

# American Government

**GOV 310L 38155**

Fall 2023

**Instructor:** Shannon Bow O'Brien, PhD

**Meeting Time:** **MWF 10am-11am MEZ 1.306 (Mezes, first floor, room 306)**

This class is in a room which has Lectures Online enabled. All lectures will be recorded and available via Lectures Online (or taped if necessary, by professor) on Canvas.

This class is using the Lectures Online recording system. This system records the audio and video material presented in class for you to review after class. Links for the recordings will appear in the Lectures Online tab on the Canvas page for this class. You will find this tab along the left side navigation in Canvas.

To review a recording, simply click on the Lectures Online navigation tab and follow the instructions presented to you on the page. You can learn more about how to use the Lectures Online system at  
<http://sites.la.utexas.edu/lecturesonline/students/how-to-access-recordings/>

You can find additional information about Lectures Online at:  
<https://sites.la.utexas.edu/lecturesonline/>.

**Student Hours:** I only have scheduled(booked) 15-minute appointments (not drop in) this semester.  
Online office hours seem to work best to help as many students as possible.

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

Any updates will be on Canvas in the announcement page

Any in-person scheduled meetings will be in MEZ 3.226 (my office). These can be arranged by emailing me and making an appointment (based on availability).

**Email:** shannonbow@utexas.edu  
*Be sure to include something about the American Government class in the subject line. I am teaching American Government, American Presidency, and Social Movements this semester so an email saying 'question about class' needs to be more specific since I will have about 400 students between the three classes.*

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

**Teaching Assistants: TBA**

Your TA will hold hours to meet with you. These will be posted on Canvas when available.

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

### **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to American Government. It is designed to give you a basic idea of the functions, activities, and interactions of our federal system. Our government is a dynamic entity that has evolved over time and shaped by both internal and external forces. The goal of this class is 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, 8<sup>th</sup> 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 from time to time if I feel they are needed. Any additional readings will be added 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 12<sup>th</sup> class day. If you remain opted-in at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> class day you will receive a bill through your "What I Owe" page and have until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> class day to pay and retain access. If you do not pay by the 18<sup>th</sup> class day, you will lose access to the materials after the 20<sup>th</sup> class day and your charge will be removed. More information about the LTA program is available at <https://www.universitycoop.com/longhorn-textbook-access>

### **Grades:**

*Grades will be based on the following:*

<b>Test 1</b>	September 22 (Friday):	20%
<b>Test 2</b>	October 23 (Monday):	30%
<b>Test 3</b>	December 4 (Monday)	30%

### **Assignments**

Short Assignment 1	September 18 (Monday)	5%
Short Assignment 2	October 2 (Monday)	5%
Short Assignment 3	October 16 (Monday)	5%
Short Assignment 4	October 30 (Monday)	5%

**All Tests will be IN PERSON this semester**

**Short Assignments and Quizzes (if there are any) will be ONLINE in Canvas this semester.**

TEST 1,2,3 will be given **in person** during CLASS TIME. Closed book and closed notes.

If you become ill and cannot participate in the course, you must contact the professor and/or the Dean of Student's office about your situation.

If attendance/participation/interest becomes extremely low, I may begin to take attendance. If I exercise this option, I will announce it in class, on Canvas, and with the re-weighted grade scale. However, attendance is NOT required for this course. (Translation: I don't take attendance.)

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).

**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

**Short Assignments**

You will have ***four*** short written assignments. These assignments will be posted on Canvas before their due date. They will be uploaded on Canvas.

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.

**Rules for Assignments 2 and 4**

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.

- These paper assignment days are noted on the calendar at the back of this syllabus. They will be posted to Canvas a week before their due day.
- You will be expected to fill out the form in its entirety. Incorrect information is always wrong.
- These forms introduce you to aspects of the American government. They are in this format this semester to facilitate grading. The course is quite large, and the information collected on

the forms would mirror what would be expected if you were to research and write a short paper for the course.

Papers 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)

### ***Rules for Assignments 1 and 3***

These assignments help you understand test questions and gauge your readiness for the exam material. Assignments 1 and 3 will be due on a specific day. The material will be timed but very generously. You will be allowed a couple of days to complete each one from when it opens until it closes. Once you start, you will receive a certain amount of time to finish it, but you will have a couple of days to decide when to take it. However, if you fail to take it in the window given, you will be given a late penalty. I will penalize you 5% daily until the late penalty hits 50%.

