

Spring 2024  
GOV 312L, #37250  
Online on-demand;  
scheduled quizzes and exams.

Professor Jason Brownlee  
course email: [onlinegov312usns@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:onlinegov312usns@austin.utexas.edu)  
office hours: Mon. 10:00-11:30, Wed. 10:00-11:30.  
Sign-up [here](#). Attend Zoom office hours [here](#).

## TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Unless otherwise noted, office Hours for TAs will be held virtually (online).

**Contact any/all Teaching Assistants at [onlinegov312usns@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:onlinegov312usns@austin.utexas.edu).**

Contact technical support at [online tech support chat](#).

## GOV312L Issues and Policies in American Government

### U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

This is an introductory-level course that fulfills the core curriculum requirement for US Government. GOV312L courses involve the analysis of governmental institutions, political behavior, civic engagement, and their political and philosophical foundations. This particular GOV312L introduces students to significant aspects of U.S. foreign policies and military actions in the countries of Southwest Asia. Readings and lectures will focus on drawing general lessons and themes from the history of US involvement in this area during 1979-2021. No prior familiarity with the subject is required.

In 1821 Secretary of State John Quincy Adams declared that America "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy." In that view, the country's national security was defined internally, through domestic policy, not foreign adventures. Since 1898, however, America's leaders have carried out a vision that tied the country's safety and well-being to its control over ideas and goods in other places. Starting in the Spanish-American War, the United States joined the competition among the existing imperial powers of Europe and Asia. After 1945, the USA emerged from World War II as one of two superpowers (the other was the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, USSR, or Soviet Union). American presidents established a global network of alliances and bases for projecting force abroad. After 1989, when the Cold War with the Soviet Union ended, the United States stood as the sole superpower, commanding the world's wealthiest economy and its largest and most advanced military.

For well over a century the United States has been heavily involved abroad searching for "monsters" that US leaders saw as a threat to Americans. In recent decades the quest for security at home through intervention overseas has revolved around countries in Southwest Asia, namely Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. US operations in these countries account for well over 90% of the cost in lives and dollars the United States has expended in military actions since 1980, when President Jimmy Carter made direct military intervention in the Persian Gulf a

plank of American strategy. Course lectures and readings will help students understand the losses and accomplishments of American wars and diplomacy in Southwest Asia.

## FREE SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

All of the content in the course (readings, lectures, videos) is covered under the University of Texas at Austin's commitment to free speech and academic freedom as embodied in the Chicago Statement. One relevant excerpt of the statement reads:

"Because the University is committed to free and open inquiry in all matters, it guarantees all members of the University community the broadest possible latitude to speak, write, listen, challenge, and learn... it is not the proper role of the University to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive... concerns about civility and mutual respect can never be used as a justification for closing off discussion of ideas, however offensive or disagreeable those ideas may be to some members of our community."

One important message of this statement is that being intellectually offended or challenged is not a bug of university learning but a feature. For members of an intellectual community it is integral to the learning process, especially when the process of education introduces them to previously unfamiliar ideas and perspectives.

It is each student's responsibility to review the syllabus and course framework and decide if the subject of US National Security is one they would like to study and learn about in a class that upholds the Chicago Statement.

The following is an example of a conventional text addressing important issues of US national security. The excerpt comes from an article by journalist Kathy Gannon, "Afghanistan Unbound," that was published in the May/June 2004 issue of the mainstream journal *Foreign Affairs*.

"In 1994, bitter fighting between competing warlords raged throughout Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. It was a time marked by endless attacks, many of them on civilians. I saw one young boy raise his hand to catch a ball, only to have it sliced off at the wrist by a rocket. A 13-year-old girl, running home to retrieve blankets and clothes left behind by her fleeing family, stepped on a land mine, which exploded and blew off the bottom of her leg. All told, 50,000 Afghans—most of them civilians—died in the four-year fight for Kabul, and even more were maimed. In one particularly grisly attack, five women from the Hazara ethnic group were scalped. Their attackers were not Taliban; this was still two years before that radical Islamist militia took Kabul. The assailants were loyal instead to one of many warlords battling for control of the city..."

