

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN  
**ISSUES & POLICIES IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: ELECTIONS (GOV 312L)**

Unique #38335

FALL 2022

**MEETING PLACE:** Online Streaming

**MEETING TIME:** MW 2:30-3:45pm

**PROFESSOR BETHANY ALBERTSON** OFFICE HOURS: Mondays, 9-12

**PROFESSOR SEAN THERIAULT** OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays, 8-11

**TEACHING ASSISTANTS AND TA OFFICE HOURS**

- Ben White: Friday, 8am – 11am
- Peter Dunphy: Wednesday, 4pm – 7pm
- Paz Avila: Friday, 2pm – 5pm
- Hillary Corwin: Tuesday/Wednesday, 8am – 9:30am
- Connor Dye: Thursday, 2pm – 5pm
- Heartlee Harman: Monday/Wednesday, 12:30pm – 2pm
- Artem Kyartalnov: Tuesday, 4pm – 5:30pm; Thursday, 4:30pm – 6pm
- Yoona Song: Friday, 9am – 12pm

**To contact the professors and teaching assistants, please email:**

onlinegov312ta@austin.utexas.edu

There are both in-person and virtual options for TA office hours. Note that **all** non-technical support questions should be directed to the email address listed above. Questions to the Professors or TAs asked via Canvas's messaging feature will not be answered, except as to direct you to submit them through the email above (or via Chatter, explained further below).

**To contact technical support outside of class, please click "Online Course Tech Support" on the left-hand menu of Canvas.**

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This course fulfills the second legislatively mandated government course that every student graduating from a public university in Texas must take. While the course focuses on the 2022 elections, we will provide a framework for understanding elections back in time and going forward. The course topics include the electoral rules of the game, who runs for office, who wins, the strategies involved, who votes, how they vote, and how it all comes together on election day. After the election, we will focus on how elections affect governing and what we can expect going forward. In addition to mastering a set of basic facts about American government, students will learn theories addressing “big questions” in American politics and will explore critical assessments of the evidence brought to bear on these questions. Some of these topics are also examined in the context of Texas politics.

We have four primary purposes in this course. First, we provide basic descriptive information about the American and Texas political systems by examining important political institutions, actors, and processes. Second, we develop analytical skills by which to understand complex political relationships and phenomena. Third, we introduce the work of political scientists by concentrating on the paradigms and techniques of the discipline. Fourth, we empower the students to appreciate their role in a properly functioning democracy.

## COURSE MATERIALS

- *Campaigns and Elections*, 4E, John Sides, Daron Shaw, Matt Grossmann, Keena Lipsitz. Norton, 2022.
- We will use the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program as the default option for purchasing the textbook. Purchasing the textbook through LTA is cheaper than purchasing the textbook through the publisher. You have until the 12th class day (September 7th, 2022) to opt out. Your bill will appear on your "What I Owe" page on August 29th, 2022 and is due on the 20th class day (September 19th, 2022).
- If you opt out of the LTA, the textbook can be purchased: <https://digital.wwnorton.com/campaigns4>. You may use an earlier version of the textbook if you wish, but please note that pop quizzes and reading credit assignments draw from the 4th edition of the textbook.
- Supplemental readings throughout the semester
- The supplemental readings and all other course materials are accessible through Modules on the course Canvas site, organized by lecture.

## COURSE FORMAT

This version of the Issues and Policies in American Government course is taught online, which means you participate in this class through your computer (from the comfort of your own home, library, or coffee joint) rather than in-person. Though delivered via the

Internet, this course takes place at the official times described in the course schedule (MW, 2:30 – 3:45pm). You are expected to “attend” class by logging into the course site by 2:30 on Monday and Wednesday to watch the real-time video stream of 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. You will have the opportunity to pose questions online in real-time, and we endeavor to respond as best we can. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have the ability to fully participate in this online class.

For each lecture, ten students can attend in-person at the LAITS studio on the third floor of Mezes Hall. Because there is a hard cap on ten students, we ask that if you'd like to show up, you sign up on [this Google sheet](#). While you don't receive extra credit for attending in person, we always love seeing students' faces! Note that class starts promptly at 2:30pm and we ask that if you are running late to the studio you join virtually.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

### Required Internet-Enabled Device

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 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and use it.)
- 5 Mbps internet connection speed ([check your speed here \(Links to an external site.\)](#))
- 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 \(Links to an external site.\)](https://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php)

### **For the best class experience:**

- Close all unnecessary browser windows and tabs and programs
  - Streaming music (Pandora, Spotify, etc.)
  - Social media sites
  - YouTube or other video sites
  - Online/Offline Gaming
- Clear the browser's cache before class ([here's how \(Links to an external site.\)](#))
- Check your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware ([UT recommendations \(Links to an external site.\)](#))

Bandwidth limitations: No use of high bandwidth programs. Because the streaming video is bandwidth intensive, you are not allowed to access YouTube, Skype, Gmail video chat or other online video system, or any other program that is bandwidth-demanding. During the class session, you should be watching the lecture and nothing else!

The Dean of Students Office has created a Student Emergency Fund to assist students with the extra costs (including technology) associated with COVID-19. For more information, please see

<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/studentemergencyfund.php> for more information.

