

Introduction to American and Texas Government-Online

GOV 310L

Unique: 80125

Course Designer

Professor Eric L. McDaniel

Course Instructor

Dr. Keith P. Chew

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Asynchronous Course

Instructor Information

Office: Mezes Hall 4.144

Zoom Office Hours: MWF 8:00 - 9:00 AM

Teaching Assistants

Email the TAs at: onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu

Teaching Assistant Student Group (last name) Drop-in Hours

Chris Cassella A - Hernandez T 10 am - 1 pm

Victor Hsu Herndon - Pena W 9 am - 12 pm

Eric Kim Perez - Z Th 1 pm - 4 pm

Course Description

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. **In this course, your grade reflects how well you have mastered the course material and the work completed.**

Required Texts and Items

"Central Ideas in American Government" 14/e is 978-1-954890-54-1.

Each chapter of the webtext has a series of "Get the Gist" questions which are designed to make sure that students are properly understanding the material covered. **Students are required to complete these questions;** they will be tested on the material covered in the assigned chapters. Students will be given three (3) attempts at each set of "Get the Gist" questions in each chapter. Only the highest 10 scores will count towards the "Get the Gist" question grade for a total of 100 points.

1. Additional readings, videos, and podcasts will be posted on Canvas.
2. Students are expected to be aware of current events and regularly read either the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*. Articles from these two media sources will be posted throughout the semester. Students should be prepared to answer questions related to the posted articles for papers and exams.

Films and Videos

Several films and videos are available on Canvas. Many of them will not be shown in class, it is the student's responsibility to take the time to watch the film and take notes. Below is a list of some of the films and their purpose.

1. Belton, David. 2010. ["A New Eden."](#)[Links to an external site.](#) In God In America, ed. David Belton. Boston: WGBH Educational Foundation.

The purpose of this film is to establish an understanding of how religion was approached in the early years of the nation. My showing of this film is not an attempt to indoctrinate any thinking about how religion should operate in America. When watching this film pay particular attention to the discussion of separation of church and state as well as the discussion of religious freedom.

2. Espinosa, Paul. 1985. [The Lemon Grove Incident.](#)[Links to an external site.](#) Espinosa Productions.

The purpose of this film is to provide a vivid example of how the nation has come to define civil rights. When watching this film, pay special attention to the cause of the conflict, how the decision was contested, the outcome and the logic behind the final outcome.

Course Format

This is the digital version of the American Government course—unlike almost all other courses offered at the University of Texas, often 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 asynchronous. However, students must be sure to adhere to the deadlines listed in this syllabus. Modules will only be unlocked once the previous modules and tasks are completed. You are expected to “attend” class by logging into the course site to watch 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.

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/1391425>.

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.

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”). However, all lectures will be made available to students from the modules tab.

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/Links to an external site.> (Links to an external site.) and use it.

Internet connection speed: 5 Mbps download speed. Check your speed here:

<https://www.speedtest.net/Links to an external site.> Links to an external site.

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

<https://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php>Links to an external site. Links to an external site.

For the best experience:

1. Close all unnecessary browser windows and tabs and program
2. Streaming music (Spotify, etc.)
3. Social media sites
4. YouTube or other video sites
5. Online/Offline Gaming
6. Check your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware

<https://security.utexas.edu/education-outreach/anti-virus>Links to an external site.

7. Clear the browser's cache before class

<https://www.refreshyourcache.com/en/home/>Links to an external site. Links to an external site.)

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. 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.

Coursework

All written assignments are expected to have proper citations, including lectures, readings, and videos. For examples of how to cite, please refer to the [Chicago Manual of Style Online](#). All written assignments must be submitted in doc, docx, or pdf format. Finally, we do not take off points. All assignments start at zero. The grade given reflects how well you convinced us that you have mastered the material and followed the guidelines of the assignment.

Short Answer Writing Assignments (CA): 100 points

One of the goals of this course is to develop critical thinking skills to issues related to the government and politics. To accomplish this, students will have six (6) writing assignments in which they apply what they have learned about in a specific section. Each assignment is worth twenty (20) points. We will take the highest five (5) scores to count towards the student's final grade. The completed assignment should be in essay format and 240-250 words. Please refer to Canvas and the class calendar, below, for due dates.

