

**Introduction to American and Texas Government-Online
GOV 310L**

Unique: 38170

Professor Eric L. McDaniel

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Days: Monday & Wednesday	Time: 1:00-2:15	Online Streaming
Instructor Information	Office: Batts Hall 4.122	Phone: 512-232-7268
Drop-in Hours		
In-Person: Wednesday 10:30-12:00	Virtual: Tuesday 10:30-12:00	

Teaching Assistants

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Teaching Assistant	Student Group	Drop-in Hours
Hartlee Harman		
Vianney Gomez		
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Alex Wais		
Artem Kvartalnov		
Anthony Kuhn		
TBD		

Course Description

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. While our main focus is on the national level, additional attention is paid to the state and local governments of Texas. In some instances, the American case is placed in a comparative context derived from the experience of other western democratic nations. In other instances, we focus on changes over time within the American political system to demonstrate how principles often change with context. At all times, we are interested in a better understanding of how this particular system has developed and what it means for citizens of the United States.

There are three primary objectives in this course. The first is to provide basic descriptive information about the American and Texas political systems by examining important political processes, institutions, and actors. The second is to develop analytical skills with which to understand complex relationships and phenomena. The third is to introduce the work of the political scientist by concentrating on the paradigms and techniques of the discipline.

Required Texts and Items

Central Ideas in American Government" 14/e is 978-1-954890-54-1. \$50

Each chapter of the webtext has a series of “Get the Gist” questions which are designed to make sure that students are properly understanding the material covered. Students are not required to complete these questions; however, they will be tested on the material covered in the assigned chapters. Students will be given four (4) attempts at each set of “Get the Gist” questions in each chapter. For the students who complete the “Get the Gist” questions in all of the chapters and receive a total score of at least ninety percent (90%), they will receive ten (10) additional points toward their final point total.

1. Additional readings, videos, and podcasts will be posted on Canvas.
2. Students are expected to be aware of current events and regularly read either the *New York Times* or *Washington Post*. Articles from these two media sources will be posted throughout the semester. Students should be prepared to answer questions related to the posted articles for papers and exams.

Films and Videos

Several films and videos are available on Canvas. Many of them will not be shown in class, it is the student’s responsibility to take the time to watch the film and take notes. Below is a list of some of the films and their purpose.

1. Belton, David. 2010. ["A New Eden."](#) In *God In America*, ed. David Belton. Boston: WGBH Educational Foundation.
The purpose of this film is to establish an understanding of how religion was approached in the early years of the nation. My showing of this film is not an attempt to indoctrinate any thinking about how religion should operate in America. When watching this film pay particular attention to the discussion of separation of church and state as well as the discussion of religious freedom.
2. Espinosa, Paul. 1985. [The Lemon Grove Incident](#). Espinosa Productions.
The purpose of this film is to provide a vivid example of how the nation has come to define civil rights. When watching this film, pay special attention to the cause of the conflict, how the decision was contested, the outcome and the logic behind the final outcome.

Course Format

This is the digital version of the American Government course—unlike almost all other courses offered at the University of Texas, often you will be viewing this class online (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: 1:00 – 2:15 PM Mondays and Wednesdays. You are expected to “attend” class by logging into the course site by 12:55 PM 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 will endeavor to respond as best we can. If anyone wants to watch the lectures in person, our studio in Mezes Hall can

accommodate a 12-person studio audience. Please let us know about a week in advance and we can arrange for you to get in.

Before beginning, there are a few important information items to cover. To get to everything associated with the class, simply go to: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1372208>

You can enter directly from the internet or through Canvas (<https://utexas.instructure.com/>). To log in to Canvas and the class website, you will need your UT EID and password. Once you reach the class website, you can navigate your way to other areas. Some of the most important include:

Homepage – The Homepage will have links to the Modules, information regarding technical questions, as well as contact information for the instructors and teaching assistants. 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.

