

American Government -WB

GOV 310L 37225

Spring 2024

Instructor: Shannon Bow O'Brien, PhD

Meeting Time: Online

Student Hours: I only have scheduled(booked) 15-minute appointments (not drop in) this semester.

Online office hours work best to help as many students as possible.

Online: I will have scheduled (booked) 15-minute appointments on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. to noon. The booking link will be in the announcements on Canvas.

Any updates will be on Canvas on the announcement page.

Teaching Assistants: This class has multiple TAs. Each person will be assigned a specific TA. Please look in the Announcements on Canvas to see which TA to contact.

Your TAs will have office hours as well.

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

Email: shannonbow@utexas.edu

Include something about the American Government class in the subject line. I am teaching American Government, Politics & Film, and Urban Politics this semester, so an email saying 'question about class' needs to be more specific since I will have about 1200 students between the three classes.

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

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to American Government. It is designed to give you a basic idea of our federal system's functions, activities, and interactions. Our government is a dynamic entity that has evolved and been shaped by internal and external forces. This class aims 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, 8th 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 occasionally if I feel they are needed. Any additional readings will be added to Canvas and also announced in class.

Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA)

The materials for this class are available through the Longhorn Textbook Access (LTA) program, a new initiative between UT Austin, The University Co-op, and textbook publishers to significantly reduce the cost of digital course materials for students. **You can access your required materials through Canvas's "Modules" tab.** You are automatically opted into the program but can easily opt-out (and back in) via Canvas through the 12th class day. If you remain opted-in at the end of the 12th class day you will receive a bill through your "What I Owe" page and have until the end of the 18th class day to pay and retain access. If you do not pay by the 18th class day, you will lose access to the materials after the 20th class day and your charge will be removed. More information about the LTA program is available at <https://www.universitycoop.com/longhorn-textbook-access>

Technical Requirements for American Politics

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 and use it.
- Internet connection speed: 5 Mbps download speed. Check your speed here.
- Functional webcam and microphone
- Zoom installed and configured

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

For the best 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
- Check your computer is free of viruses, malware, and spyware (UT recommendations)

- Clear the browser's cache before class ([here's how.](#))

Technical Support

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.

Grades:

Grades will be based on the following:

Test 1	March 6 (Wednesday): available 9am-11:59pm	20%
Test 2	April 29 (Monday): available 9am-11:59pm	20%

Assignments

Quizzes at the end of each week's material Please see calendar for schedule	10%
Shorter Graded Assignments Please see calendar for schedule	40%
Longer Graded Assignments Please see calendar for schedule	10%

Overview of Class

Each Class Lecture will be released on Sunday (except the first one since the semester begins on Monday). The class is divided into chapters. You will be expected to complete the week's chapter by the following Saturday at 11:59 pm.

At the end of each Chapter, you will get a short module of approximately five questions addressing the material covered in the lecture. These modules are open book/open note. These modules must be completed by Saturday at 11:59pm of that lecture week. These questions will count towards your overall grade.

You will have two tests. These tests will be online, timed, and multiple choice, true/false, or matching. They will cover material from the book and lectures in the specific chapters. They will be open book/open note. You are forbidden to collaborate with others during the exam.

You will also have short assignments in this class which will be uploaded throughout the semester by specific days. These will be uploaded to Canvas.

Your professor and TAs will also hold individual office hours throughout the semester.

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

I also reserve the right to change the grading system as 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).

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.

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 your performance.

A:	93-100	C:	73-76.99
A-:	90-92.99	C-:	70-72.99
B+:	87-89.99	D+:	67-69.99
B:	83-86.99	D:	63-66.99
B-:	80-82.99	D-:	60-62.99
C+:	77-79.99	F:	Less than 60

Quizzes

Each week, you will have a lecture to watch online. At the end of each lecture set, there will be five multiple-choice questions. These questions will be drawn from book and/or lecture. They are open book, open note. They are NOT questions you will see on the actual tests, but they are comparable to test questions in this class.

