

American and Texas Government

GOV 310L Syllabus

Fall 2024

The University of Texas at Austin
GOV 310L (37170)
T Th 3:30-4:45 p.m.; **PAR 1**

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Office Hours: W 10:30-12; 1-2:30 **3.130 Mezes Hall**

Prerequisites: None.

General Description of the Course

This course is a survey of US national and Texas state and local governments and politics. It is designed to provide the student with an understanding of the foundations, constitutions and processes of their governments. The major institutions of the government will be examined in order to gain an understanding of how they work, the role of the people and institutions in the political system, and the consequences of a democratic political system. The success (and lack thereof) of some groups to influence government and obtain benefits from it will be considered in an effort to evaluate the workings of a democratic system.

This course is designed to meet part of the legislative core requirement for Government for all students; this course is required for all Government majors and minors.

Format of the Course

This course seeks to provide the student with the knowledge of the American political system needed to understand, participate in, and make a difference in that system (1). The story of the politically empowered (and those who are not) will be used to exemplify the workings of a democracy (2). Students will learn to consider politics and government within a larger setting of the rights of individuals and the power of the politically active (3). Course Outcomes and Assessment:

Course outcomes:	Assessment:
<i>Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:</i>	<i>The objectives will be assessed</i>
Demonstrate their understanding of the essential terminology and institutions of national and state governments	By tests, quizzes, and short papers
Have sufficient knowledge of the American political system needed to participate and make a difference in that system	By tests, quizzes, and short papers
Tell the story of the politically empowered (and those who are not) and how those stories exemplify the workings of democracy	By tests, quizzes, and short papers
Consider politics and government within a larger setting of the rights of individuals and the power of the politically active	By tests, quizzes, and short papers

Since our textbook is online, you may use your laptop/tablet during the class. Please limit your classroom use to the text and note taking—and do not use cell phones, smart watches, or other distractions. Drinks *are* allowed in the classroom; **food is *not* allowed.**

Students are required to attend class and participate—Repeated lack of preparation or absences will hurt one's grade. The teaching method presumes that students heard prior discussions. When a student did not hear earlier discussions and then participates, it often wastes the time of others. ***I call on students every day*** and expect them to be well-prepared.

Exceptions to the policies stated in this syllabus are rare and must be approved by me in advance unless there is an emergency. This includes medical exceptions.

Readings

- *U.S. and Texas Politics*, Jocelyn Evans & Kristy Michaud / The Texas Politics Project (UT Bundle V1 (CIAG 15eV1, TexPol 12eV1), Soomo Publishing, 2024. ISBN: 978-1-963859-04-1.

This is a required online text: online interactive projects/quizzes are an essential part of the course grade, so each student must purchase online access.

- Additional readings will be required that will be on reserve or posted on Canvas.
- Other Resources: Learn to avail yourself of online coverage of US and Texas politics. You may already have your favorites. Here are a couple to check in with:
 - Texas Tribune <https://www.texastribune.org/>
 - Pew Research Center <https://www.pewresearch.org/>

Assignments will be given each class period from the detailed reading list posted on Canvas. The next day's assignment depends upon how far we get in any given day; therefore, it is impossible to know specific daily assignments in advance. If you have to miss class, it is your responsibility to find out what was covered and what has been assigned *from a classmate*. **Do not contact me for this purpose. Get to know your fellow students.** Study groups are encouraged.

Evaluation (Grading)

- Plus and minus grades will be used.
- Midterm examination ($\approx 30\%$). **Week of Oct. 15-17.** Multiple Choice and Essay
- Soomo Quizzes ($\approx 35\%$).
- Final examination ($\approx 35\%$). Multiple Choice and Essay. Check the official Final Exam Schedule for location and to confirm the time. Early or late exams are rarely allowed.
- Class attendance and participation are required and may affect a grade positively or negatively, hence the approximate percentages. (See attendance and participation statements above.)

Communications

I encourage students to come to my office hours for help or just to chat. I like getting to know you. Students should *not* use e-mail as a way of having a conversation with me about substantive issues—that is what office hours and class discussion are for. Email may be used for administrative reasons.

You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses.

I will sometimes contact you via Canvas, but you should always send emails directly to me using my email rather than via Canvas unless I direct otherwise.

Important Restrictions:***Academic Dishonesty***

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

Artificial Intelligence. The use of artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT) in this class is strictly prohibited. This includes using AI to generate ideas, outline an approach, write your case briefs, answer questions, solve problems, or create original language. All work in this course must be your own or created in group work where allowed.