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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 December that were handed back in October 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 November 27, 2023. No short assignments will be accepted after that day.**

### **EXAMS**

**THREE multiple-choice tests will be given.** They 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 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/> and <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>. **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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-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 Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please 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 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 1<sup>st</sup> through the 12<sup>th</sup> class day, an undergraduate student can drop a course via the web and receive a refund, if eligible. From the 13<sup>th</sup> 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**

The readings for this day are the readings I expect you to have done before that day. This calendar is based on my best estimation of how long it will take to go through the material. On occasion throughout the semester, I \*may\* get behind a day depending on how long it takes to cover the topic. Tests will **ALWAYS** only cover the chapters noted in the syllabus.

August 21 Monday	Introduction to the Course – Pass out Syllabi
August 23 Wednesday	Chapter 1 – Understanding American Politics
August 25 Friday	Chapter 1 –Understanding American Politics/Chapter 2
August 28 Monday	Chapter 2 – Constitution and the Founding

<b>August 30 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 2 – Constitution and the Founding
<b>September 1 Friday</b>	Chapter 2 – Constitution and the Founding/ Chapter 3 – Federalism
<b>September 4 Monday</b>	<b>Labor Day- No Class</b>
<b>September 6 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 3 – Federalism
<b>September 8 Friday</b>	Chapter 3 – Federalism
<b>September 11 Monday</b>	Chapter 3 – Federalism/ Chapter 10 Congress
<b>September 13 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 10 Congress
<b>September 15 Friday</b>	Chapter 10 Congress
<b>September 18 Monday</b>	Chapter 10 Congress <b>ASSIGNMENT ONE DUE by 11:59pm</b>
<b>September 20 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 10 Congress
<b>September 22 Friday</b>	<b>Test 1 (Chapters 1,2,3,10)</b>
<b>September 25 Monday</b>	Chapter 11 Presidency
<b>September 27 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 11 Presidency
<b>September 29 Friday</b>	Chapter 11 Presidency
<b>October 2 Monday</b>	Chapter 12 Bureaucracy <b>ASSIGNMENT TWO DUE by 11:59pm</b>
<b>October 4 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 12 Bureaucracy
<b>October 6 Friday</b>	Chapter 12 Bureaucracy
<b>October 9 Monday</b>	Chapter 13 The Courts
<b>October 11 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 13 The Courts
<b>October 13 Friday</b>	Chapter 13 The Courts
<b>October 16 Monday</b>	Chapter 6 Public Opinion and the Media <b>ASSIGNMENT THREE DUE by 11:59pm</b>
<b>October 18 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 6 Public Opinion and the Media
<b>October 20 Friday</b>	Chapter 6 Public Opinion and the Media
<b>October 23 Monday</b>	<b>Test 2 (covers Chapters 11,12,13,6)</b>
<b>October 25 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 7 Political Parties

<b>October 27 Friday</b>	Chapter 7 Political Parties
<b>October 30 Monday</b>	Chapter 7 Political Parties/ Chapter 8 Elections <b>ASSIGNMENT FOUR DUE by 11:59pm</b>
<b>November 1 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 8 Elections
<b>November 3 Friday</b>	Chapter 8 Elections
<b>November 6 Monday</b>	Chapter 8 Elections/ Chapter 9 Interest Groups
<b>November 8 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 9 Interest Groups
<b>November 10 Friday</b>	Chapter 9 Interest Groups
<b>November 13 Monday</b>	Chapter 4 Civil Liberties
<b>November 15 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 4 Civil Liberties
<b>November 17 Friday</b>	Chapter 4 Civil Liberties
<b>November 20 Monday</b>	<b>Fall Break: No Class</b>
<b>November 22 Wednesday</b>	<b>Fall Break: No Class</b>
<b>November 24 Friday</b>	<b>Fall Break: No Class</b>
<b>November 27 Monday</b>	Chapter 5 Civil Rights <i>Last day to turn in all late assignments</i>
<b>November 29 Wednesday</b>	Chapter 5 Civil Rights
<b>December 1 Friday</b>	Chapter 5 Civil Rights
<b>December 4 Monday</b>	<b>Test 3 (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 4, 5)</b>