You are not allowed to retake these quizzes.

The quizzes are 10% of your grade.

You will have 13 quizzes for a total of 65 questions. Each question is 1 point. You will have full credit at 60 points.

At the end of the semester, we will take your final question number and divide by 60. If you have 60 points, you will have a 100%. If you have 59 points, you will receive a 98.3%. If you have 61 points, you will have 101.6%. If you have the whole 65, you will have 108.3%.

This is the ONLY way to receive extra credit in this class this semester.

Assignments

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

Shorter Graded Assignments

You will have 10 assignments. We will drop the lowest 2. Your grade will be calculated out of 8 assignments. They are worth 40% of your grade, so each one will be worth 5%.

These will be graded on a 5 point scale. Short Assignment 6 will have a different grading set up (it is a matching assignment) and it will be located in the directions when you take the assignment.

Assignments 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10 will use the following scale to assess your work on the Shorter Graded Assignments

- 5=You did it correctly. You answered all sections. You took it seriously.
- 4= You did it correctly, but turned it in late. (up to 15 days late)
- 3=You did it poorly, partially, or didn't follow directions. It was incomplete.
- 2= You did it poorly, partially, didn't follow directions and turned in late. You will also be assessed a 2 if you turn in a correct late assignment 16 days or more late unexcused.
- 1= You did something here, but we cannot determine what you did (wrong assignment/didn't follow any directions at all/made up own assignment)
- 0= You didn't turn anything in

Longer Fully Graded Assignments

There will be 2 assignments spaced out in the semester

These will require more work than the regular short assignments.

These will be 5% each and the TAs will carefully grade these. Some of the material will also be auto-graded by the system.

Please check the calendar for their due dates. You have approximately 1 week to complete each assignment. Late assignments will be penalized. For every calendar day a paper is late (including weekends, breaks, and non-class days), 5% of the total daily grade will be penalized until 50%. Additional late penalties will not be assessed after 50% though you may be graded lower than 50% for incorrect information.

The longer fully graded assignments 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 two weeks after the grade is first returned to the class. If the last assignment is returned with less than two weeks left, the last day of class is the last day to challenge a grade. Only the professor (not the TAs) can 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 not to question grades in April that were handed back in January because they do not like their final class grades.

We will always fix technical errors or mistakes.

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

Late papers are only accepted until April 22, 2024. No late work will be accepted after that day.

EXAMS

Two multiple-choice tests will be given.

They will be online, timed, open note, open book. You are not allowed to retake any exam.

You are NOT allowed to collaborate with each other during the test. Each test will have an approximate 12 hour window on test day to take the exam. Once you start, you will receive 60 minutes. Each question will be presented one at a time, and you will not be allowed to go backwards on the exam. If I determine you have collaborated with anyone while taking the exam, you will receive a zero on the exam.

The tests 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 tests will be primarily multiple choice or true/false. The final exam is **NOT** cumulative and will only cover material presented since the previous exam. However, most of the 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 on 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 realize 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 most of the class and could be an essay exam if I decide one is best to test the information.

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/>

Any assignments turned in will be assumed to be the final version, and any inappropriate material will be considered intentional and not accidental.

Any class materials may not be uploaded onto 3rd 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.

“Students who violate University rules on academic misconduct are subject to the student conduct process and potential disciplinary action. A student found responsible for academic misconduct may be assigned both a status sanction and a grade impact for the course. The grade impact could range from a zero on the assignment in question up to a failing grade in the course. A status sanction can range from probation, deferred suspension and/or dismissal from the

University. To learn more about academic integrity standards, tips for avoiding a potential academic misconduct violation, and the overall conduct process, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>.”

