

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Government 310L

Unique: 81165

Professor Daron Shaw

Professor Eric McDaniel

Summer I – 2022

MEETING PLACE: Online-demand streaming through Canvas.

PROFESSOR SHAW

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OFFICE HOURS: Mon. 12-3; Virtual (online)

PROFESSOR McDANIEL

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OFFICE HOURS: Virtual (online)

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Chris Cassella	(Students A-Diaz)
Sarah Heise	(Students Ding-Ingram)
Jonathan Jiang	(Students Italia-Mehta)
Miranda Sullivan	(Students Melmed-Seelye)
Allen Sumrall	(Students Seitz-Z)

OFFICE HOURS

Virtual (on-line)

Virtual (on-line)

Virtual (on-line)

Virtual (on-line)

Virtual (on-line)

Office Hours for all TAs will be held virtually (online).

Contact any/all Teaching Assistants at onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu

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

There will be a google doc on the course's Canvas Homepage to sign up for virtual office hours.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. While our main focus is on the national level, additional attention is paid to the state and local governments of Texas. In some instances, the American case is placed in a comparative context derived from the experience of other western democratic nations. In other instances, we focus on changes over time within the American political system to demonstrate how principles often change with context. At all times, we are interested in a better understanding of how this particular system has developed and what it means for citizens of the United States.

There are three primary objectives in this course. The first is to provide basic descriptive information about the American and Texas political systems by examining important political processes, institutions, and actors. The second is to develop analytical skills with which to understand complex relationships and phenomena. The third is to introduce the work of the political scientist by concentrating on the paradigms and techniques of the discipline.

COURSE MATERIALS

We are using the *Texas Politics* webtext. ISBN 978-1-949164-95-4, Soomo Learning (2022). You can purchase access to the webtext which includes all of the Texas politics content directly through Canvas at \$55 or buy a passkey from the Co-Op bookstore for approximately \$73.39. The second option will allow you to use your financial aid.

For instructions on how to register for the webtext, use the student quick start guide. You can access it by clicking [here](#).

NOTE: If you have already completed a course that has used the Texas Politics webtext, you can have your payment applied to the total price of the webtext by emailing Soomo Learning's Student Support at support@soomolearning.com. Please provide the course information from your previous course.

COURSE FORMAT

This is an on-demand digital version of the American Government course. Unlike most of the courses offered at the University of Texas, you will be viewing this class online (from the comfort of your own home, library, or coffee joint) rather than in-person. You are expected to "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. Students can view them at any time day or night. Having said this, the class is not quite "on demand." We will release the modules in "thirds": the first third encompasses five modules, the second third encompasses five other modules, and the final third encompasses five other modules. This is done to parcel out the material and assignments so students are not encouraged to binge the course, which we find to be counter-productive.

In addition to the lecture modules, for each topic we will also offer a "10 Good Minutes" interview. Experts on different subjects within American Politics are interviewed about their research and thoughts on the current state of affairs. Our goal with these segments is to introduce students to the world of social scientific research and to a variety of viewpoints about how to study American politics.

Outside of the lecture modules, we occasionally ask students to listen to a podcast or watch a short instructional video. These are designed to supplement the ideas and information offered in lecture, and to enhance our students' understanding of how theories and concepts can be applied to real-world issues and problems. **These materials are identified on the course schedule, and (unless otherwise noted) are required (that is, information discussed in these could be on the exams!).**

Beyond the lecture modules and attendant supplementary materials, we will also offer weekly updates on the class and what's going on in the world in the form a short video (20 minutes or so), to be posted on a set day at roughly the same time each week. These videos will also be available on demand, and we strongly urge students to watch each of them. They should help you stay abreast of how the class is proceeding, and might personalize your experience. The discussion of current events is to help contextualize the course with events happening in the U.S. and the world. Although we do not ask about these current events discussions on the exams, we do ask that you complete a short quiz on these videos every week (more on this later).

