F306C:Politics and Government in Contemporary Texas

The University of Texas at Austin - Summer 2023 - First Session - #80675

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Office Hours:	M-F 2PM-5PM by appointment

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 encouraged to visit the LAITS website 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: The quickest and most efficient way to reach me is via email at lauracquaglia@utexas.edu. I usually respond within 24 hours, on regular business hours (Monday through Friday, 9AM - 5PM). I will do my best to always respond in a timely manner, but I cannot guarantee a response at nights or on weekends.

Office Hours: To keep my availability more flexible, I hold office hours by appointment only. If you wish to book a time you can schedule a 15 minute appointment via Calendly. Appointments are available Monday through Friday between 2PM and 5PM and you're free to book multiple times a week. Appointments should be made by 8PM of the previous day.

▌ **Technical Support:** If you experience a technical problem, click on the "Online Course Tech Support" item in the left-side navigation bar on Canvas. 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.

Reading Materials:

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

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

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 and Data Security:

Laptop or desktop computer All students are required to have access to an internet-enabled laptop or desktop computer, 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)
- Functional webcam and microphone
- Zoom installed and configured

Confirm that your computer is able to stream video by visiting LAITS.

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 all 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.

Class Website Components and Terms for the Course:

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, and the next module will become available once the student is done with the previous one. Within each module, students must complete the textbook reading and chapter review quizzes before accessing the remaining assignments.

Assignments will be locked on the completion deadline as described in the schedule. Given the nature of the course, no late work will be accepted after these deadlines.

You can enter directly from this URL or through the Canvas Dashboard. 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.

- ***'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. Each assignment group has a weight associated with it that will be used to calculate final grades (see below for details).

Grading and Assignments:

Texas Politics "Get the Gist" Quizzes	10%
Texas Politics Investigations	15%
Lecture Quizzes	15%
Comprehensive Investigations	20%
Texas Insiders Quizzes	10%
"Second Reading" Quizzes	10%
Putting it All Together	20%

The grading scale adopted in this course is as follows:

A 93-100
A- 90-92.99
B+ 87-89.99
B 83-86.99
B- 80-82.99
C+ 77-79.99
C 73-76.99
C- 70-72.99
D 60-69.99
F .... Less than 60

▌ *Texas Politics* **"Get the Gist" Quizzes:** 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 for each module on Canvas, 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:** Investigations are designed to provide students with a deeper dive into important topics. Students will complete an investigation in Canvas for each module.

▌ **Lecture Quizzes:** The 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.

▌ **Comprehensive Investigations:** Comprehensive questions that challenge students to use the knowledge they acquired over each module to interpret figures and graphs to arrive at the right answer.

▌ **Texas Insiders 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.

▌ **"Second Reading" Quizzes:** 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, published weekly. 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. The 'Second Reading' module will be located separately, at the top of the modules page.

▌ **Putting it All Together:** 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.

Course Outline:

Module	Topic	Due Date	Textbook Reading
1	Political Culture and History of Texas	5-June	TX 1
2	Public Opinion	5-June	TX 1
3	Voting, Campaigns and Elections	12-June	TX 2
4	Political Parties	12-June	TX 3
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 1	12-June	Podcast
5	Interest Groups	16-June	TX 4
6	Texas Constitution	16-June	TX 5
7	Executive Branch	20-June	TX 6
8	The Governor	20-June	TX 7
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 2	20-June	Podcast
9	Legislative Branch: Actors and Organization	23-June	TX 8
10	Legislative Branch: Process and Politics	23-June	TX 9
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 3	26-June	Podcast
11	The Justice System	30-June	TX 10, 11
12	Intergovernmental Relations	3-July	TX 12, 13
Podcast	Second Reading Quiz 4	3-July	Podcast
13	The Policy Landscape	6-July	TX 14

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

Practical Stuff:

Academic Honesty: Each student in the course is expected to abide by the University of Texas Honor Code. Lack of knowledge of the academic honesty policy is not a reasonable explanation for a violation. Students who violate University rules on scholastic 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 scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. 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. For further information, visit the Student Judicial Services web site.

- **Use of AI Tools**: Given the nature of the written assessments in this course, you may not engage in unauthorized collaboration or make use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software, and doing so would be considered a violation of academic integrity.

Services for Students with Disabilities: The University of Texas at Austin provides, upon request, appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. For more information, contact the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 512-471-6259 (Videophone: 512-410-6644) or their website. You do not need to disclose your particular disability to me - only to the appropriate services -, but if you do I will maintain your confidentiality.

Personal Pronoun/Chosen Name Policy: Class rosters at UT are provided to the instructor with students' legal names. I will gladly honor any request to address students by a different name. Please inform me of any preferred names, nicknames, or gender pronouns as early as possible so I can adopt them for the entirety of the semester and onward. If there are further accommodations that will make you feel more comfortable in communication with me, please come to office hours so we can discuss them.

Drop Policy: If you would like to drop this course after the 4th class day, you will need to execute a Q drop before the end of the summer term, upon approval of the dean. Under Texas law, you are only allowed six Q drops while you are in college at any public Texas institution. For more information on dropping courses please consult UT's Catalog.