

GOV 312 Issues and Policies in American Government – Identity & American Politics

GOV 312L

Unique Number: 38185

Fall 2023

TuTh 8:00 am to 9:30 am - Parlin Hall 1

Instructor

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Office: MEZ 3.216.

Office Hours: TuThu 9:30am to 11:00am or by appointment

Course Description

How do we make sense of the political choices people make? Why do we see increasing political polarization in the U.S.? How do we explain new political phenomena like the January 6th insurrection? Why do we see differences in public opinion based on race, gender, and religion? When do Americans work together to solve problems and when do we fight we one another? We can better understand these questions when we consider the role of identities in American politics. Over the course of this semester, we will be exploring the above questions and more by learning more about the basis of identity and how identity shows up in American politics. By the end of the semester, my aim is for you to be familiar with some of the most important identities in American politics, and understand how they influence American politics.

Course Goals

- Be aware of the psychological foundations of social identities
- Be able critically engage in social science works on identity
- Be aware of the variety of politically salient identities in the American context
- Develop scientifically informed opinions on when identity becomes politically important and how identity can impact political behavior
- Reflect on class content and engage with peers, family members, friends, and others in a thoughtful and meaningful way about the role identity plays in politics and all aspects of life in general
- Critically investigate the nature and origin of your own identities and become aware of how they influence your thoughts, beliefs, and behavior

Course Requirements and Grading

- 25% - Class Assignments/Quizzes
- 25% - Exam I
- 25% - Exam II
- 25% - Group Presentation

A 93-100

A- 90-92

B+ 87-89

B 83-86

B- 80-82

C+ 77-79

C 73-76

C- 70-72

D 60-69

F 0-59

There will be no rounding of 89s, 79s, 69s, or 59s!

Class Participation/Quizzes

Assignments/quizzes will be given during the regularly scheduled class time and some will be required to be completed outside of class. Submission of in-class assignments/quizzes will be administered through Canvas and **MUST** be submitted during class time in order to receive credit. Each student can miss one in class quiz without it counting against their grade.

Attendance and participation in class is expected and required. You must come prepared and ready to contribute very week. Class contributions include but are not limited to: raising questions about the readings, relating your own experience or current events to the class discussion, listening and engaging with the contributions of fellow classmates.

Exams

The format of the two exams will be multiple choice and will cover all of the course lectures, films, and readings. Both exams will be administered during the regularly scheduled class time. The second exam will **NOT** be cumulative.

Group Presentation

Working in groups of 4, students will create a 5- (minimum) to 10- (maximum) minute group presentations on an American political figure or event (current or historical) and discuss what role identity played in the figure's life/political event. The presentation should be able to answer the following questions: What identities are at play in this person's life/political event? What role did those identities play in their life/ in the political event? If you did not consider identity, what we fail to understand about this person/event? Group presentations should include visual media that includes but is not limited to: graphs, charts, images, audio, or video. Your presentation may be on a figure (e.g. MLK), group (Republican party), or event (Stonewall Riots). Each presentation must incorporate a thesis that guides the information presented and must have a clear beginning, middle, and end.

The group project will be completed in stages. In the first stage (worth 10 percent of your grade), each group will need to submit a presentation outline (maximum of 2 pages double spaced) that includes: the topic; why this topic is important to you; the thesis; the research articles (from in-class readings or outside readings) (minimum of 3); and what you hope your audience will learn from your presentation. All assignments must be typed in a 12-point font and have margins no bigger than 1.25 inches. All outlines must be uploaded to Canvas.

In the second phase (worth 15 percent of your grade), each group will complete and present their presentations. Evaluation of presentations will be based on aesthetics (visual content) and substance (quality, organization, and persuasiveness of the information presented).

Excused Absences

An absence from class will only be excused if proper documentation is presented. In the case of an illness, you will need to produce a note from your doctor stating that you could not attend class that day. In all other cases, you will need to provide documentation from Student Emergency Services (<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/>). In the case of planned activities, the documentation must be presented to me at least a week 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.

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be tolerated. Progress in the course, as well as feedback from classmates and classroom discussion depend on the timely submission of assignments. Like excused absences, late assignments will not count against your grade if there is a *legitimate documented reason* for the lateness. Again, discussions regarding late assignments must happen BEFORE the fact, not AFTER the fact. Late assignments will be docked 10 points per day, with no more than 50 points docked due to lateness. All late assignments have a FINAL submission date (regardless of total points docked) by (insert date of Presentation I). Any assignments not received by that date will be given a ZERO.

Expectations

Meeting the goals of the class requires—attendance, preparation and professionalism.