Below are the questions and grading rubric

Questions

1. Which definition of government you most prefer and why? Also, please identify and explain which section of the public policy process this definition is most in line with. **(Due July 19 7:00 PM CDT)**
2. Please identify and explain which tradeoff between rights and liberties sticks out the most to you. Also, please explain how federalism factors into how the tradeoffs between civil liberties and rights. **(Due July 24 7:00 PM CDT)**
3. Please highlight and discuss your preferred definition of institutions. Also, please explain how this definition helps us understand the behavior of members of Congress. **(Due July 30 7:00 PM CDT)**
4. How should we understand the differences between interest groups and social movements? Further, how does the collective action problem impact them differently **(Due August 5 7:00 PM CDT)**
5. How do you believe public opinion influences the behavior of parties? Also, how does the endogenous nature of parties reflect their changes over time? **(Due August 12 7:00 PM CDT)**

6. What do you believe are some of the biggest obstacles to voting and political participation? Further, how might campaigns help people overcome these hurdles? **(Due August 15 7:00 PM CDT)**

The grading for the short writing assignments will use the following rubric

- 13 points for properly defining and describing relevant course concepts
- 5 points for quality and defense of argument
- 2 point for grammatical correctness and organization

"Get the Gist" Webtext Questions: 100 points

Students are expected to complete ALL webtext "get the gist" questions. We will take the highest ten (10) scores to count towards the student's final grade. Students will have three (3) attempts to correctly answer the assigned "Get the Gist" questions by the designated deadline.

Failure to complete ALL 16 chapters worth of webtext questions will result in uncompleted chapters counting towards the ten (10) scores that go into the student's final grade.

Exams: 300 points

There will be three (3) exams. Each exam will contain fifty (50) multiple choice items. The material tested on the exam will be from the course lecture, webtext, and additional materials (i.e. podcasts, videos, and readings). Students should expect at least forty percent (40%) of the exam questions to come from the lecture, at least forty five percent (45%) to come from the webtext. The remaining questions will be from the additional materials. The exams are cumulative. Concepts learned at the beginning of the class will be critical for later in the class.

Webtext Questions	100 points
Writing Assignments	100 points
Exam One	100 points
Exam Two	100 points
<u>Exam Three</u>	<u>100 points</u>
Total	500 points

Overall Grades

Please note, there is no curve and I do not round up grades. A 449.999% is a B+.

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

Expectations

Preparation

Doing well in this class necessitates students be informed and prepared. Therefore, you will be expected to complete the readings prior to watching the class lectures. This course covers a large amount of material in a short amount of time. If you do not keep up with the readings, your grade will reflect your preparation.

Professionalism

Remember that this is an academic environment. Therefore, I ask that you minimize unnecessary disruptions. This means notifying me ahead of time if you are unable to meet the requirements of the course.

Ground Rules

Because this course will sometimes deal with sensitive material, it is imperative that we set a series of ground rules.

1. Respect others. There will be times when you disagree with an idea that has been presented to the class. Although you have the right to disagree with someone, you must remember to challenge the idea and not the person.
2. Listen attentively. The purpose of this course is to present and discuss different ideas. In order to reap the benefits of such an exchange, you must be willing to pay attention to what others have to say.
3. Think before you speak. Refrain from making broad, general, and/or unsubstantiated comments. Make sure that you use evidence and provide a rationale for your statements.
4. Maintain the dignity of the academic environment. Your ideas should be presented using Standard English, minus the use of any profanity.
5. Raise your hand. This helps to maintain order in the classroom and helps to ensure that everyone has a chance to talk.
6. Be courteous. Refrain from interrupting or engaging in private conversation while others are speaking. Also, limit disruptive behavior, such as newspaper reading, personal grooming, etc.

Procedures for Dealing with Grade/Evaluation Concerns

Grade/evaluation concerns will only be considered if the following procedure is followed:

All grade complaints must be **TYPED** and must clearly express the student's specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e., readings, textbook, and/or lecture notes, to ensure accuracy.

Written statements may be submitted for consideration **AFTER** one week has passed since the assignment was returned to students. This allows the student time to re-read his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made.

Grade complaints will not be considered once two weeks have passed. For example, if I return a graded assignment on July 15th, students must submit a complaint **BEFORE** the July 29th. Once class is over for that week, no complaints will be considered for that assignment. Furthermore, assignments graded in the final week of class is subject to a

shortened timeline due to university final grades submission policies and the timeline of the summer semester. Students may submit a grade complaint for assignments in final third segment (Writing Assignments #5 and #6, and Exam 3) of the course within three (3) working days after the last class exam for the semester up till six (6) working days. The instructor will submit final grades to the university after this period. Once final grades are submitted to the university, no complaints will be considered for any assignment.

Since class time is limited, we will only deal with questions or concerns during scheduled office hours. You will need to file the grievance with the individual who graded your exam or assignment and in addition, you will need to meet with them to discuss the grievance.

Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

Course Communication

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

1. *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:
2. Technical support can be obtained through the "Online Tech Support Chat" button on the left-hand menu in Canvas (not the instructor or the TAs).
3. Substantive questions about the class, as well as questions concerning accommodations or study habits should be sent directly to the instructor 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.
4. Questions about grades will only be answered in-person during office hours. We will not answer questions about grades by email.

