCHEDULE

Dates	Topic	Assigned Readings/Videos/Podcasts
Mon., Jan. 9	Introduction and Pre-Constitutional Government	
Wed., Jan. 11	The Articles of Confederation	
Wed., Jan. 18	The U.S. Constitution	Texas: The Texas Constitution Revisionist History: Divide and Conquer http://revisionisthistory.com/episodes/21-divide-and-conquer
Mon., Jan. 23 Wed., Jan. 25	Federalism	Texas: Federalism Texas: Local Government
Mon., Jan. 30 Wed., Feb. 1	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	Stuff you Missed in History Class: Hernandez v. Texas https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/hernandez-v-texas-30207525/
Mon., Feb. 6 Wed., Feb. 8	Interest Groups & Social Movements	Texas: Interest Groups
Sun., Feb. 12	Webtext Assignments Due (Chapters 1, 2, 3, & 4): 5:00 PM Central time	
Mon., Feb. 13	Midterm Exam #1 at 1:00 PM Central time	
Wed., Feb. 15 Mon., Feb. 20	Political Parties	Texas: Political Parties Stuff You Missed in History Class: Alabama Governor George Wallace https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/alabama-governor-george-wallace-30207572/
Wed., Feb. 22 Mon., Feb. 27	The Media	Media Business Matters Podcast: Local Media a Conversation with Texas Tribune CEO Evan Smith http://www.amandalotz.com/podcast-media-business-matters/2018/8/22/local-media-a-conversation-with-texas-tribune-ceo-evan-smith
Wed., Mar. 1 Mon., Mar. 6	Public Opinion	Texas: Political Culture FiveThirtyEight: Politics Is More Partisan Now, But It's Not More Divisive https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/politics-is-more-partisan-now-but-its-not-more-divisive/
Wed., Mar. 8	Political Participation	Texas: Elections, Voting, & Campaigns
Mar. 13-17	Spring Break	
Mon., Mar. 20 Wed., Mar. 22	Campaigns, Voting, & Elections	Texas: Elections, Voting, & Campaigns (redux) FiveThirtyEight Politics Podcast: What Does it Mean to be 'Electable'? https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/politics-podcast-what-does-it-mean-to-be-electable/ Stuff You Missed in History Class: Does My Vote Count? https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/does-my-vote-count-30208516/

		<p>Stuff You Missed in History Class: How the Swing States Works</p> <p>https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/how-the-swing-states-works-30208426/</p>
Sun., Mar. 26	Webtext Assignments Due (Chapters 5, 6, & 7): Due 5:00 PM Central time	
Mon., Mar. 27	Midterm Exam #2 at 1:00 PM Central time	
<p>Wed., Mar. 29</p> <p>Mon., Apr. 3</p>	Congress	<p>Texas: The Legislature</p> <p>Texas: The Legislative Process</p> <p>Stuff You Missed in History Class: Elbridge Gerry's Monstrous Salamander</p> <p>https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/elbridge-gerrys-monstrous-salamander-29175698/</p>
<p>Wed., Apr. 5</p> <p>Mon., Apr. 10</p>	The Presidency	<p>Texas: The Governor</p> <p>Texas: The Executive Branch</p> <p>Whistlestop: Harry S. Truman's Battles with the Bosses</p> <p>https://open.spotify.com/episode/50mdTBVWw8vnK05P8AaSMd</p>
<p>Wed., Apr. 12</p>	The Courts	<p>Texas: The Criminal Justice System</p> <p>Texas: The Judicial Branch</p> <p>More Perfect: The Heist</p> <p>https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolabmoreperfect/episodes/heist</p> <p>Whistlestop: The Bidding of Biden to Boo Bork</p> <p>https://open.spotify.com/show/7uS0gm8RDEPT45E4sxxkiH?si=NXIAN_qSQaWe_xsee4YCpQ&nd=1</p>
<p>Mon., Apr. 17</p>	Domestic & Economic Policy	<p>Texas: Public Policy</p> <p>FiveThirtyEight: We Let Our Readers Practice International Trade. They Started A Bunch of Trade Wars.</p> <p>https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/we-let-our-readers-practice-international-trade-they-started-a-bunch-of-trade-wars/</p>
<p>Mon., Apr. 19</p>	Foreign Policy	<p>Whistlestop: Nixon Goes to China (Part 1)</p> <p>https://open.spotify.com/episode/2uB6gO5JDoNtVgG1SaZVE2</p> <p>Whistlestop: Nixon Goes to China (Part 2)</p> <p>https://open.spotify.com/episode/3PMRhabXgTYLHLcCawkPmY</p> <p>Whistlestop: Nixon Goes to China (Part 3)</p> <p>https://open.spotify.com/episode/5EXd1TyeyjEqI7I57XT0ky</p>

Sun., Apr. 23	Webtext Assignments Due (Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, & 14): Due 5:00 PM Central time
Mon., Apr. 24	Midterm Exam #3 at 1:00 PM Central time