GOV F306C: POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT IN CONTEMPORARY TEXAS

Summer 2021 - First Session
Department of Government
The University of Texas at Austin
Unique #81505

INSTRUCTOR: Josh Landry
EMAIL: jdlandry@utexas.edu
OFFICE HOURS: Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday 12-1:30pm via Zoom (you can find the link on Canvas)

Contact **technical support** by clicking on the "Online Course Tech Support" item in the left-side navigation bar of the course Canvas page.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an in-depth orientation to the actors, processes, and institutions that make up the political system in Texas with a strong emphasis on the development of applied knowledge. Instructional material in the course focuses on how politics in Texas shapes the operation of political institutions, with particular attention to the interplay between public opinion, conflict among elites, and the policy environment in the state.

The course is delivered completely online, which gives students more latitude in completing their work, though the class is NOT entirely self-paced. The course meets online through Canvas. The course material is organized by topic ("Modules"), and each module includes reading assignments, lecture and guest-speaker videos, a segment keyed to recent events in Texas politics, and a variety of other assignments. Students will be expected to complete 2-3 modules per week. The course schedule below contains module assignments and due dates. This design allows students to complete the work largely according to their own schedule – as long as the due dates for completion of each module lesson are met. Students are required to take one scheduled, proctored exam online in Canvas. Students are encouraged to visit http://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php to test their computer and network connection.

The course fulfills the second half of the state-mandated instruction in Texas and American constitutional government (Texas Common Number GOVT 2302).

COURSE COMMUNICATION and INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT

- Announcements: Any student communication initiated by instructors will be conducted via the Announcements page on our course Canvas page. Please make sure to check the Announcements page **daily**, or set your Canvas notifications so that new Announcements are delivered directly to your primary email right away (and check your email daily).
- Private communication**:** Students who wish to contact the instructor can do so either in zoom office hours, or via personal email. Do not assume that the instructor will receive communication submitted via Canvas messaging or Canvas comments.

Note: Students should expect the quickest response time to communication during normal business hours (Monday-Friday 9am–5pm). As a general rule, students can expect a response to emails within 24 hours of being sent; however, please note that communications sent after hours, on weekends, and over University holidays may have a longer response time.

Technical Support
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.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

Texas Politics Course Version online text ($55) available for purchase through Canvas.

A limited set of additional readings will be provided on the Canvas site for the course.

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

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Laptop or desktop computer
All students are required to have access to an internet-enabled <u>laptop</u> or <u>desktop computer</u>, running either Windows or macOS operating systems. Tablets, smartphones, and Microsoft Surface devices are not supported. 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 and use it.)
- Internet Download Speed: 5 Mbps & Internet Upload Speed: 1 Mbps (check here: https://www.speedtest.net/)
- Functional webcam and microphone
- Zoom installed and configured

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

Information and data security. All exercises, quizzes, writing assignments, and online interactions in Canvas 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, UTEIDs, 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 <u>all</u> information is stored on secure UT-Austin computer servers. In online interactions with the course, remember that the instructors will have access to all information.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADE CALCULATION

Course assignments are designed to enable students to make the most of the online format of the course to effectively assimilate course material and acquire knowledge of Texas politics though active engagement with the materials. There will be one (1) cumulative final exam (more information below). In addition to the exam, grades will be derived from numerous short assignments aimed at reinforcing students' assimilation of course material via frequent knowledge assessment and practical application of the content

in the course materials. Course assignments are designed to be a roadmap to help prepare students for the final exam.

The following groups of assignments will constitute the graded work of the course.

- ***Texas Politics* "Get the Gist" Practice Questions.** The *Texas Politics* webtext includes study questions called "Get the Gist" after every page of text and other instructional material (tables, videos, etc.). Students are required to respond to all Get the Gist questions, and will receive credit for all correct answers. Students are provided two (2) attempts to deliver correct answers within the due date. A numerical score based on the percentage of total questions answered correctly will constitute their *Texas Politics* reading grades.

- ***Texas Politics* Investigations in Canvas.** Students will complete an investigation in Canvas for each module. Investigations are designed to provide students with a deeper dive into important topics.

- **Lecture Video Quizzes – "Becoming an Insider".** These short lecture videos provide context and clarity to the topics in the course, with an emphasis on an in-depth understanding of politics in relationship to the topic being discussed. Each video set is followed by a multiple-choice question quiz designed to reinforce your understanding of the content of the lecture.

- **"Texas Insiders" Video & Reading Quizzes.** These short videos and readings present political practitioners and insiders providing first-hand perspectives on course topics. Each video and reading set is accompanied by a multiple-choice question quiz.

- **Putting It All Together – Short Answer Activities.** These assignments contain a mix of interactive short answer activities. Putting It All Together assignments require students to complete structured short answer exercises that develop applied understanding of the material. These activities are designed to engage students in public policy and politics.

- **'Second Reading' podcast Quizzes.** Published **weekly.** Each 'Second Reading' podcast will be accompanied by a quiz that will contain 2-4 multiple choice questions, based on the content of the week's podcast. The instructor will post an announcement when the podcast and assignment are available in Canvas, with a link to the podcast. Students will have about 5 days to complete the assignment

once it has been published. <u>The 'Second Reading' module will be located separately, at the top of the modules page.</u>

- **Exam.** There will be one (1) cumulative final exam. See course schedule (below) for the exam date. While the exam is cumulative, it will be weighted more on the material in the second half of the class. The assignments are designed to prepare you for the exam. In other words: there will be no surprises and you should do well if you do the readings, complete all assignments, and pay attention to where you may need to allocate more resources to studying.

Each assignment will be designated a point total based on its length and difficulty. Final grades will be calculated using the assignment group weights below.