Modules – The Modules page includes a listing of the reading assignments, as well as links to the lecture videos, graded assignments, and other course documents. Each module contains the collection of reading, videos, and graded assignments organized around a particular course subject. Note that the readings and links may change up to about a week before the listed date. Due dates for the reading assignments can also be accessed via the Calendar.

Pre-Class Activities – At top of the homepage, you'll find the Pre-Class Activities Module. You should complete all pre-class activities before the first day of class. A lot of effort has been put into these activities to answer questions you may have about the course. Activities include information on the syllabus, a FAQ page, a technical requirements and testing page, and other helpful tips for doing well in the course.

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 – We organize the gradebook by individual assignment as well as assignment group.

Zoom – On occasion, this is where we will store taped professor and TA recordings (under “Cloud Recordings”).

Most of your activity on Canvas will take place in the Modules tab.

Technical Requirements and Technical Support

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 unsupported. 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 (<https://www.google.com/chrome/downloads/>Links to an external site.) and use it.

Internet connection speed: 5 Mbps download speed. Check your speed here: <https://www.speedtest.net/>Links to an external site.

Confirm that your computer is able to stream video by visiting: <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php>Links to an external site.

For the best experience:

1. Close all unnecessary browser windows and tabs and program
2. Streaming music (Spotify, etc.)
3. Social media sites
4. YouTube or other video sites
5. Online/Offline Gaming
6. Check your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware
<https://security.utexas.edu/education-outreach/anti-virus>Links to an external site.
7. Clear the browser's cache before class
(<https://www.refreshyourcache.com/en/home/>Links to an external site.)

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.

There are multiple computer labs on campus for your use if you do not have a personal computer or laptop. (You can find a listing of these labs here [Links to an external site.](#)) If you do not have an internet-enabled device, some inexpensive ones are available at local stores or on the internet, some for as little as \$100.

Coursework

Class Poll Participation: 40 points

Through the class sessions, students will be asked to respond to class polls called Instapolls. The poll will ask your opinion on certain issues and serve as attention checks. There will be several dozen opportunities to participate in these polls. The polls will be graded as complete or incomplete. Given that students may miss a class or a poll for a variety of reasons, the ten (10) lowest scores will be dropped.

Content Application (CA): 100 points

One of the goals of this course is to help students better understand how they can use the government to help solve issues or problems of importance to them. To accomplish this, students will have five (5) writing assignments in which they apply what they have learned about in a specific section of the class to solving a particular problem of interest. Students will be asked to identify their issue or problem of interest in the first few weeks of the class. The completed assignment should be 350-400 words. *Please refer to Canvas and the class calendar below for due dates.*

Career Preparedness Exercise: 60 points

Because your time in college will swiftly pass, it is important for students to begin preparing themselves for their careers as soon as possible. The career preparedness exercise is intended to help students think about their future after college. *Please refer to Canvas and the class calendar below for due dates.* The career preparedness exercise will require students to prepare:

- (1) Resume (20 points)
- (2) Career plan (40 points)

Guidelines for Career Plan

3-5 pages double spaced; size 12 font; include page numbers

Your career plan must address each of the following:

1. Develop a refined list of career options by examining your interests, skills, and values through self-assessment.
Online Career Assessment Tests
 - a. <https://www.princetonreview.com/quiz/career-quiz>
 - b. <http://yourfreecareertest.com/>
 - c. <http://www.assessment.com/>
 - d. <https://www.whatcareerisrightforme.com/career-aptitude-test.php>
2. Prioritize your top skills and interests. Indicate what is most important to you, such as money family, location, or benefits. Make sure to include potential deal breakers, such as long hours, travel or high turnover rate.
3. Provide a realistic description of the aspects of the careers you are interested in pursuing. Make it clear what the day-to-day activities of this career entail and establish what skills are needed to advance in this career.
4. Compare your most promising career options against your list of prioritized skills, interests and values.
5. Consider other factors, such as demand, barriers to entry, and needed qualifications. Discuss what may issues may increase or decrease the demand for people in these careers. Make sure to discuss how you plan to overcome barriers to entry and earn the necessary qualifications for that career.

