

# **Introduction to American Government**

Fall, 2021

GOV 310L

The University of Texas at Austin

## Instructor

Professor David L. Leal

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## Class Information

Class Location: MEZ 1.306

Class Hours: T, TH 3:30 – 5:00 PM

Unique Number: 38830

## Teaching Assistants

Name: TBA

Office Hours:

Office:

Email:

Name: TBA

Office Hours:

Office:

Email:

## Course Description

This course will introduce you to government and politics in the United States. We will cover U.S. political history, political institutions, elections, public opinion, rights and freedoms, and public policy. We also introduce approaches to the social scientific study of politics, particularly data analysis. The class begins with the basic principles of politics, followed by a discussion of the creation of the nation and its fundamental features, including the Constitution, the development of democracy, the importance of federalism, and fundamental civil liberties and civil rights. We then explore the institutional building blocks of government – the Congress, presidency, bureaucracy, and the courts. The class then examines public input into the political system, particularly public opinion, elections, the political parties, interest groups, and the mass media. We conclude with the key social, foreign policy, and economic issues facing the nation.

## Readings

*American Government: Power and Purpose*, 16<sup>th</sup> edition. 2021. Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. W.W. Norton. ISBN 978-0-3934-2769-1

Note: If you see a “Core” edition for sale, be aware that it does not include the three policy chapters.

*The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition. 2018. David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, and Kenneth R. Mayer. W.W. Norton.

## Assignments

Student understanding of the readings and topics will be assessed in a variety of ways, as noted below.

### Course Grade

Exams: There will be three exams.

Exam #1 (25% of your grade)

Multiple choice and possibly other questions; covers approximately the first third of the class material.

Exam #2 (25% of your grade)

Multiple choice and possibly other questions; covers approximately the second third of the class material.

Exam #3 (25% of your grade)

Multiple choice and possibly other questions; covers the remaining class material and may also include cumulative questions.

Reflection Essays (25% of course grade)

For any ten (10) weekly topics, students will write a two-page essay (doubled spaced) with reflections, observations, comments, and questions about the readings and corresponding class discussion. This could include, for example, what you found to be the most interesting or unexpected. Each essay will be due on the next Monday (by the end of the day). The instructor will discuss this assignment further in class.

Class attendance: This is not used in determining your course grade.

The class does not have a “final exam” during the final exam period at the end of the semester.

### Grading

93-100%	A	(4)	73-76%	C	(2)
90-92%	A-	(3.67)	70-72%	C-	(1.67)
87-89%	B+	(3.33)	67-69%	D+	(1.33)
83-86%	B	(3)	63-66%	D	(1)
80-82%	B-	(2.67)	60-62%	D-	(.67)
77-79%	C+	(2.33)	Below 60%	F	(0)

### Policies

#### **By taking this class, you agree to all of the following policies:**

- \* All aspects of this course are subject to change depending on the public health context. Directives from UT or the State of Texas may therefore require changes that are large, small, and anything in-between.
- \* Make-up exams and late papers will only be allowed on a case-by-case basis. Please check with the instructor before an exam or the paper due date to discuss your situation and see what is allowable.
- \* Grades of “Incomplete” are generally not assigned, but please discuss your situation with the instructor if you believe an Incomplete may be necessary.
- \* 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.
- \* Accommodations for religious holidays. 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.
- \* Important announcements will be made in class and via the class Canvas email list. It is the responsibility of students to make sure that the University knows their correct email address.
- \* The Canvas class email list can only be used for class purposes. Do not use it for any commercial or business activities, for example.
- \* Students who miss class should obtain notes from a classmate.
- \* Assignments are due at the start of the specified class.
- \* Any complaints about grades must be initiated by your written or emailed explanation of why the decisions behind the assignment of your grade should be revisited. You will have one week after an exam or paper has been handed back to submit this written explanation. After that period, all grades will be considered final and any discussion that we might have will be restricted to how you can do better on the next exam or paper.
- \* This syllabus is subject to change or adjustment by the instructor. Consistent class attendance is the best way to ensure that no important announcements are missed.
- \* During class discussions, be respectful at all times.
- \* Cell phones cannot be used in class.
- \* Computers can only be used in class for academic purposes. They should not be used for email, social networking, etc.

