

# **American Government**

**GOV 310L 38825**

Fall 2021

***Instructor:*** Shannon Bow O'Brien, PhD

***Meeting Time:*** MWF 1-2pm JES A121A

This class is in a room which has Lectures Online enabled. All lectures will be recorded and available via Lectures Online (or taped if necessary, by professor) on Canvas. You do not have to attend class if you are uncomfortable doing so.

**Student Hours:** I only have scheduled(booked) 15-minute appointments (not drop in) this semester to help with social distancing.

Online: I will have scheduled (booked) 15-minute appointments on Tuesday/Thursday from 10:30-noon.

Any updates will be on Canvas in the announcement page

Any in person office hours will be in MEZ 3.226 by email appointment

**Email:** shannonbow@utexas.edu

*Be sure to include something about the American Government class in the subject line. I am teaching American Government and American Presidency this semester so an email saying 'question about class' needs to be more specific since I will have about 600 students between the three classes.*

Please routinely check Canvas for this class. I post Powerpoint slides, notes and information I feel are important to the class. In addition, we will post your grades online.

## **Teaching Assistants: TBA**

Your TA will hold hours to meet with you. These will be posted on Canvas when available.

Unless your question/problem directly involves my teaching assistants, I expect you to contact them first for class assistance.

## **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to American Government. It is designed to give you a basic idea of the functions, activities, and interactions of our federal system. Our government is a dynamic entity that has evolved over time and shaped by both internal and external forces. The goal of this class is to provide you with tools to understand American Institutions. Through learning the duties, powers, and limitations of government, you can better appreciate the impact of current events upon America. This course may be used to fulfill three hours of the American and Texas government component of the university core curriculum and addresses the following four core objectives established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board: communication skills, critical thinking skills, personal responsibility, and social responsibility.

## **Required Readings:**

**There is ONE (1) book required for this course. You can purchase it either as a hardcopy version from the bookstore/online/etc or as an electronic version.**

American Politics Today, 7<sup>th</sup> Essentials Edition by William T. Bianco and David T. Canon W. W. Norton and Company.

I am using the new edition in class. However, I do not use any online material from the publisher. I am also using the ESSENTIALS edition (shorter and thus cheaper).

*I reserve the right to assign additional readings from time to time if I feel they are needed. Any additional readings will be added Canvas and also announced in class.*

### **Grades:**

*Grades will be based on the following:*

<b>Test 1</b>	September 27 (Monday):	30%
<b>Test 2</b>	October 25 (Monday):	30%
<b>Test 3</b>	December 6 (Monday)	30%

### **Assignments**

Paper Assignment 1	October 11 (Monday)	5%
Paper Assignment 2	November 8 (Monday)	5%

### **All Tests, Paper Assignments and Quizzes will be ONLINE in Canvas this semester.**

I have thought about the tests for this semester carefully. I am concerned with two classes of 300 students back-to-back, many of you may be uncomfortable testing in a room with this many people at once.

TEST 1,2,3 will be given **online** on Canvas during CLASS TIME. You can take the exam anywhere (as long as you do your own work and no collaboration). You may use your book and notes on the exam. It will be 50 minutes.

Assuming we are in person, I will come in the class room during test time and sit there for the time period. You are welcome to sit in the room and take the test on your own computer if you want/need a quiet place to take the exam.

If you become ill and are unable to participate in the course, you need to contact the professor and/or the Dean of Students office about your situation.

If attendance/participation/interest becomes extremely low, I may begin to take attendance. If I do exercise this option, I will announce it in class and on Canvas as well as with the re-weighted grade scale. However, attendance is NOT required for this course.

I also reserve the right to make any changes to the grading system I see fit during the semester. This may include, but is not limited to additional paper assignments (if I determine they are needed), or moving the test dates to accommodate unforeseen circumstances (think hurricanes and natural disasters, not doctor's appointments).

### **Grade Scale:**

The University uses a plus/minus system. Here is the scale I will use for the class for grades. I do NOT round up or negotiate grades. You will receive your earned grade based on performance.

A:	93-100	B+:	87-89.99
A-:	90-92.99	B:	83-86.99

B-: 80-82.99  
C+: 77-79.99  
C: 73-76.99  
C-: 70-72.99

D+: 67-69.99  
D: 63-66.99  
D-: 60-62.99  
F: Less than 60

### **Paper Assignments**

You will have *two* paper assignments. These assignments will be posted on Canvas prior to their due date. They will be uploaded on Canvas.

The two short paper assignments will involve collecting information about American politics. They will be announced at a later date.

If your turned in assignment is functionally identical to another student, you will both fail the assignment with a 0 (zero) regardless of which one copied it and which one is copied from.