A student's decision to remain enrolled in the course indicates that the student acknowledges that free and open inquiry can mean encountering ideas and images in lectures and other materials

that the student finds “unwelcome, disagreeable or even deeply offensive” and that such encounters are a normal and healthy part of a robust university education.

## COURSE MATERIALS

All texts will be provided on Canvas in PDF format. There are no texts to be purchased.

## COURSE FORMAT

This is an on-demand digital version of GOV 312L. Unlike most of the courses offered at the University of Texas, students will be viewing this class online rather than attending a classroom. Students “attend” class by logging into the course site to watch recorded lectures that have already been posted to Canvas. There are no preset times that students are required to log in to view the recorded lectures, but the course is paced with two lectures each week, except for weeks with an exam. Lectures will be posted in groups according to the quiz and exam schedule, i.e., the first two weeks’ lectures will be posted on the first day of classes, lectures for week 3 will be posted after Quiz 1 closes, and so on.

To access everything associated with the class, simply go to:

<https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1385509>. Alternatively, students can enter from Canvas (<https://utexas.instructure.com/>). To log in to Canvas and the class website, students will need their UT EID and password.

The tool used in this course to host and play lecture videos does not have a built-in variable speed playback function. **If you wish to watch the lectures at variable speeds**, you may install a browser plug-in. We recommend this plug-in with the Chrome browser:  
<https://chromewebstore.google.com/detail/video-speed-controller/nffaoalbilbmmfgbnbgppjjhopabppdk?hl=en>.

From the main class website it is possible to navigate to specific pages:

- *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 links to lecture videos, readings, graded assignments, and other course documents. Each module contains the collection of reading, videos, and graded assignments for a given week. Most student activity on Canvas take places in the Modules tab.
- *Pre-Class Activities* –The top of the homepage holds the Pre-Class Activities Module. Students should complete all pre-class activities before the first day of class. Access to the lecture content in the following modules is dependent upon completion of these activities.

- *Announcements Page* – The Announcements feature is the primary mode of communication from the instructors to students. It is accessible from 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* – The gradebook is organized by individual assignment as well as assignment group.
- *Zoom* – For accessing virtual office hours with the professor and TAs.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

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. Computers 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/>) and use it.
- Internet connection speed: 5 Mbps download speed. Check your speed here: <https://www.speedtest.net/>
- Functional webcam and microphone (for office hours).
- Zoom installed and configured (for office hours).

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

For the optimal experience:

- Close all unnecessary browser windows and tabs and program, including streaming music, social media sites, video sites, and games.
- Ensure the computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware  
<https://security.utexas.edu/education-outreach/anti-virus>
- Clear the browser's cache before class (<https://www.refreshyourcache.com/en/home/>)

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. (A listing of these labs is [here](#).)

## COURSE ASSESSMENTS AND GRADES

The course work, including graded assessments, has been designed to enhance student learning in an on-demand online format. All required readings will be accompanied by study questions to help students check if they are following the arguments and information in the texts. Lectures can be absorbed in chunks, over multiple viewings, rather than watched in a single sitting.

Understanding of the texts and lectures will be assessed through the best five of six online quizzes and three online exams. Each quiz constitutes 5% of the final grade; each exam constitutes 25% of the final grade. Students may use their their notes and course texts when completing quizzes and exams, but they may not consult any other sources. All quiz and exam questions will be multiple-choice. Each quiz will have ten questions. Each exam will have fifty questions. Each question will be worth half a point.

Quizzes and exams will available during an 8am-5pm Central time window on Thursdays. Students will have ten minutes to complete a quiz and seventy-five minutes to complete an exam. The schedule of quizzes and exams is:

**Quizzes and exams are available starting at 8:00am-5:00pm on the day they are scheduled.**

Week 2 – Thursday, January 25 (Quiz 1).

Week 3 – Thursday, Feb 1 (Quiz 2)

Week 4 – Thursday, Feb 8 (Exam 1).