- \* Students must be prepared to show their UT identification card during exams.
- \* Passing the class (a D grade or better) requires at minimum a grade of D- or better on at least three of the four components.

### Scholastic Dishonesty

\*“‘Scholastic dishonesty’ includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor), or the attempt to commit such an act.” Section 11-802 (b), *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*. If you have any questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty, you should consult with me and the following websites:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/>

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/academicintegrity.php>

\* Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: “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.”

### Emergency Evacuation Policy

- \* 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 shall inform their 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.
- \* Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: <http://emergency.utexas.edu/>
- \* Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050,  
<http://operations.utexas.edu/units/csas/bcal.php>

### 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.”

### **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.”

### **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.”

### **Senate Bill 212 and Title IX Reporting Requirements**

“Under Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), the professor and TAs for this course are required to report for further investigation any information concerning incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking committed by or against a UT student or employee. Federal law and university policy also requires reporting incidents of sex- and gender-based discrimination and sexual misconduct (collectively known as Title IX incidents). This means we cannot keep confidential information about any such incidents that you share with us. If you need to talk with someone who can maintain confidentiality, please contact University Health Services (512-471-4955 or 512-475-6877) or the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (512-471-3515 or 512-471-2255). We strongly urge you make use of these services for any needed support and that you report any Title IX incidents to the [Title IX Office](#).”

## **Weekly Readings and Topics**

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
Thursday, August 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lowi et al., Preface and Chapter 1</li><li>• Canon et al., Chapter 1 (readings 1-5)</li></ul>

<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Creating a New Democracy</b>
Tuesday, August 31 Thursday, September 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 2</li><li>• Canon et al., Chapter 2 (readings 6-11)</li><li>• Lowi et al., Appendix (Federalist Papers #10, #51)</li></ul>

<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Federalism</b>
Tuesday, September 7 Thursday, September 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 3</li><li>• Canon et al., Chapter 3 (readings 12-17)</li></ul>

Friday, September 17<sup>th</sup> is Constitution Day.

To learn more about the U.S. Constitution, visit the National Archives website:  
<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/constitution-day/>

<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Civil Liberties and Civil Rights</b>
Tuesday, September 14 Thursday, September 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lowi et al., Chapters 4 and 5</li><li>• Canon et al., Chapter 4 (readings 20 and 21)</li></ul>

<b>Week 5 (Part I)</b>	<b>Congress</b>
Tuesday, September 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 6</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 5 (readings 22-26)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 5 (Part II)</b>	<b>** Exam #1 **</b>
Thursday, September 23	

<b>Week 6 (Part I)</b>	<b>The Presidency</b>
Tuesday, September 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 7</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 6 (readings 27-31)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 6 (Part II)</b>	<b>The Executive Branch</b>
Thursday, September 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 8</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 7 (readings 32-35)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 7</b>	<b>The Federal Courts</b>
Tuesday, October 5 Thursday, October 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 9</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 8 (readings 36-40)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Public Opinion</b>
Tuesday, October 12 Thursday, October 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 10</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 9 (readings 41-42)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Elections</b>
Tuesday, October 19 Thursday, October 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 11</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapters 10 (readings 47-52)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 10 (Part I)</b>	<b>Political Parties</b>
Tuesday, October 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 12</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 11 (readings 53-56)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 10 (Part II)</b>	<b>** Exam #2 **</b>
Thursday, October 28	

<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Groups and Interests</b>
Tuesday, November 2 Thursday, November 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 13</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 12 (readings 57-61)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 12</b>	<b>The Media</b>
Tuesday, November 9 Thursday, November 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 14</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 9 (readings 43-46)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 13</b>	<b>Social Policy</b>
Tuesday, November 16 Thursday, November 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 16</li> </ul>

<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Economic Policy</b>
Tuesday, November 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 15</li> <li>• Canon et al., Chapter 13 (readings 62-63)</li> </ul>

**\*\* Thursday, November 25 – Thanksgiving, no class \*\***

<b>Week 15 (Part I)</b>	<b>Foreign Policy</b>
Tuesday, November 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lowi et al., Chapter 17</li> </ul>

<b>Week 15 (Part II)</b>	<b>** Exam #3 **</b>
Thursday, December 2	