Late papers will be penalized. For every calendar day a paper is late (including weekends, breaks, and non-class days), it will be penalized 5% of the total grade a day until 50%. Additional late penalties will not be assessed after 50% though you may be graded lower than 50% for incorrect information.

- These papers assignment days are noted on the calendar at the back of this syllabus. They will be posted to Canvas at least a week prior to their due day.
- You will be expected to fill out the form in its entirety. Incorrect information is always wrong.
- These forms introduce you to aspects of the American presidency. They are in this format this semester to facilitate grading. The course is quite large and the information collected on the forms would mirror what would be expected if you were to research and write a short paper for the course.

Papers will be graded on a 5 point scale (yes I will give quarter and half points). 1 will be the lowest and 5 will be full points. (5=100%, 4.75=95%, 4.5=90%, 4.25=85%, etc)

All assignment grades can only be questioned or challenged for 2 weeks after the date it is first returned back to the class. If the last assignment is returned with less than 2 weeks of the semester left, then the last day of class is the last day to challenge a grade. Only the professor (not the TAs) has the authority to change an assignment grade (unless it is a minor or obvious calculation error). If the grade is not questioned or challenged in this time frame, it stands as recorded. This is designed to encourage students to retrieve their papers and also to not question grades in December that were handed back in October because they decide they do not like their final class grade.

You will be able to see grading on your assignments in Canvas.

**Late papers are only accepted until November 22, 2021. No paper assignments will be accepted after that day.**

### **EXAMS**

***THREE multiple choice, true/false, and/or short answer exams will be given.*** They will cover material presented in lectures and in the readings from the text, as well as any other material assigned/presented in class (including videos if I show any). The final exam is **NOT** cumulative and will only cover material presented since the previous exam. However, most of concepts in this course build upon each other so you will be expected to retain information from earlier portions of the class.

The test days are fixed and announced the first day of class. They will not be changed or negotiated. If these test days do not fit your personal schedule, do **NOT** enroll in this course. DO NOT ask to move the final at the end of the semester because you suddenly realized you have another exam in conflict.

There are too many students in this course to work with you to make these dates fit vacations, trips, or other such matters. While I will abide by university approved absences and work with students, make up

exams may not be the same exam given to the majority of the class and could be an essay exam if I decide one is best to test the information.

If you are online and in a different radically time zone, you will need to communicate with the professor to schedule it a reasonable time when you are awake.

If the university is cancelled because of an event (e.g. snow), the exam is cancelled. The professor will communicate on Canvas about rescheduling.

**Class Recordings:** Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are 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.

### **Academic Dishonesty/Cheating**

You will be expected to adhere to the UT 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.*

Though obvious, cheating is not allowed on any assignments. Plagiarism is prohibited. It refers to copying any work from any source (electronic, paper, etc.) without noting/citing its original source. It is important to note that using ideas (and not just quotes) from other sources without proper citation also counts as plagiarism. For additional information on these items, see the University General Information Catalog at: <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/> and <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>. **Any assignments turned in will be assumed to be the final version of the assignment and any inappropriate material will be considered intentional and not accidental.**

Any class materials may not be uploaded onto 3<sup>rd</sup> party websites without the professor's explicit permission. If you do so, it will be considered a violation of the honor code. The professor has the right (even after the class is completed) to submit these violations to Judicial Affairs for adjudication.

**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 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 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 in the course.

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. For further information, <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>

### **Canvas**

I will attempt to use Canvas as a way to provide information to the class. In the past, I have regularly made RTF versions of my Powerpoint slides available prior to class. However, if I encounter problems utilizing Canvas, I may shift my materials (including test guides and other things) to another website devoted to making material available to the class. I will announce any changes of this sort to the class.

**I will try to post on Canvas review sheets prior to each exam.** These sheets should not be considered the definitive study guide for the test. Rather, they are a list of major concepts and ideas you should definitely know for the exam.

### **Additional information**

Do NOT phone or email me about a grade (i.e. "What did I get?"). We will post grades electronically as soon as practical.

**If you need extra time on a test and/or require special physical accommodations, please contact me in confidence as soon as possible at the beginning of the course.** Every effort will be made to accommodate your needs within the guidelines set forth by the University.

**Accessible/Compliant Statement:** If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). You may refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with SSD, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations.

**Accessible, Inclusive, and Compliant Statement:** 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 Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please refer to SSD's website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with SSD, 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.

### **Course Instructor Survey/Evaluation:**

An evaluation of the course and instructor will be conducted at the end of the semester using the approved UT Course/Instructor evaluation forms.