Week 6 – Thursday, Feb 15 (Quiz 3).

Week 8 – Thursday, February 29 (Quiz 4).

NOTE: THE WEEK OF MARCH 11-15 IS SPRING BREAK 2024.

Week 9 – Thursday, March 21 (Exam 2).

Week 10 – Thursday, March 28 (Quiz 5).

Week 12 – Thursday, April 11 (Quiz 6).

Week 14 – Thursday, April 25 (Exam 3).

Students with a scheduled university-defined and approved excuse for being absent from exam-taking on one of these days (religious holiday, off-site competition, etc.) should provide documentation by the end of Week 1. In case of last-minute emergencies (family, medical, etc.) documentation will also need to be provided. In either scenario, university-recognized documentation will qualify the student for a makeup assessment. Typically, this makeup quiz or exam administered exactly one course week after the original quiz or exam test time, i.e., the next Thursday of the semester.

The syllabus is subject to change by the professor. Any alteration in the syllabus or course schedule will be announced on Canvas.

## FINAL GRADES

The grading scale is: A = 94-100; A- = 90-93.999; B+ = 87-89.999; B = 84-86.999; B- = 80-83.999; C+ = 77-79.999; C = 74-76.999; C- = 70-73.999; D+ = 67-69.999; D = 64-66.999; D- = 60-63.999; F = 0-60. *To ensure fairness, all numbers are absolute, and will not be rounded up or down at any stage, i.e., 93.5 is an A-.* The professor and TAs will not alter grades calculated at the end of the semester.

Note that grades are determined by overall point totals, for the entire semester. This can be somewhat confusing, because Canvas automatically produces percentages in its grade scoring algorithms. For example, if a student got 3 out of 5 on the first quiz, Canvas would show 60% (!) for the final grade, even though only 5% of the final grade had been at stake – and if the student went on to ace the rest of their assessments they would end the course with a 98%.

## COURSE COMMUNICATION

**Do NOT use the Canvas mail system.** This class is too large to manage student communication through this platform. The professor and TAs will not be checking the Canvas inbox. Students should consider the nature of their inquiry and then direct it into one of these two channels:

1. Technical Support: Do not contact the professor or TAs. Use the "Online Tech Support Chat" button on the left-hand menu in Canvas.
2. Non-technical, substantive questions about the class: Email the professors and/or TAs at [onlinegov312usns@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:onlinegov312usns@austin.utexas.edu) or come to office hours. Students are expected to abide by the rules of respect and decorum described below when participating in any course conversations.

Questions about grades will only be answered in-person during virtual office hours. The professor and TAs will not answer questions about grades by email.

The professor and TAs will communicate important information through the Announcements page on the course website.

### Course Etiquette Policy:

One responsibility of the instructional team in an online course is to ensure to the best of our abilities that the learning environment is fair, safe, and respectful to all students. To this end, we have developed an "etiquette contract" that all students are required to sign before using the course tools and interacting with other users. The general point of this contract is very simple: be polite and stay on topic.

There are two parts to this contract. First, students are expected to abide by a code of collegial respect and civility towards their classmates and the instructional team, including and especially when posting to any of the online learning platforms. If you post something that we think violates our standards of respect and civility in substance or tone, we will contact you privately and let you know our concerns. Second, we require that when students post on a public forum used by the class, they do so with a user name that clearly identifies them to the instructor.

Finally, please be aware that we don't want to discourage students from posting things that are related to this course, even if not directly covered in the course materials. The key point is that your posts need to be respectful of others and relevant to what we are studying.

## **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.

## **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

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 [Disability and Access](#) (D&A). Please refer to the D&A website for more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, 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.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

“Scholastic dishonesty... includes but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, 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 prior permission of the instructor, providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment), or the attempt to commit such an act” (Section 11-802 (b), *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*).