6. Provide and justify at least one career choice. Describe what you have done to work towards the career choice, such as job experience, internships and classes. Make sure you are realistic in making your career choice.
7. Develop a realistic timeline to achieve your career goals.

Below are the websites to some of the career services offices in the various colleges that can help you prepare your resume and career plan.

1. Undergraduate Studies: <https://ugs.utexas.edu/vick/career>
2. Fine Arts: <http://finearts.utexas.edu/careers>
3. Moody College of Communications: <https://moody.utexas.edu/career-services>
4. McCombs School of Business: <https://www.mcombs.utexas.edu/career-services>
5. College of Natural Sciences: <https://cns.utexas.edu/career-services>
6. Liberal Arts: <http://liberalarts.utexas.edu/lacs/>
7. Jackson School of Geosciences: <https://www.jsge.utexas.edu/careers/>
8. School of Information: <https://www.ischool.utexas.edu/careers>
9. School of Social Work: <https://socialwork.utexas.edu/dccs/>
10. College of Education: <https://education.utexas.edu/about/offices/career-services>
11. School of Nursing: <https://nursing.utexas.edu/academics/career.html>
12. School of Architecture: <http://soa.utexas.edu/resources/career-services>
13. Cockrell School of Engineering: <http://www.engr.utexas.edu/ecac>

Exams: 300 points

There will be three (3) in-class exams. Each exam will contain fifty (50) multiple choice items. The material tested on the exam will be from the course lecture, webtext, and additional materials (i.e. podcasts, videos, and readings). Students should expect at least forty percent (40%) of the exam questions to come from the lecture, at least forty five percent (45%) to come from the webtext. The remaining questions will be from the additional materials. The exams are cumulative. Concepts learned at the beginning of the class will be critical for later in the class.

Student Panel

To increase student-interaction and student engagement, each class will offer students the opportunity to participate in the student panel. Those who participate in the student panel will appear to the class, via Zoom, to respond to questions about specific content and ask questions about concepts and events covered in the lecture. This is an opportunity for students to express their thoughts as well as seek clarification. Each class will have 10-15 openings for students to participate in the panel. Students who participate in the panel are expected to be prepared for class by making sure they have read the assigned webtext chapter and the assigned additional material for that day. Those who participate in the student panel will be asked to submit a 400–500-word essay responding to the additional material assigned for that class day. This writing assignment will be due at 1 PM on the day the student is participating in the panel. Students are only allowed to participate once. Students who both participate in the panel and submit a satisfactory response paper, will receive ten (10) additional points toward their final point total.

Students who wish to participate, should use the Canvas calendar to sign up. The instructions for which are below.

To sign up for the GOV 310L student panels:

1. Log into Canvas: <https://utexas.instructure.com/>
2. Click on the “Calendar” icon in the left-hand navigation menu
3. On the right-hand side under “Calendars” make sure “Fa23 – AMERICAN GOVERNMENT–WB (38170) is selected.
4. On the calendar, find the date of the student panel you want to attend. They occur every class period except exam days, and September 13.
5. Click on the calendar event and register.
6. Note the Zoom link listed in the “Location” of the calendar event. You’ll use that link to join the panel on class day you registered for, at 12:50PM.
7. Read through the instructions in the “Details” of the calendar event.
8. Note instruction #1 contains the link to the required written assignment for student panel participants.
9. A day or two before your panel, go to this Student Panel Assignment link, do your written assignment, and submit it. These assignments must be submitted before your student panel starts at 1:00PM.
10. On the day of the panel, go back to the calendar event to copy/paste the Zoom link into your browser.

***Students may only attend one student panel per semester.**

***If you registered for a student panel but can no longer attend, please go to the Canvas calendar and unregister yourself before it starts.**

Participation	40 points
Content Application	100 points
Career Preparedness	60 points
Exam One	100 points
Exam Two	100 points
Exam Three	100 points
Total	500 points

Overall Grades

Please note, there is no curve and I do not round up grades. A 449.999% is a B+.