Assignment Group	Weight
Texas Politics "Get the Gist" Questions	10%
Texas Politics Investigations in Canvas	20%
Lecture Video Quizzes – Becoming an Insider	10%
Texas Insiders Video & Reading Quizzes	10%
Putting It All Together – Short Answer Activities	20%
'Second Reading' Podcast questions	10%
Final Exam	20%

Students are required to <u>complete 90% of all assignments</u> in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

<u>Grade scale for final grades:</u>
A   94-100%   B- 80-83%   D+ 67-69%
A- 90-93%   C+ 77-79%   D   64-66%
B+ 87-89%   C   74-76%   D- 60-63%
B   84-86%   C- 70-73%   F   59 and below

Without exception, I will round up scores of 0.5 or higher, and round down score of less than 0.5.

Again: Students must complete <u>at least 90% of the assignments</u> in order to receive a passing grade for the course. Decimal points will be rounded.

CLASS WEBSITE COMPONENTS AND TERMS FOR THE COURSE

https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1309369

You can enter directly from the URL above or through the Canvas Dashboard (https://canvas.utexas.edu/). To log into Canvas and the class website, you will need your UTEID and password. Once you reach the course Canvas page, you can navigate your way to other areas. This is an innovative online course that combines the Canvas learning platform with a webtext authored by a team at UT-Austin's Texas Politics Project. Some of the most important components include:

- **Home** — The homepage will have links to the Modules page, course Announcements, as well as important contact information and FAQs. 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, Grades, and Online Course Tech Support.
- **Modules** — The Modules page includes an orientation module (Module 0), which must be completed in order to access the substantive course content. The Modules page contains the course reading assignments, lecture videos, graded assignments, and other course material. Each module contains the collection of reading, videos, and graded assignments organized around a particular course subject.
  - **Assignment** — An assignment is an individual piece of work a student must complete for a recorded score.
  - **Chapter** — refers to a chapter in the *Texas Politics* webtext.
  - **'Second Reading' Podcast Module** — Regular updates to the course content featuring discussion of recent events related to the course in a podcast format and quizzes based on content in the podcast. Located at the top of the modules page. Updates to this module will occur on a weekly basis and will be accompanied by an announcement regarding their publication.
- **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** — The gradebook will be organized by individual assignment as well as by assignment group.
  - **Assignment group** — Types of assignments that appear in each module. Each group has a weight associated with it that will be used to calculate final grades (see above for details).

COURSE MECHANICS: How A Completely Online Course Works

This is a paced course that provides students extensive but not unlimited discretion in terms of when to complete the required work. As described in the course schedule below, students have to complete each module by

11:59 PM CDT on the assigned due date. Each module must be completed in sequential order. Within each module, students must complete the textbook reading and chapter review quizzes <u>before</u> accessing the remaining assignments.

No Late Assignments. Assignments will be locked on the completion deadline as described in the schedule. **No late work will be accepted after these deadlines – no exceptions. So, plan accordingly**.

Online Exam Proctoring. The exam will be taken in Canvas, and proctored with a remote proctoring software called Proctorio to ensure that the integrity of the exam is upheld. Proctorio has been vetted by UT's Information Security Office (ISO) and is FERPA compliant (meaning your recording is secure and private). Students can take the exam from almost anywhere using a webcam, a microphone, a strong and stable high-speed Internet connection, and a Chrome browser, preferably in a quiet, secure, and distraction-free setting (i.e. the kind of place you should want to take an exam). Proctorio will confirm your identity and monitor your computer and work space while you are taking the exam. Instructions for using Proctorio will be provided. Additionally, you will complete a non-graded practice quiz with Proctorio to ensure you have correctly enabled Proctorio and can use it successfully.

Make-Up Exam Policy. There will be NO early or late make-up exams, except in cases of excusable absence, DOCUMENTED emergencies, observance of religious holy days, or properly documented University-sponsored planned activities. Notice that it is YOUR responsibility to notify the instructor PRIOR to your expected absence. Missing an exam in all other cases will result in a score of zero on that exam.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

The GOV 306C online course format allows for multiple methods of identity verification, collusion, collaboration and plagiarism monitoring and detection. A violation of the course policy may include (but is not limited to) the following:
- Providing your UT EID to any other person
- Collaborating or sharing information with another person regarding the material on any work assigned to any person in any format or means of distributions.
- Recording any graded questions, prompts, or responses in <u>any</u> format

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 instructor.

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

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/.

COURSE SCHEDULE* (TX = *Texas Politics* webtext chapter)

Module	Topic	Open Date	Due Date	Reading
1	Political Culture and History of Texas	3-June	7-June	TX 1
2	Public Opinion	3-June	7-June	TX 1
3	Voting, Campaigns and Elections	3-June	14-June	TX 2
4	Political Parties	3-June	14-June	TX 3
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 1	9-June	14-June	Podcast
5	Interest Groups	3-June	18-June	TX 4
6	Texas Constitution	3-June	18-June	TX 5
7	Executive Branch	3-June	21-June	TX 6
8	The Governor	3-June	21-June	TX 7
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 2	16-June	21-June	Podcast
9	Legislative Branch: Actors and Organization	16-June	25-June	TX 8
10	Legislative Branch: Process and Politics	16-June	25-June	TX 9
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 3	23-June	28-June	Podcast
11	The Justice System	16-June	2-July	TX 10, 11
12	Intergovernmental Relations	16-June	5-July	TX 12, 13
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 4	30-June	5-July	Podcast
13	The Policy Landscape	16-June	8-July	TX 14
FINAL EXAM: Saturday, July 10 9 AM - 12 PM				

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