By taking this class, you agree to abide by the University of Texas prohibition on cheating. The online course format allows the university 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 log-in credentials to another person;

- Collaborating or sharing information with another person on a quiz, writing assignment, or exercise;
- Recording any quiz, assessment or assignment material in any format;

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>

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>

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>

## TITLE IX REPORTING

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 (formerly known as 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, written forms, applications, one-on-one conversations, class assignments, class discussions, or third-party reports) must report it to the Title IX Coordinator. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, please remember that I will be required to report this information.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Education Code, Section 51.252, they are mandatory reporters under federal Title IX regulations and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of misconduct covered under Texas Education Code, Section 51.252. Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex – including pregnancy and parental status – in educational programs and activities. The Title IX Office has developed supportive ways and compiled campus resources to support all impacted by a Title IX matter.

If you would like to speak with a Case Manager for Support and Resources, who can provide support, resources or academic accommodations, in the Title IX Office, please email [supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu). A Case Manager can also provide support, resources and accommodations for pregnant, nursing, and parenting students.



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.

## **GUIDANCE ON READING, TIME CONSTRAINTS, AND PERFORMANCE**

### **Reading**

This class is based on attention to the lectures and close reading of an average of 50 pages/week. The written material may be challenging and students should expect to spend 4-6 hours on weekly readings.

Close reading entails reflecting on the information and incorporating it into your knowledge. The goal is not just turning (or scrolling through) pages. Look for the author's main point as it relates to the course topic. What is the central claim she makes? What are the key events or ideas that the text is covering?

When you are done reading, check to see that you can summarize the material in a few sentences. You may want to take 5 minutes and write down this summary, particularly if you are reading several different texts in a given week. You can also use the study questions as a self-check to assess your comprehension.

Thoughtful reading takes time and energy. Space out your reading in reasonable increments. It is more effective to read over several days than to cram all the reading into a night or two.

### **Time**

Time management is a valuable skill in college and life. Professor Brownlee and the TAs are glad to meet with students to discuss ways of organizing a schedule to carve out and protect the time needed for this class, e.g., thinking about when and where you study most effectively. If you think you would like assistance in this area, do not lose time waiting to ask for help. It is best to approach Professor Brownlee or the TAs in the first two weeks of class.

This course is expected to make up one component in a full student schedule of classes, extracurricular activities, work, and other commitments. The assignments and workload are designed to require approximately 4-6 hours, in addition to the time spent attending lectures. (If you do not have that kind of time to devote to this GOV 312, it may make sense for you to select another class or choose another semester to take this class.)

### **Performance**

The syllabus specifies the workload, deadlines, and grading rubric for the course. If any changes occur, they will be announced. Hence, everyone is aware of the expectations for the class. By taking the course, students indicate that they will honestly strive to deliver their best work and in line with the class schedule.

Most students have an active schedule, brimming with obligations and activities that demand attention and time. All students merit equal treatment. Therefore, the professor and TAs will be strict about applying the announced policies uniformly.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Below is a list of course topics by week, with required readings and **assessments** listed below. All readings are posted on Canvas. To stay current, students should read the listed material before the Thursday of that week. For example, by the second Thursday of the course (January 19), students are expected to have read and studied all the readings assigned in Week 1 and in Week 2.

### PART I: A CAUTIOUS GOLIATH (1979-2001)

#### 1. January 16, 18. Introduction to US national security and the Muslim world.

Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History*, 3-23;

Smith, *Penguin State of the Middle East Atlas (PSMEA)*, 9-14 (political definitions of the “Middle East”), 46-49 (the US presence), 54-55 (faith);

Wadley, *South Asia in the World*, pages through Table 1.2 (13 total).

#### 2. January 23, 25. The Iran hostage crisis. The Soviet-Afghanistan War. The Iran-Iraq War.

##### **QUIZ 1 Thursday, January 25.**

*PSMEA* 94-95 (Iran introduction), 100-103 (Iraq introduction), 98-99 (Iran-Iraq War).

Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Political and Cultural History*, 1-2, 17-28.

Pear, “Arming Afghan Guerrillas: A Huge Effort Led by U.S.,” *New York Times*, April 8, 1988 (8 PDF pages).