Sharing of Course Materials with non-class members is Prohibited. You may share materials with fellow members of the class unless I say otherwise. No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), lecture hand-outs, videos, in-class materials, review sheets, etc., may be shared online or with anyone **outside of the class** unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am aware of sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Class Recordings: The class will not be routinely recorded. If there is a class recording, it is only for the student(s) who have been given permission to see it. If the entire class is allowed to see a recording, it is reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and is protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND RESOURCES

See the [General Information Catalog](#), for University official policies. For a list of important university policies and helpful resources that you may need as you engage with and navigate your courses and the university, **see the University Policies and Resources Students Canvas page**. The page includes the language of the University Honor Code, Title IX legal requirements for Texas employees, and information about how to receive support through the office of Disability & Access.

Academic Integrity Expectations

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>. Plagiarism is taken very seriously at UT and is subject to academic disciplinary action, including failure of the course. To learn more about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it, see the Avoiding Plagiarism tutorial developed by the UT Libraries in partnership with the Writing Flag program and Student Judicial Services.

Getting Help with Technology

Students needing help with technology in this course should contact the ITS Service Desk.

<https://its.utexas.edu/contact>

Basic Needs

Security Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. UT maintains the UT Outpost, which is a free on-campus food pantry and career closet. Furthermore, if you are comfortable notifying me, please do so, as I may have additional resources I can share.

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. The University is well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure of the course.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence as far in advance as possible of 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.

Names and Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender identity & expression, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "chosen name" with the registrar's office. I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit that site. More resources available on the Gender and Sexuality Center's website, <http://www.utgsc.org>.

Disability & Access

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability & Access (D&A). Please refer to the D&A website for more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC)

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. Know you are not alone. If you or anyone you know is experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, academic concerns, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, or any other concern impacting your wellbeing, you are strongly encouraged to connect with CMHC. The Counseling and Mental Health Center provides a wide variety of mental health services to all UT students including crisis services, counseling services with immediate support and well-being resources. Additionally, CARE Counselors are located within the academic schools and colleges. These counselors get to know the concerns that are unique to their college's students. For more information on CMHC, visit <https://cmhc.utexas.edu> or call 512-471-3515.

University Health Services (UHS)

Your physical health and wellness are a priority. University Health Services is an on-campus high-quality medical facility providing care to all UT students. Services offered by UHS include general medicine, urgent care, a 24/7 nurse advice line, gynecology, sports medicine, physical therapy, lab and radiology services, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and much more. For additional information, visit <https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu> or call 512-471-4955.

Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

Student Emergency Services (SES)

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to crisis or an emergency situation, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/> or by calling 512-471-5017.

BeVocal

BeVocal is a university-wide initiative to promote the idea that individual Longhorns have the power to prevent high-risk behavior and harm. At UT Austin all Longhorns have the power to intervene and reduce harm. To learn more about BeVocal and how you can help to build a culture of care on campus, go to: <https://wellnessnetwork.utexas.edu/BeVocal>.

WellBeing

Resources for self-care are at Longhorn Wellness Center and Virtual Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Activities. See University Policies and Resources Students Canvas page for links to:

- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050
- Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 988

Other resources

- Undergraduate Writing Center: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>
- UT Libraries: <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/>

Important Safety Information

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs or professors, contact BCCAL (the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line) by calling 512-232-5050 or at <https://safety.utexas.edu/behaviorconcerns-advice-line>. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, however the university may be required to release some information to appropriate parties.

Classroom safety and COVID-19

- For any illness, students should stay home if they are sick or contagious, not only to stop the spread, but also to promote their personal wellness.
- The university will continue to provide rapid antigen self-test kits at distribution sites throughout campus. Students can receive up to four tests at a time.
- The university will provide symptomatic COVID-19 testing on campus for all students, faculty and staff.
- UHS maintains up-to-date resources on COVID, which can be found here: – COVID-19 Information and Resources – COVID-19 Exposure Action Chart

Carrying of Handguns on Campus

Texas' Open Carry law expressly prohibits a licensed to carry (LTC) holder from carrying a handgun openly on the campus of an institution of higher education such as UT Austin. Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to review the university policy regarding campus carry.
- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted, meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.
- ***Per my right, I prohibit carrying of handguns in my personal office.*** Note that this information will also be conveyed to all students verbally during the first week of class. This written notice is intended to reinforce the verbal notification, and is not a “legally effective” means of notification in its own right.

Title IX Disclosure

Faculty members are a “Responsible Employee” and I must report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed to me. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, please remember that I will be required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to speak with someone who can

provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu, or call 512-471-0419. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email advocate@austin.utexas.edu.

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 (formerly known as Senate Bill 212) requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations, or third party reports) must be report it.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Education Code, Section 51.252, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Education Code, Section 51.252. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support all impacted by a Title IX incident.

Campus Safety; Campus Emergencies

The following are recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767.

- Students should sign up for Campus Emergency Text Alerts at the page linked above.
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus must evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- 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.
- For more information, please visit emergency preparedness.

Emergency evacuation procedures

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