Before beginning this course, there are a few important additional information items to cover. To access everything associated with the class, simply go to: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1336194>

You can enter directly from the internet or through Canvas (<https://utexas.instructure.com/>). To log in to Canvas and the class website, you will need your UT EID and password. Once you reach the class website, you can navigate your way to other areas. Some of the most important include:

- 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 a listing of the reading assignments, as well as links to the lecture videos, graded assignments, and other course documents. Each module contains the collection of reading, videos, and graded assignments organized around a particular course subject. Note that the readings and links may change up to about a week before the listed date. Due dates for the reading assignments can also be accessed via the **Calendar** feature.
- Pre-Class Activities** – At top of the homepage, you'll find the Pre-Class Activities Module. You should complete all pre-class activities before the first day of class. A lot of effort has been put into these activities to answer questions you may have about the course. Activities include information on the syllabus, a FAQ page, a technical requirements and testing page, and other helpful tips for doing well in the course.
- Announcements Page** – The Announcements feature is the primary mode of communication from the instructors to students. You can access it on 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** – We organize the gradebook by individual assignment as well as assignment group.
- Zoom** – This is where you can access professor and TA office hours discussion, as well as the weekly update videos (under “Cloud Recordings”).

Most of your activity on Canvas will take place in the **Modules** tab.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

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 unsupported. 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 (<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
- 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 program
 - 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
<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. (You can find a listing of these labs [here](#).) If you do not have an internet-enabled device, some inexpensive ones are available at local stores or on the internet, some for as little as \$100.

COURSE EVALUATION & GRADES

The assignments and their sequencing are designed to actively engage students' interaction with the on-demand online format. There will be **three (3) online, virtually-proctored exams**. In addition to the exams, grades will be derived from **short answer assignments** and **webtext assignments** ("get the gist" questions) aimed at reinforcing students' knowledge base. The lectures, readings, and short answer assignments are all designed to prepare you for the exams. There should be no surprises; you should do well if you do the readings, watch the videos, complete all short answer assignments, **take notes** and **pay attention to where you may need to allocate resources to studying**.

The following groups of assignments will constitute the graded work of the course. Final grades will be calculated based on the total number of points earned.

Grading	Points	Grading Rule
Short Answer assignments	50	15 short answer assignments (one per module) @ 5 points each; count the 10 highest scores
"In the News" assignments	50	5 "In the News" assignments (one per week) @ 10 points each
Webtext "Get the Gist" questions	50	14 webtext chapters (typically one per module, though this varies) @ 5 points each; count the 10 highest scores
Exams	150	3 exams @ 50 points each
Total Points	300	

- **Short Answer assignments (15) – 5 points each [50 points total].** *The highest ten (10) grades will be counted.* Students will complete fifteen (15) short answer assignments (one per module) that develop applied understanding of the material presented by asking you to synthesize the material and make connections between and among concepts presented in each module. You will be graded on organization, spelling, and proper grammar. Your grade will also depend on the accuracy, thoughtfulness, and the details you include to support your answer and demonstrate (i.e., provide evidence) that you have read, understood, and can apply the course material presented in each module. Short Answer assignments for each module **must be submitted by 5:00 pm CDT on the due date. No exceptions.**
- **"In the News" Exercises (5) – 10 points each [50 points total].** Students will complete five (5) short answer assignments that develop applied understanding of the material presented in weekly "In the News" segments. Students will receive an announcement when the "In the News" video and assignment are available in Canvas, with a link to the video. Students will have 5-6 days to complete the assignment once it has been published. **The "In the News" module will be located separately, at the top of the modules page.** The same grading guidelines apply as outlined in the Short Answer assignments above. Each assignment **must be submitted by 5:00 pm CDT on the due date. No exceptions.**

- **Webtext “Get the Gist” Questions (14) – 5 points each [maximum 50 points total].** *The highest ten (10) grades will be counted.* The webtext will offer study questions that students will be asked to complete as you read the text. Each chapter will be worth 5 points, with your top 10 chapter scores contributing to your point total for this element of the course. You must answer these “Get the Gist” questions correctly to receive credit. You may reset the answers to all the questions on a page if you answer any of them incorrectly, but you will only have 3 total attempts to answer each set of questions correctly. A numerical score based on the percentage of total questions answered correctly will constitute your *Texas Politics* reading grade. Each assignment **must be submitted by 5:00 pm CDT on the due date. No exceptions.**
- **Midterm Exams (3) - 50 points each [150 points total].** Midterm Exams are *computer-graded* exams containing multiple-choice questions that cover material from both lecture and the ***Texas Politics*** textbook. They are designed to reinforce your understanding of the course material. The exams are non-cumulative. Exams are 75 minutes and consist of 50 multiple choice questions. Exam One will cover the material from Modules 1-5; Exam Two will cover the material from Modules 6-10; Exam Three will cover the material from Modules 11-15.