The creation of artificial intelligence tools for widespread use is an exciting innovation. These tools have both appropriate and inappropriate uses in classwork. Using artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT) in this class **is strictly prohibited**. This includes using AI to generate ideas, outline an approach, answer questions, solve problems, or create original language. All work in this course must be your own or created in group work, where allowed.

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

Canvas

I will attempt to use Canvas to provide information to the class. In the past, I have regularly made RTF versions of my Powerpoint slides available before 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 review sheets on Canvas before each exam. These sheets should not be considered the definitive study guide for the test. Instead, they list significant concepts and ideas you should 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 confidently 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, 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 Disability and Access. Please refer to D&A’s website for contact and more information: <https://community.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.

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 1st through the 12th class day, an undergraduate student can drop a course via the web and receive a refund, if eligible. From the 13th 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 an actual 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

inform us you won't be there. In those situations, you have more significant problems than this class at that moment in time.

Class Calendar

Week	Material Covered	Due this Week
Week of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 15-20 	Syllabus/Introduction Chapter 1: Understanding American Politics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Monday January 15 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday Jan 20 11:59pm 	Due before Jan 20 @11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 1 Short Assignment 1
Week of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 21-27 	Chapter 2 The Constitution and the Founding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday January 21 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday January 27 11:59pm 	Due before Jan 27 @11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 2 Short Assignment 2
Week of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 28-February 3 	Chapter 3 Federalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday January 28 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday February 3 11:59pm 	Due before Feb 3 @11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 3 Short Assignment 3
Week of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 4-10 	Chapter 10 Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday February 4 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday February 10 11:59pm 	Due before Feb 10 @11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 10 Short Assignment 4
Week of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 11-17 	Chapter 11 The Presidency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday February 11 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday February 17 11:59pm 	Due before Feb 17 @11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 11 Longer Assignment 1
Week of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 18-24 	Chapter 12: The Bureaucracy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday February 18 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday February 24 11:59pm 	Due before Feb 24 @11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 12 Short Assignment 5
Week of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> February 25-March 2 	Chapter 13: The Courts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday February 25 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday March 2 11:59pm Review Sheet released this week	Due before March 2 @ 11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 13 Short Assignment 6
Week of March 3-8	Wednesday March 6: Test 1 covers Chapters 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13 Open book/open note Do your own work. No collaboration on the test	March 6: Test 1 (complete between 9am and 11:59pm) System WILL lock you out at 11:59pm no matter where

		you are on the test so be sure to be completed at that time
Week of • March 10-16	Spring Break	Spring Break
Week of • March 17-23	Chapter 6: Public Opinion and the Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday March 17 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday March 23 11:59pm 	Due before March 23 @ 11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 6 Short Assignment 7
Week of • March 24-30	Chapter 7: Political Parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday March 24 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday March 30 11:59pm 	Due before March 30 @ 11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 7 Longer Assignment 2
Week of • March 31-April 6	Chapter 8: Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday March 31 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday April 6 11:59pm 	Due before April 6 @ 11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 8 Short Assignment 8
Week of • March April 7-13	Chapter 9: Interest Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday April 7 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday April 13 11:59pm 	Due before April 13 @ 11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 9 Short Assignment 9
Week of • April 14-20	Chapter 4: Civil Liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday April 14 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday April 20 11:59pm 	Due before April 20 @ 11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 4 Short Assignment 10
Week of • April 21-27	Chapter 5: Civil Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lectures released on Sunday April 21 Lectures expected to be fully viewed/completed by Saturday April 27 11:59pm Review Sheet will be posted this week April 22: Any outstanding late work must be turned in by this day. Any missing work will be assigned a zero after this point.	Due before April 27 @ 11:59pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quiz immediately following Chapter 5
Monday April 29	Test 2 (Chapters (4,5,6,7,8,9)) Open book/open note Do your own work. No collaboration on the test	Test 2, April 29 (complete between 9am-11:59pm) System WILL lock you out at 11:59pm no matter where you are on the test so be sure to be completed at that time