### **Undergraduate Student Drop Policy**

From the 1<sup>st</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> class day, an undergraduate student can drop a course via the web and receive a refund, if eligible. From the 13<sup>th</sup> through the university's academic drop deadline, a student may Q drop a course with approval from the Dean, and departmental advisor.

**Religious Holy Days:** 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, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/academic-policies-and-procedures/attendance/>

### **Emergency Evacuation Policy**

In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class.

Information can be found here for preparedness:

<https://preparedness.utexas.edu/safety/emergency-terms>

Information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at <http://www.utexas.edu/emergency>

**Restricting Information:** If you want your personal information restricted in the directory, the information is located here: <https://registrar.utexas.edu/students/records/restrictmyinfo>

### **Make-up exams/Excused Absences**

Absences on exam days may be excused if the student provides verifiable documentation of accident, illness, or university or legal obligation. Unexcused absences from examinations will result in a score of zero for that exam.

I **STRONGLY** encourage you not to miss an exam. The make up may be different from the exam given to the rest of the class. It may include an essay format, but the exam format is at my discretion.

**One more thing:** If a true emergency occurs that you know you can document, take care of yourself first and we will sort it out later. You do not need to call me from the ER or jail to let us know you won't be there. In those situations, you have bigger problems than this class at that moment in time.

### **Class Calendar**

The readings for this day are the readings I expect you to have done PRIOR to that day. This calendar is based on my best estimation of how long it will take to go through the material. On occasion through the semester, I \*may\* get behind a day depending on how long it takes to cover the topic. Tests will ALWAYS only cover the chapters noted in the syllabus.

<b>August 25 Wednesday</b>	Introduction to the Course – Pass out Syllabi
<b>August 27 Friday</b>	Chapter 1 – Understanding American Politics
<b>August 30 Monday</b>	Chapter 1 –Understanding American Politics/Chapter 2
<b>September 1 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 2 – Constitution and the Founding

September 3 Friday	Chapter 2 – Constitution and the Founding
September 6 Monday	<b>LABOR DAY- NO CLASS</b>
September 8 Wednesday	Chapter 2 – Constitution and the Founding
September 10 Friday	Chapter 3 – Federalism
September 13 Monday	Chapter 3 – Federalism
September 15 Wednesday	Chapter 3 – Federalism/
September 17 Friday	Chapter 10 Congress
September 20 Monday	Chapter 10 Congress
September 22 Wednesday	Chapter 10 Congress
September 24 Friday	Chapter 10 Congress
September 27 Monday	<b>Test 1 (Chapters 1,2,3,10)</b>
September 29 Wednesday	Chapter 11 Presidency
October 1 Friday	Chapter 11 Presidency
October 4 Monday	Chapter 11 Presidency/Chapter 12 Bureaucracy
October 6 Wednesday	Chapter 12 Bureaucracy
October 8 Friday	Chapter 12 Bureaucracy
October 11 Monday	Chapter 12 Bureaucracy/ Chapter 13 The Courts <b>ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE by 11:59pm</b>
October 13 Wednesday	Chapter 13 The Courts
October 15 Friday	Chapter 13 The Courts
October 18 Monday	Chapter 6 Public Opinion and the Media
October 20 Wednesday	Chapter 6 Public Opinion and the Media
October 22 Friday	Chapter 6 Public Opinion and the Media
October 25 Monday	<b>Test 2 (covers Chapters 11,12,13,6)</b>
October 27 Wednesday	Chapter 7 Political Parties
October 29 Friday	Chapter 7 Political Parties

<b>November 1 Monday</b>	Chapter 7 Political Parties
<b>November 3 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 8 Elections
<b>November 5 Friday</b>	Chapter 8 Elections
<b>November 8 Monday</b>	<b>ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE at 11:59pm</b> Chapter 8 Elections
<b>November 10 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 9 Interest Groups
<b>November 12 Friday</b>	Chapter 9 Interest Groups
<b>November 15 Monday</b>	Chapter 9 Interest Groups
<b>November 17 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 4 Civil Liberties
<b>November 19 Friday</b>	Chapter 4 Civil Liberties
<b>November 22 Monday</b>	Chapter 4 Civil Liberties <i>Last day to turn in all late assignments</i>
<b>November 24 Wednesday</b>	<b>Thanksgiving – No Class</b>
<b>November 26 Friday</b>	<b>Thanksgiving – No Class</b>
<b>November 30 Monday</b>	Chapter 5 Civil Rights
<b>December 1 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 5 Civil Rights
<b>December 3 Friday</b>	Chapter 5 Civil Rights
<b>December 6 Monday</b>	<b>Test 3 (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 4, 5)</b>