THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

ISSUES & POLICIES IN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: ELECTIONS (GOV 312L)

Unique #37185

FALL 2024

MEETING PLACE: Online Streaming

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

PROFESSOR BETHANY   OFFICE HOURS:
ALBERTSON   Tuesday & Thursday
                            9:00am - 10:30am

PROFESSOR SEAN THERIAULT   OFFICE HOURS:
                               Mondays (1-2:30)
                               Tuesdays (2-3:30)

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Clinton Willbanks (Lead TA)
Other TAs TBA

To contact the professors and teaching assistants, please email:

onlinegov312ta@austin.utexas.edu

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 2024 elections, we 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 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 learn theories addressing "big questions" in American politics, and 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, 2023.
  Can be purchased: https://wwnorton.com/books/9781324046912
- Supplemental readings throughout the semester are available through the 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 listed 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 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.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Required Internet-Enabled Device

All students are required to have access to an internet-enabled laptop or desktop computer. Tablets and smartphones are not supported. Your computer should have enough battery life to last an entire class period and meet the following requirements:

- Laptop or desktop computer
- Most recent operating system for Mac or Windows
- Browsers: Chrome is highly recommended. If using Safari or Firefox, be prepared to use Chrome as a backup.
- JavaScript enabled

You should confirm that your computer is able to stream the video lectures by visiting the test stream page at https://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.html.

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.))

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 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 it on a regular 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. Students are also encouraged to exchange information for completing the course's community engagement projects.
- Private Communication**:** Students who wish to contact anyone on the teaching team (professors or teaching assistants) can do so either in office hours or via the common course email address: 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 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.
- 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% Quizzes (Q) – A weekly (approximately) multiple-choice quiz on course material. The quizzes must be completed within 10 minutes (extra time if you receive SSD accommodations) during class and are designed to test comprehension of the material from readings and lectures up through the previous lecture. (For example, a Wednesday quiz will cover the material up to and including that Monday's lecture.) Quizzes are not explicitly cumulative, and only test the material covered since the last quiz. At least 12 quizzes are offered and a student's top 10 count for their grade; a TINY fraction of the lowest two quizzes is added to the students' quiz grade as extra credit.
- 30% Community Engagement projects (CE) - A series of projects spaced throughout the semester that ask 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 CE projects are offered and a student's top 6 count for their grade; a tiny fraction of the other CE projects are added to the students' CE 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 must be completed within their 5 to 10 minute window and are graded for participation only (did you enter an answer?). We offer at least 12 ICA opportunities during the course and your top 10 scores count for your grade; a tiny fraction of the lowest two ICA's are added to the students' ICA grade as extra credit.
- 10% Reading Credits (RC) – The online textbook has corresponding reading comprehension questions for each section. These questions can be found in the Canvas modules. All Reading Credits are used for calculating this portion of the student's 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 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.

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 471-6259 (voice) or 232-2937 (video phone) or http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/.

Those with documentation for accommodations should contact Professors Albertson or Theriault as soon as possible.

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.

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 26 - First day of class
August 28 - Introduction to Elections (Chapter 1)

September 2 – Labor Day – no class
September 4 - The 2024 Election

September 9 - The American Electoral Process (Chapter 2)
September 11 – The Transformation of American Campaigns (Chapter 3)

September 16 - Candidates (readings TBD)
September 18 - Candidates (readings TBD)

September 23 - Financing Campaigns (Chapter 4)
September 25 - Modern Campaign Strategies (Chapter 5)

September 30 - Media (Chapter 8)
October 2 - Interest Groups (Chapter 7)

October 7 - Political Parties (Chapter 6)
October 9 - Presidential Campaigns (Chapter 9)

October 14 - Congressional Campaigns (Chapter 10)
October 16 - Congressional Campaigns, Part II

October 21 - State and Local Campaigns (Chapter 11)
October 23 - Voting Rules (readings TBD)

October 28 - Voter Participation (Chapter 12)
October 30 - Voter Choices (Chapter 13)

November 4 - Pre-Election class (readings TBD)
November 6 - Post-Election class (readings TBD)

November 11 - Youth Participation (readings TBD)
November 13 - BA Research Day (readings TBD)

November 18 - ST Research Day (readings TBD)
November 20 - The Future of American Democracy (Chapter 14)

Thanksgiving Break

December 2 - Election follow-up (readings TBD)
December 4 - Election follow-up (readings TBD)

December 9 – Last day of the semester