

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT (GOV 310L)

Unique # 37825

Spring 2022

MEETING PLACE: Online Streaming

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

Professor Bethany Albertson

Mon 12:30 -2, Weds 12:30 - 2

Professor Sean Theriault

Tues 1-4

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Klara Fredriksson (Head TA)

Wed 9-12

Theodore Charm

Mon & Wed 11-1230

Danny Cowser

Tue 1-4

Peter Dunphy

Tue 330-630

Christine Guo

Mon 1130-230

Alex Wais

Wed 10-1130 & Thur 11-1230

Ben White

Fri 8:30-11:30

Avery Williams

Fri 3-6

To contact the professors and teaching assistants, please email:

onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu

Office Hours for all TAs will be held on Zoom. To access office hours click Zoom on the left hand menu, and click the link for the relevant office hours. You can sign up for office hours [here](#) (note that there is one tab per TA). This is not mandatory, but ensures that you have a slot in case it gets busy.

For technical support, please click on Online Course Tech Support on the left-hand menu of the class Canvas page.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course provides an introduction to American politics. The course topics include an introduction to America's constitutional foundations, the function of institutions (Congress, presidency, courts), the role of intermediary organizations (interest groups, media, parties), and the relationship between the mass public and politics (public opinion and participation). In addition to mastering a set of basic facts about American government, students will learn theories addressing "big questions" in American politics and will 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.

This course includes four primary purposes. First, it provides basic descriptive information about the American and Texas political systems by examining important political institutions, actors, and processes. Second, it develops analytical skills to understand complex political relationships and phenomena. Third, it introduces the work of the political scientist by concentrating on the paradigms and techniques of the discipline. Fourth, it empowers the students to appreciate their role in a properly functioning democracy.

COURSE FORMAT

This version of the American Government course is taught on-line, which means most of the time 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 described 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 Mondays and Wednesdays 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 will have the opportunity to pose questions online in real-time, and we endeavor to respond as best we can. To assist with the unique demands of an online course, we have put together a "technology handbook." It can be accessed [here](#) or on the modules page. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have the ability to fully participate in this online class.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

- Announcements: Outside of the video lectures, any student communication initiated by professors and teaching assistants is conducted via the Announcements page of Canvas for our course, so please make sure to check it on a daily basis.
- Outside of Class Discussion: This course uses Chatter, a discussion board, built directly into Canvas. 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.
- Private communication: Students who wish to contact anyone on the teaching team (professors or teaching assistants) can do so either in person during office hours or via the common course email address: onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu.

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 will involve de-identifying the data, including the removal of names, UTEIDs, 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. For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services website: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs>.

Refer to the Dean of Students Student Judicial Services website or call 471-2841 for the official university policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty.

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% In class pop quizzes (PQ) – A weekly (approximately) multiple-choice quiz on course material. The quizzes are given at random times and they are designed to test comprehension of the material from readings and lectures up until the previous lecture. At least 12 PQ are offered and a student's top 10 count for her/his grade; a

tiny fraction of the lowest three quizzes is added to the students' PQ grade as extra credit.

- 30% Community engagement projects (CE) - A series of projects spaced throughout the semester that ask the 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 will be offered and a student's top 6 count for her/his grade; a tiny fraction of the other CE project will be 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 are graded for participation only (did you enter an answer?). We offer at least 12 ICA opportunities during the course and 10 count for your grade; a tiny fraction of the lowest three ICA is added to the students' ICA grade as extra credit.
- 10% Reading Credits (RC) – Reading credit questions are available within each module with a relevant chapter. The reading credits portion of the student's grade is based on the percentage of these reading comprehension questions completed correctly by midnight on the day of the lectures.

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 in this course. A 92.99999 is an A-, just as a 93.00001 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 will 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.

COURSE MATERIALS

- By the People, Brief 4th Edition, by James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh with material from Inside Texas Politics, Texas Politics, 2nd Edition, by Brandon Rottinghaus. Online text, ISBN 978-0-1976500-3-5, Oxford University Press. Available for purchase through Canvas [here](#).
- Supplemental readings throughout the semester
- The supplemental readings and all other course materials are accessible through Modules on the course Canvas site, organized by lecture.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any disabled student may request appropriate academic accommodations from the office of Services for Students with Disabilities (471-6259) or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>

Those with documentation for accommodations should send their accommodation letter to the TA email address. Once these letters are received, the time allocated for quizzes will be adjusted. If the student seeks any other accommodation, it is the student's responsibility to meet with either the professors or the TAs to arrange for such accommodations

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Class Reading
Jan 19	Course Introduction	
Jan 24	The Founding	Chapters 1 and 2
Jan 26	The Constitution	Chapter 3
Jan 31	Federalism	Chapter 4
Feb 2	Civil Liberties	Chapter 5

Feb 7	Civil Rights	Chapter 6
Feb 14	The Legislative Branch	Chapter 7
Feb 16	The Legislative Branch	Chapter 8
Feb 21	The Legislative Branch	
Feb 23	The Executive Branch	Chapter 9
Feb 28	The Executive Branch	Chapter 10
Mar 2	Bureaucracy	Chapter 11
Mar 7	The Judicial Branch	Chapter 12
Mar 21	Political Parties	Chapter 13
Mar 23	Political Parties	Chapter 14
Mar 28	Interest Groups	Chapter 15
Mar 30	Interest Groups	
Apr 4	Media	Chapter 16
Apr 6	Public Opinion	Chapter 17
Apr 11	Political Participation	Chapter 18
Apr 13	Campaigns and Elections	Chapter 19
Apr 18	Voting and Elections	Chapter 20
Apr 20	Youth Participation	Supplemental Reading
Apr 25	Party Polarization	
Apr 27	Party Polarization	
May 2	Election Attitudes	Supplemental Reading
May 4	You in the Political System	