

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT (GOV 310L)

Unique # 38840

Fall 2021

MEETING PLACE: Online Streaming

STUDIO LOCATION: MEZES 2.200

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

PROFESSOR BETHANY ALBERTSON

OFFICE HOURS: 12:30 – 2:00, Monday & Wednesday

(all via Zoom)

PROFESSOR SEAN THERIAULT

OFFICE HOURS: 12:30-2:30, Tuesday (all via Zoom)

TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Klara Fredriksson (Head TA)

Office Hours

Xx

Office Hours

xx

Office Hours

xx

Office Hours

Xx

Office Hours

To contact the professors and teaching assistants, please email:

onlinegov310ta@austin.utexas.edu

Office Hours for all TAs will be held in 1.118 Batts Hall.

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.

[1]
SEP

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 13 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 13 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) – **The online textbook has reading comprehension questions at the end of each section.** The reading credits portion of the student's grade is based on the percentage of 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%	G+
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, exas Politics, 2nd Edition, by Brandon Rottinghaus. Online text, ISBN 978-0-9904165-5-5, Oxford University Press. Available for purchase through Canvas at <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1160016/assignments/3738889>.
- 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

Lecture	Date	Topic	Class Reading
1	25-Aug	Course Introduction	
2	30-Aug	The Founding	Chapters 1 and 2
3	1-Sept	The Constitution	Chapter 3
4	8-Sept	Federalism	Chapter 4
5	13-Sept	Civil Rights	Chapter 5
6	15-Sept	Civil Liberties	Chapter 6
7	20-Sept	The Legislative Branch	Chapter 7
8	22-Sept	The Legislative Branch (continued)	Chapter 8
9	27-Sept	The Executive Branch	Chapter 9

10	29-Sept	The Executive Branch (continued)	Chapter 10
11	4-Oct	Bureaucracy	Chapter 11
12	6-Oct	The Judicial Branch	Chapter 12
13	11-Oct	The Judicial Branch (continued)	
14	13-Oct	Interest Groups	AG: Chapter 12
15	18-Oct	Interest Groups (continued)	
16	20-Oct	Political Parties	AG: Chapter 13
17	25-Oct	Political Parties (continued)	TX: Chapter 14
18	27-Oct	Media	AG: Chapter 15
19	1-Nov	Public Opinion	AG: Chapter 16
20	3-Nov	Voting	AG: Chapter 17
21	8-Nov	Campaigns and Elections	AG: Chapter 18
22	10-Nov	Campaigns and Elections	TX: Chapter 19
23	15-Nov	Youth Participation	Supplemental Reading
23	17-Nov	Party Polarization	Supplemental Reading
24	22-Nov	Party Polarization	Supplemental Reading
25	29-Nov	Election Attitudes	Supplemental Reading

27

1-Dec

You in the Political System