#### 3. January 30, February 1. Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Fighting terrorism in the 1990s.

##### **QUIZ 2 Thursday, February 1.**

Britannica, “The Persian Gulf War and its Aftermath” (7 PDF pages).

*PSMEA*, 134-135 (Saudi Arabia introduction), 36-41 (Israel and the Palestinians introduction), 104-106 (Gulf Wars, up to discussion of 2001). 144-145 (networks of grievance and terror).

McLeod, “Osama bin Laden: The Paladin of Jihad,” *Time Magazine*, May 6, 1996 (5 PDF pages).

Miller, “Greetings, America. My name is Osama bin Laden. Now that I have your attention...” *Esquire*, February 1999 (10 PDF pages).

#### 4. February 6, 8. Relations among al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the US government through the morning of September 11, 2001.

##### **EXAM 1 Thursday, February 8**

*PSMEA*, 62-63 (gender relations).

Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, *The Taliban: Engagement or Confrontation?*, July 20, 2000, opening statements by Brownback and Inderfurth (8 PDF pages).

Ahmed, "America and the Taliban: From Co-operation to War," *Global Dialogue*; Spring 2002, 77-84.

## **PART II: WARPATH (2001-2011)**

5. February 13, 15. The AUMF, Operation Enduring Freedom, the Bonn Framework.

### **QUIZ 3 Thursday, February 15.**

Gardner, *The Science of Fear* (2009), "Terrified of Terrorism."

Gannon, *I is for Infidel* (2005), "The Last Days of the Taliban."

6. February 20, 22. The argument for invading Iraq. Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Iraqi Civil War.

Ricks, "Winning the Battle," *Fiasco* (2006), 115-148.

Sluglett, "Blunder Books: Iraq after Saddam Hussein," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 60 No. 2 (Spring, 2006), 361-368.

7. February 27, February 29. The Taliban's return in Afghanistan. An American surge in Iraq.

### **QUIZ 4 Thursday, February 29.**

Hirschkind and Mahmood, "Feminism, the Taliban, and the Politics of Counter-Insurgency," *Anthropological Quarterly* (2002), 339-348 (excerpt).

Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Political and Cultural History*, 293-311.

Patriquin, "How to the War in Al Anbar," 1-18.

8. March 5, 7. The escalation of war in "Af-Pak" and the Abbotabad raid.

Coyne, Blanco, and Burns, "The War on Drugs in Afghanistan," *Independent Review* (2016), 95-119.

Shehzad Qazi, "US-Pakistan Relations," *World Affairs* (2012), 71-78.

## **SPRING BREAK**

9. March 19, 21. Observations on US intervention in Southwest Asia 2001-2011.

### **EXAM 2 Thursday, March 21.**

*No new readings.*

## **PART III: THE BETTER PART OF VALOR (2011-2021)**

10. March 26, 28. The Arab Spring and the American Intervention in Libya.

### **QUIZ 5 Thursday, March 28.**

Brittanica, "The Arab Spring."

Mann, *The Obamians*, "Libya: To Fly," *The Obamians* (2012).

11. April 2, 4. Patterns of US Intervention in the Arab World

Aslı Bâli and Aziz Rana. 2012. "Pax Arabica: provisional sovereignty and intervention in the Arab uprisings." *California Western International Law Journal*, 42(2), 321-352.

12. April 9, 11. Avoiding a Syrian Quagmire: Obama, Assad, and Islamic State.

**QUIZ 6 Thursday, April 11.**

Goldberg, "The Obama Doctrine," *The Atlantic* (2016), 37 pages approximately.

13. April 16, 18. Afghanistan's last liberation: The US-Taliban peace agreement.

Landler, "The Afghan War and the Evolution of Obama," *New York Times*, January 1, 2017.

Sajjad, "Breaking Afghanistan," *Catalyst* March 2022, pp. 144-158.

14. April 23, 25. Closing thoughts.

**EXAM 3 Thursday, April 25.**

*No new readings.*