If you have a university-defined and approved excuse (e.g., a medical or personal emergency) that prevents you from taking the exam at the appointed time, please notify us immediately so we can consider an alternative arrangement.

The grading scale is as follows:

279.00-300.00	A	239.99-231.00	C+	209.99-201.00	D+
278.99-270.00	A-	230.99-219.00	C	200.99-189.00	D
269.99-261.00	B+	218.99-210.00	C-	188.99-180.00	D-
260.99-249.00	B			0.00-179.99	F
248.99-240.00	B-				

Please note that your grade is determined by your overall point total; percentages are used to determine the cut-points, but are otherwise irrelevant for your grade. This can be somewhat confusing, because Canvas automatically produces percentages in their grade scoring algorithms.

With respect to rounding, we typically round down when determining the cut-points. However, we do **NOT** then go ahead and round student point totals up. We can only take charity so far. In light of this, please refrain from asking us to “round up” your grade at the end of the semester. We cannot do this without offering the same to everyone else, and we are not prepared to thus destroy the integrity of the evaluative process.

Finally, we reserve the right to use a curve, which would take the top score in the course and “percentage” off of that number to determine cut-points. For example, say the top score were 295. We might then take 93% of this to set the A range at 460-500, the A- range at 445-459.99 (90% * 495), etc. We emphasize that students should NOT expect a curve; it is something that we occasionally use if we think it appropriate given the overall distribution of scores. More information on this will come later in the class, if necessary.

We reserve the right to use a curve, which would take the top score in the course and “percentage” off of that number to determine cut-points. For example, say the top score were 295. We might then take 93% of this to set the A range at 274-300, the A- range at 265-273.99 (90% * 295), etc. We emphasize that students should not EXPECT a curve; it is something that we occasionally use if we think it appropriate given the overall distribution of scores.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

From the student's perspective, the basic rules are as follows:

- Do NOT use the Canvas mail system.** This class is too large to manage student communication through this platform. We will not be checking the Canvas inbox regularly so please send your inquiries to one of the two communication avenues below:
 1. Technical support can be obtained through the "Online Tech Support Chat" button on the left-hand menu in Canvas (not the professors or the TAs).
 2. Substantive questions about the class, as well as questions concerning accommodations or study habits should be sent directly to the professors and/or TAs at onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu. Or, better yet, come to office hours! Please 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. We will not answer questions about grades by email.

From the professors' and the TAs' perspective, we will communicate important information through the video lectures, as well as the Announcements page on our course website. In light of this, please make sure you check the Announcements page on a daily basis.

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.

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 (512) 471-6259 (voice) or (512) 410-6644 (video phone) or <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

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;
- Recording any quiz, assessment or assignment material in any format;
- Failing to properly cite ideas, data, or arguments that are not originally yours.

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>

Honor system for quizzes and assignments. By taking this class, you agree to abide by the University of Texas regulations concerning cheating. While working on your activities, you cannot receive help from others or discuss your short answer assignments with other students. If you observe others cheating, you are honor bound to contact the teaching team.

The University of Texas 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: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/standardsofconduct.php>

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.

INTERNET RESOURCES

If you want to use the Internet to keep abreast of what's happening in politics, we recommend the following sites:

Political News Sites
cnn.com
nytimes.com
washingtonpost.com
latimes.com
onlinewsj.com
realclearpolitics.com
politico.com
nationaljournal.com
texastribune.com

Issues and the Basics
vote-smart.org
archives.gov

For the More Adventurous...
fivethirtyeight.com
washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/
pollingreport.com
fec.gov