## COURSE COMMUNICATION

- Announcements: Outside of the video lectures, any student communication initiated by professors and teaching assistants is conducted via the Announcements page on our course website, so please make sure to check the Announcements page on a daily basis.
- Outside of class discussion: This course uses Chatter, a discussion board built directly into your Canvas course. Here students can submit questions related to the content of the course that other students might benefit from seeing. Students are encouraged to answer each other's questions and professors and TAs regularly "endorse" good submissions.
- Private communication: Students who wish to contact anyone on the teaching team (professors or teaching assistants) can do so either during office hours or via the common course email address: [onlinegov312ta@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:onlinegov312ta@austin.utexas.edu).
- Technical questions should be directed to the tech people using the "Online Course Tech Support" link on the left-hand menu of Canvas (not the professors or the Tas). If you have technical issues it's important to contact the live tech support chat immediately during class. Outside of class you can email tech support and expect a response within 24 hours.

## COURSE INTEGRITY

- Honor system for quizzes and writing assignments: By taking this class, the student agrees to abide by the University of Texas regulations concerning cheating. During the weekly quizzes, students cannot receive help from any source other than their own notes or the textbook. For written assignments, all submitted materials must be original and done exclusively by the student whose name is attached to it. If students observe cheating in any manner, they are honor bound to contact the Tas or instructors. For more, see **Academic Dishonesty**.
- Information and data security: All exercises, quizzes, writing assignments, and online interactions over the system are saved and stored. All information is 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

information is secure, please do not include identifying information in online interactions with others.

- University honor code violations: 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 are strictly enforced:  
<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/index.php>

A few additional points merit attention. 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:

- Providing your UT EID to another person
- Collaborating or sharing information with another person on a quiz, writing assignment, or exercise

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. Grade-related penalties are routinely assessed (up to and including an "F" in the course), but students can also be suspended or even permanently expelled from the University for scholastic dishonesty. Also, remember that all information is stored on secure UT-Austin computer servers. In online interactions with others, remember that the instructors and TAs will have access to all information.

## COURSE EVALUATION

Grades for this class will be based on the following:

- 50% In class pop quizzes (PQ) – A weekly (approximately) multiple-choice quiz on course material. The quizzes are given at random times and they are designed to test comprehension of the material from readings and lectures up until the previous lecture. At least 12 PQ are offered and a student's top 10 count for her/his grade; a tiny fraction of the lowest two quizzes is added to the students' PQ grade as extra credit.
- 30% Election engagement projects (EE) - A series of projects spaced throughout the semester that ask the students to engage with government in various ways. The exact nature of these assignments vary, but they stress the importance of the individual within a well-functioning democracy. At least 8 EE projects will be offered and a student's top 6 count for her/his grade; a tiny fraction of the other EE projects will be added to the students' EE grade as extra credit.
- 10% In-class activities (ICA) – During regular class times, polls to gauge opinion or multiple-choice questions to assess student comprehension is conducted. These are graded for participation only (did you enter an answer?). We offer at least 12 ICA opportunities during the course and 10 count for your grade; a tiny fraction of the lowest two ICA is added to the students' ICA grade as extra credit.

- 10% Reading Credits (RC) – The online textbook has reading comprehension questions for each section. These questions will be found in Canvas. The reading credits portion of the student's grade is based on the percentage of reading comprehension questions completed correctly by 11:59 PM the day of the lectures. Unlike the other components, every single one of these reading credit assignments will count toward your grade.

## **Overall Grades**

The grading scale is as follows:

93%-100%	A
90%-93%	A-
87%-90%	B+
83%-87%	B
80%-83%	B-
77%-80%	C+
73%-77%	C
70%-73%	C-
67%-70%	D+
63%-67%	D
60%-63%	D-
0%-60%	F

We will not round up in this course. A 92.99999 is an A-, just as a 93.0 is an A.

### **Important grading notes:**

- There is no final exam associated with this class.
- Notice the multiple opportunities to earn the required points for quizzes and participation. We understand that students' lives can be busy and complicated and that for a variety of legitimate and perhaps silly reasons they might miss a class or forget to do an assignment. It's also possible that technical difficulties will arise during a quiz or participation portion of the class. It is the student's responsibility to ensure a properly functioning computer (with the advice and consultation with the tech support). Make-up quizzes or participation opportunities DO NOT exist in this class – the extra opportunities for grades are there to provide some leeway. If a student completes more than the required number of quizzes and class participation assignments, a tiny fraction of the remaining points will be added to their grade as extra credit.

## **DISABILITY & ACCESS (D&A)**

If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to Professors Albertson or Theriault as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

## **TITLE IX REPORTING**

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Senate Bill 212 requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, 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) must be reported. 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](mailto:advocate@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](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu), or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, 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 Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

August 22 - First day of class

August 24 - The 2022 Elections

August 29 - Introduction to Elections (Chapter 1)

August 31 - The American Electoral Process (Chapter 2)

September 5 - Labor Day (no class!)

September 7 - The Transformation of American Campaigns (Chapter 3)

September 12 - Candidates (readings TBD)

September 14 - Candidates (readings TBD)

September 19 - Financing Campaigns (Chapter 4)

September 21 - Modern Campaign Strategies (Chapter 5)

September 26 - Political Parties (Chapter 6)

September 28 - Interest Groups (Chapter 7)

October 3 - Media (Chapter 8)

October 5 - Presidential Campaigns (Chapter 9)

October 10 - Congressional Campaigns (Chapter 10)  
October 12 - Congressional Campaigns, Part II

October 17 - State and Local Campaigns (Chapter 11)  
October 19 - Voting Rules (readings TBD)

October 24 - Voter Participation (Chapter 12)  
October 26 - Voter Choices (Chapter 13)

October 31 - Youth Participation (readings TBD)  
November 2 - BA Research Day (readings TBD)

November 7 - Pre-Election class (readings TBD)  
November 9 - Post-Election class (readings TBD)

November 14 - ST Research Day (readings TBD)  
November 16 - The Future of American Democracy (readings TBD)

November 28 - Election follow up (readings TBD)  
November 30 - Last day of class