Attendance

Although attendance is not mandatory, it is expected. Therefore, I find it unnecessary to formally take attendance. Nevertheless, missing class will greatly affect your grade. First, I frequently give pop quizzes and in-class assignments. Students that miss a quiz/assignment will receive a zero. Second, exams are based on a combination of the course readings, class lectures, and supplementary media presentations. Thus, missing class will greatly affect your grade.

Preparation

Doing well in this class necessitates that students are informed and prepared. Therefore, you will be expected to complete the readings prior to the first day we are scheduled to cover that topic. 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 it.

Professionalism

Remember that this is an academic environment. Therefore, I ask that you minimize unnecessary disruptions. This includes (but it is not limited to) side conversations, cell phone calls, bringing pets to class¹, and the consumption of tobacco products². I also ask that you be proactive if any conflict occurs. 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.

¹ The Elliott Rule

² The Mock-Hall Rule.

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.
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 social media use, 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, in order to ensure accuracy. Written statements will not be considered until one week **AFTER** the assignment is returned to students. This allows the student time to reread his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made. Grievances will not be considered once two weeks have passed. For example, if I return a graded assignment on Monday, the student must submit a complaint **BEFORE** the Friday of the following week. Once class is over on that Friday, no complaints will be considered for that assignment. Since class time is limited, I will only deal with questions or concerns during scheduled office hours. Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

University Code of Conduct

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.

Student Honor Code

As a student of The University of Texas at Austin, I shall abide by the core values of the University and uphold academic integrity.

Academic Dishonesty

According to the Institutional Rules, scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and falsifying academic records. In the event that a student violates the University policy on scholastic dishonesty, he or she 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. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity web site at <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.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, 512-471-6259, <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

Religious Holy Day Observance

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me 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 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.

Campus Safety

Please note the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety>:

- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to 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 should inform the 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.
- Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050.
- Further information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>.

Outline of Course Topics and Readings

1. *Syllabus Week and Overview of Course [August 22 & 24]*
2. *What is Identity? [August 29 & 31]*
 - “The Henry James of Harlem: James Baldwin's Struggles.” 2001. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/sep/14/jamesbaldwin> (October 27, 2021).
3. *Social Identity Theory [September 5th & 7th]*

- Ellemers, N., & Haslam, S. A. (2012). Social identity theory. *Handbook of theories of social psychology*, 2, 379-398.
- 4. ***In Group Love & Out Group Hate: Identities & Intergroup Conflict [September 12 & 14]***
 - [Frontline PBS Documentary: Documenting Hate](#)
 - Enos, Ryan D. 2014. "Causal Effect of Intergroup Contact on Exclusionary Attitudes." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111(10): 3699-3704.
- 5. ***Partisanship I: The Most Important Political Identity [September 19 & 21]***
 - Mason, L. (2018). *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. University of Chicago Press. **Chapter 1**
- 6. ***Partisanship II: Partisanship in Practice [September 26 & 28]***
 - [Frontline PBS Documentary: American Insurrection](#)
- 7. **Exam Week [October 3rd & 5th]**
 - Exam Review [October 3rd]
 - Exam [October 5th]
- 8. ***Racial Identity: Minority Groups [October 10 & 12]***
 - Baldwin, James. 1988. *The Fire next Time*. New York: Dell. **Chapter 1**
- 9. ***Racial Identity: Majority Groups [October 17 & 19]***
 - Jardina, A. (2019). *White identity politics*. Cambridge University Press. *Gender & Feminism*. **Chapter 1**
- 10. ***Religious Identity [October 24 & 26]***
 - [One Nation Under God? The Political Power of Evangelicalism](#)
 - McDaniel, Eric L. 2016. "What Kind of Christian Are You? Religious Ideologies and Political Attitudes." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 55(2): 288–307.
- 11. ***Gender & Feminism [October 31 & November 2nd]***
 - Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2011. "Gendered Perceptions and Political Candidacies: A Central Barrier to Women's Equality in Electoral Politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(1): 59–73.
 - <https://statusofwomendata.org/explore-the-data/political-participation/political-participation-full-section/>
 - <https://www.american.edu/spa/wpi/upload/2012-men-rule-report-web.pdf>
- 12. ***Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity [November 7th & 9th]***
 - [Stonewall Forever – A Documentary about the Past, Present, and Future of Pride](#)
 - Listen to the podcast: "From Stonewall to the Present, Fifty Years of L.G.B.T.Q. Rights" From the New Yorker Radio Hour (<http://www.wnystudios.org/story/stonewall-presentfifty-years-lgbtq-rights/>)
- 13. **Exam Week [November 14 & 16]**
 - Exam Review – November 14
 - Exam – November 16
- 14. ***THANKSGIVING BREAK!! [November 20 – 24]***
- 15. ***Presentations – Last Week of Class!! [November 28 & 30]***