COURSE SCHEDULE

Module	Topic	Open Date	Due Date	Assigned Readings/Videos/Podcasts
	<i>In the News #1 Assignment</i>	June 6	June 12	
	<i>In the News #2 Assignment</i>	June 13	June 19	
	<i>In the News #3 Assignment</i>	June 20	June 26	
	<i>In the News #4 Assignment</i>	June 27	July 3	
	<i>In the News #5 Assignment</i>	July 5	July 10	
1	Introduction and Pre-Constitutional Government	June 2	June 13	
2	The Articles of Confederation & the U.S. Constitution	June 2	June 13	Texas: The Texas Constitution Texas: Federalism Revisionist History: Divide and Conquer http://revisionisthistory.com/episodes/21-divide-and-conquer
3	Federalism	June 2	June 13	Texas: Local Government
4	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	June 2	June 13	Stuff you Missed in History Class: Hernandez v. Texas https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/hernandez-v-texas-30207525/
5	Interest Groups & Social Movements	June 2	June 13	Texas: Interest Groups
EXAM 1: Tuesday, June 14 7:00-8:15 CDT				
6	Political Parties	June 15	June 27	Texas: Political Parties Stuff You Missed in History Class: Alabama Governor George Wallace https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/alabama-governor-george-wallace-30207572/
7	The Media	June 15	June 27	Media Business Matters Podcast: Local Media a Conversation with Texas Tribune CEO Evan Smith http://www.amandalotz.com/podcast-media-business-matters/2018/8/22/local-media-a-conversation-with-texas-tribune-ceo-evan-smith
8	Public Opinion	June 15	June 27	Texas: Political Culture FiveThirtyEight: Politics Is More Partisan Now, But It's Not More Divisive https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/politics-is-more-partisan-now-but-its-not-more-divisive/
9	Political Participation	June 15	June 27	Texas: Elections, Voting, & Campaigns
10	Campaigns and Elections	June 15	June 27	FiveThirtyEight Politics Podcast: What Does it Mean to be 'Electable'? https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/politics-podcast-what-does-it-mean-to-be-electable/ Stuff You Missed in History Class: Does My Vote Count? https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/does-my-vote-count-30208516/ Stuff You Missed in History Class: How the Swing States Works https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/how-the-swing-states-works-30208426/
EXAM 2: Tuesday, June 28 7:00-8:15 CDT				

Module	Topic	Open Date	Due Date	Assigned Readings/Videos/Podcasts
11	Congress	June 29	July 8	<p>Texas: The Legislature</p> <p>Texas: The Legislative Process</p> <p>Stuff You Missed in History Class: Elbridge Gerry's Monstrous Salamander https://www.iheart.com/podcast/stuff-you-missed-in-history-cl-21124503/episode/elbridge-gerrys-monstrous-salamander-29175698/</p>
12	The Presidency	June 29	July 8	<p>Texas: The Governor</p> <p>Texas: The Executive Branch</p> <p>Whistlestop: Harry S. Truman's Battles with the Bosses http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/whistlestop/2017/11/in_may_1946_harry_s_truman_took_on_labor_bosses.html</p>
13	The Courts	June 29	July 8	<p>Texas: The Criminal Justice System</p> <p>Texas: The Judicial Branch</p> <p>More Perfect: The Heist https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolabmoreperfect/episodes/heist</p> <p>Whistlestop: The Bidding of Biden to Boo Bork http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/whistlestop/2018/08/on_june_26_1987_president_reagan_learned_that_th_e_swung_vote_on_the_supreme.html</p>
14	Domestic & Economic Policy	June 29	July 8	<p>Texas: Public Policy</p> <p>FiveThirtyEight: We Let Our Readers Practice International Trade. They Started A Bunch of Trade Wars. https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/we-let-our-readers-practice-international-trade-they-started-a-bunch-of-trade-wars/</p>
15	Foreign Policy	June 29	July 8	<p>Whistlestop: Nixon Goes to China (Part 1) http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/whistlestop/2018/05/when_richard_nixon_went_to_china.html</p> <p>Whistlestop: Nixon Goes to China (Part 2) http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/whistlestop/2018/05/in_1971_henry_kissinger_faked_a_stomachache_to_promote_nixon_s_international.html</p> <p>Whistlestop: Nixon Goes to China (Part 3) http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/whistlestop/2018/06/in_february_1972_president_nixon_had_to_abandon_a_much_needed_shower_in.html</p>

EXAM 3: Saturday, July 9 7:00-8:15 CDT