From the professor's perspective,

1. If you have an issue that you need to discuss with Dr. Chew, please attend his office hours.
2. If you cannot attend office hours, you may contact Dr. Chew to make an appointment.

3. When contacting the teaching assistants please limit your e-mails to questions about class topics.
4. Any grievances involving the class must be handled during office hours.
5. Make sure to check the syllabus, your email, and Canvas first before sending an e-mail. In many cases they will answer your question.
6. Finally, you are required use proper etiquette. The teaching assistants have been instructed to not reply to any emails that do not follow proper etiquette.
For tips on proper e-mail etiquette
visit <http://www.101emailetiquettetips.com/Links to an external site..>

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/Links to an external site.> Links to an external site..

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:

1. Providing your UT EID to another person;
2. Collaborating or sharing information with another person on a quiz, writing assignment, or exercise;

3. Recording any quiz, assessment or assignment material in any format;
4. 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>Links to an external site.

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>Links to an external site. Links to an external site.

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>Links to an external site.

In the event that a student violates the University policy on scholastic dishonesty, they will be 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 scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

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](#)[Links to an external site.](#)

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](#)[Links to an external site.](#) or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

Religious Holy Day Observance

By UT Austin policy, you must notify your instructor 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 to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Excused Absences

An absence from class will only be excused if proper documentation from a university representative is presented. If you have an emergency which prevents you from attending class, please contact the [Emergency Services Office in the Office of the Dean of Students](#)[Links to an external site.](#) to gain documentation. In the case of planned activities, the documentation must be presented at least two weeks before your scheduled absence. I will not accept a planned activity as a valid excuse for an absence after the fact. In the case of unexpected circumstances, the documentation must be turned in within a week of your return.

Make-up Exams

Students will only be allowed to take the make-up exam if they have an excused absence.

Changes to the Course

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus to better facilitate the needs of the course.

Date	Topic	Assignment Due	Course Material
15-Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Defining Government• Public Policy• Constitution• Federalism• Civil Liberties and Rights		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Declaration of Independence• Webtext: Chapter One• What if Sociologists Had as Many As Economists?• Webtext: Chapter Two• Federalist 1• Constitute Website• Brutus• Webtext: Chapter Three• Federalist 39• Webtext: Chapter Four• From Manhattan to Madison for American federalism• Webtext: Chapter Five• God in America: A New Eden• Webtext: Chapter Six• Lemon Grove Incident

19-Jul		Writing Assignment #1 Due at 7:00 PM CDT	
24-Jul		<input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment #2 Due at 7:00 PM CDT <input type="checkbox"/> "Get the Gist" Webtext Questions – Chapters 1 – 6 by 7:00 PM CDT	<input type="checkbox"/>
25-Jul	Exam 1 at 7:00 PM CDT		

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webtext: Chapter Seven • Federalist 51 • Stuff You Missed in History <p>Gerry's Monstrous Salama</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webtext: Chapter Eight • Federalist 70 • Webtext: Chapter Nine • Whistleblower calls for government transparency as Congress about UFOs • Webtext: Chapter Ten • Law and Politics • Federalist 78 • Webtext: Chapter Eleven • 'Horse race' coverage of elections voters, candidates and news • Social media can in fact be misleading Research shows it is possible sharing accurate information misinformation • Webtext: Chapter Twelve • Federalist 10 • Letter from Birmingham Jail
26-Jul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congress • Presidency • Bureaucracy • Courts • Media • Interest Groups • Social Movements 		
30-July		Writing Assignment #3 Due at 7:00 PM CDT	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment #4 Due at 7:00 PM CDT<input type="checkbox"/> "Get the Gist" Webtext Questions - Chapters 7 - 12 by 7:00 PM CDT<input type="checkbox"/>
5-Aug		Exam 2 at 7:00 PM CDT	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Webtext: Chapter Thirteen • This 1950 political science re-invents the news. Here's the story behind it. • If America had six parties, what would happen? • Webtext: Chapter Fourteen • Pew Political Typology Quiz • Can we still trust the polls? • Webtext: Chapter Fifteen • Turnout in U.S. has soared in recent years, but some measures still trails that of other countries. • Webtext: Chapter Sixteen • A.I.'s Use in Elections Sets Off a Debate About Guardrails • A Foreign Policy for the American Century
7-Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties • Public Opinion • Political Participation • Campaigns and Elections • Foreign Policy 		
12-Aug			<p>Writing Assignment #5 Due at 7:00 PM CST</p>
15-Aug		<input type="checkbox"/> Writing Assignment #6 Due at 7:00 PM CST <input type="checkbox"/> "Get the Gist" Webtext	

		Questions - Chapters 13 - 16 by 7:00 PM CST	
16-Aug	Exam 3 at 7:00 PM CST		