A	465-500	B-	400-414.99	D+	335-349.99
A-	450-464.99	C+	385-399.99	D	315-334.99
B+	435-449.99	C	365-384.99	D-	300-314.99
B	415-434.99	C-	350-364.99	F	0-299.99

Expectations

Preparation

Doing well in this class necessitates students be informed and prepared. Therefore, you will be expected to complete the readings prior to when class meets. 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 your preparation.

Professionalism

Remember that this is an academic environment. Therefore, I ask that you minimize unnecessary disruptions. 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.
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, minus the use of any profanity.
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 newspaper reading, 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, to ensure accuracy.

Written statements may be submitted for consideration **AFTER** one week has passed since the assignment was returned to students. This allows the student time to re-read his/her answers and think carefully about what improvements could have been made.

Grade complaints will not be considered once two weeks have passed. For example, if I return a graded assignment on Thursday February 14th, students must submit a complaint **BEFORE** the Thursday February 28th. Once class is over on that Thursday, no complaints will be considered for that assignment.

Since class time is limited, we will only deal with questions or concerns during scheduled office hours. You will need to file the grievance with the individual who graded your exam or assignment and in addition, you will need to meet with them to discuss the grievance.

Finally, submitting a grade grievance will result in a complete re-grade of the assignment.

Course Communication

From the student's perspective, the basic rules are as follows:

1. Do NOT use the Canvas mail system. This class is too large to manage student communication through this platform. We will not be checking the Canvas inbox regularly so please send your inquiries to one of the two communication avenues below:
2. Technical support can be obtained through the "Online Tech Support Chat" button on the left-hand menu in Canvas (not the professors or the TAs).
3. Substantive questions about the class, as well as questions concerning accommodations or study habits should be sent directly to the professors and/or TAs at onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu. Or, better yet, come to office hours! Please abide by the rules of respect and decorum described below when participating in any course conversations.
4. Questions about grades will only be answered in-person during office hours. We will not answer questions about grades by email.

From the professor's perspective,

1. If you have an issue that you need to discuss with Prof. McDaniel, please attend his office hours.
2. If you cannot attend office hours, you may contact Prof. McDaniel to make an appointment.
3. When contacting the teaching assistants please limit your e-mails to questions about class topics.
4. Any grievances involving the class must be handled during office hours.
5. Make sure to check the syllabus, your email, and Canvas first before sending an e-mail. In many cases they will answer your question.

6. Finally, you are required use proper etiquette. The teaching assistants have been instructed to not reply to any emails that do not follow proper etiquette. For tips on proper e-mail etiquette visit <http://www.101email etiquettetips.com/>.

Information and Data Security

All examinations, exercises, assignments, and online interactions over the TOWER system 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, UT EIDs, 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 others, remember that the professors and TAs will have access to all information.

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/>Links to an external site..

Academic Honesty

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:

1. Providing your UT EID to another person;
2. Collaborating or sharing information with another person on a quiz, writing assignment, or exercise;
3. Recording any quiz, assessment or assignment material in any format;
4. Failing to properly cite ideas, data, or arguments that are not originally yours.

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>Links to an external site.

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> Links to an external site.

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 teaching team.

The 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/standardsconduct.php>

In the event that a student violates the University policy on scholastic dishonesty, they 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.

TITLE IX Reporting

Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual misconduct, dating/domestic violence and stalking at federally funded educational institutions. UT Austin is committed to fostering a learning and working environment free from discrimination in all its forms. When sexual misconduct occurs in our community, the university can:

1. Intervene to prevent harmful behavior from continuing or escalating.
2. Provide support and remedies to students and employees who have experienced harm or have become involved in a Title IX investigation.
3. Investigate and discipline violations of the university's [relevant policies](#).

Faculty members and certain staff members are considered "Responsible Employees" or "Mandatory Reporters," which means that they are required to report violations of Title IX to the Title IX Coordinator. **We are Responsible Employees and must report any Title IX related incidents** that are disclosed in writing, discussion, or one-on-one. Before talking with us, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, be sure to ask whether they are a responsible employee. If you want to speak with someone for support or remedies without making an official report to the university, email advocate@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit titleix.utexas.edu or contact the Title IX Office at titleix@austin.utexas.edu.

Religious Holy Day Observance

By UT Austin policy, you must notify your instructor 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 to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Excused Absences

An absence from class will only be excused if proper documentation from a university representative is presented. If you have an emergency which prevents you from attending class, please contact the [Emergency Services Office in the Office of the Dean of Students](#) to gain documentation. In the case of planned activities, the documentation must be presented at least two weeks 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.

Make-up Exams

Students will only be allowed to take the make-up exam if they have an excused absence.

Changes to the Course

The professor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus to better facilitate the needs of the course.

Date	Topic	Assigned Readings and Activities
21-Aug-2023	Defining Government & Democracy	Declaration of Independence
23-Aug-2023	Public Policy	Webtext: Chapter One What if Sociologists Had as Much Influence as Economists?
28-Aug-2023	Constitution	Webtext: Chapter Two Federalist 1
30-Aug-2023	Constitution	Constitute Website Brutus
4-Sep-2023	Labor Day--No Class	
6-Sep-2023	Federalism	Webtext: Chapter Three Federalist 39
11-Sep-2023	Federalism	Webtext Chapter Four From Manhattan to Madison, a bruising week for American federalism Content Application One
13-Sep-2023	Civil Liberties and Rights	Webtext: Chapter 5 God in America: A New Eden
18-Sep-2023	Civil Liberties and Rights	Webtext: Chapter 6 Lemon Grove Incident
20-Sep-2023	Exam One	Content Application Two
25-Sep-2023	Congress	Webtext: Chapter 7 Federalist 51

27-Sep-2023	Congress	Stuff You Missed in History Class: Elbridge Gerry's Monstrous Salamander
2-Oct-2023	Presidency	Webtext: Chapter 8 Federalist 70
4-Oct-2023	Bureaucracy	Webtext: Chapter 9 Whistleblower calls for government transparency as Congress digs for the truth about UFOs
9-Oct-2023	Courts	Webtext: Chapter 10 Law and Politics
11-Oct-2023	Courts	Content Application Three Federalist 78
16-Oct-2023	Media	Webtext: Chapter 11 'Horse race' coverage of elections can harm voters, candidates and news outlets
18-Oct-2023	Media	Social media can in fact be made better: Research shows it is possible to reward users for sharing accurate information instead of misinformation
23-Oct-2023	Interest Groups	Webtext: Chapter 12 Federalist 10
25-Oct-2023	Social Movements	Letter from Birmingham Jail
30-Oct-2023	Exam Two	Content Application Four
1-Nov-2023	Parties	Webtext: Chapter 13 This 1950 political science report keeps popping up in the news. Here's the story behind it.

6-Nov-2023	Parties	If America Had Six Parties, Which Would You Belong To?
8-Nov-2023	Public Opinion	Webtext: Chapter 14 Pew Political Typology Quiz Career Preparedness Exercise
13-Nov-2023	Public Opinion	Can we still trust the polls?
15-Nov-2023	Political Participation	Webtext: Chapter 15 Turnout in U.S. has soared in recent elections but by some measures still trails that of many other countries
20-Nov-2023	Fall Break--No Class	
22-Nov-2023	Fall Break--No Class	
27-Nov-2023	Campaigns and Elections	Webtext: Chapter 16 A.I.'s Use in Elections Sets Off a Scramble for Guardrails
29-Nov-2023	Foreign Policy	A Foreign Policy for the American People
4-Dec-2023	Exam Three	Content Application Five