

GOV 312L Issues and Policies in American Government

Is America Exceptional?

University of Texas at Austin
Fall 2023

MWF 9:00 - 10:00 (PAR 1) - Unique Number: 38190

Contact Information

Keith Padraic Chew, M.A. - he/him/his
Email: keithpadraicchew@utexas.edu
Office Hours: M 11:00 - 2:00 (Zoom)

Students must register for office hours at least 48 hours in advance on Calendly (<https://calendly.com/keithpchew/gov-312l-office-hours-fall-2023>).

Course Description

Is America Exceptional? On the one hand, American achievements on the global stage transcends the fields of politics, economics, innovation, and society. On the other hand, countries around the world have both emulated and bested American achievements on multiple fronts. In this course, we compare and contrast American political institutions (regime type, political parties, the cabinet, the courts, the legislature, and public policies) with countries around the world.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Understand the role of political institutions in the United States and around the world.
2. Identify political institutional practices in real world applications.
3. Compare and contrast key US political institutions with institutions around the world.

How Will You Learn?

Statement of Learning Success

Your success in this class is important to me. We all learn differently, and everyone struggles sometimes. You are not, ever, the only one having difficulty! If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we will develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course. I also encourage you to reach out to the student resources available through UT and I am happy to connect you with a person or Center if you would like.

Teaching Modality Information

This is an in-person class that meets thrice a week. Lectures will *not* be recorded.

Communication

The course Canvas site can be found at <http://utexas.instructure.com>. Please **DO NOT** email me through Canvas – ONLY email me at my work email address stated on the first page. All Canvas messages will be ignored. You are responsible for ensuring that the primary email address you have recorded with the university is the one you will check for course communications because that is the email address that Canvas uses for you to receive announcements.

Asking for Help

If you need to access or ask questions of me outside of class time, visit my office hours. I have office hours online to make access more flexible for all. Time and location can be found at the top of page 1.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed, and that the diversity that students bring to this class can be comfortably expressed and be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit to all students. Please come to me at any time with any concerns.

Disability and Access (D&A)

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 Disability & Access (D&A). Please refer to the D&A website for more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Course Requirements and Grading

Required Materials

There are no assigned books for this course. I will place all readings on Canvas under the File tab (File/Readings).

Required Devices

You will need a computer or tablet and internet access to succeed in this course. All assignments, quizzes, and examinations will be conducted electronically.

Classroom Expectations

Class Attendance: Attendance will not be taken in this course. You are, however, strongly encouraged to attend class.

- Readings are not a substitute for the class lectures. Likewise, class lectures are not a substitute for the readings.
- Weekly quizzes will be administered in class (see below).
- If you are absent on a quiz day (see below), you will receive a 0% on that quiz.

Class Behavior: Laptops and tablets are allowed in the classroom for quiz-taking and note-taking purposes. However, studies have shown people are more likely to multi-task (i.e., be distracted *and* be distracting) when they are sitting behind a computer. Please do not check your email, browse the internet, or send texts on your phone in the middle of class. Note-taking by hand is highly encouraged.

Terms of Address: Please address me as Keith – not Mr. Chew, not Dr. Chew, and not Prof. Chew. I have not yet earned my doctorate nor hold the position of professor (and Mr. Chew is my Dad). Just Keith will do.

Email Etiquette: When emailing me, you are expected to begin with a salutation followed by my name (e.g., Hi Keith). Please indicate within the first complete sentence of your email the purpose of writing to me. Please sign off at the end of the email with your name (e.g., Sincerely/Best, y/n) and UT EID. Please write to me **formally and professionally**. I reserve the right to not respond to emails in the twelve hours before an assignment is due.

Quizzes and Assignments

Your grade in this course will be assessed based on the following four items:

Weekly Quizzes (25%): The quizzes **can be cumulative** and cover both class lectures and assigned readings. Quizzes will usually be administered on Fridays. I do, however, reserve the right to administer pop quizzes. These quizzes will test key information. On average, there will be one quiz per week, for an approximate total of fourteen quizzes for the semester. On each announced quiz, there will be a bonus question (worth 3% of the quiz) about current affairs in the United States. I strongly encourage you to read at least one of the following news sources on a regular basis (note that some - but not all - have a limit on the number of free articles per month):

- BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/>

- Guardian: <https://www.theguardian.com/us/>
- National Public Radio: <http://www.npr.org/>

I will take the top ten quizzes – inclusive of the last quiz. As such, if you are absent for whatever reason on a day a quiz is given, you will receive a 0% for that specific quiz. There are no makeup quizzes. If you miss between 40-50% of the total in-class quizzes given, your final quiz grade for the semester will be a 0%. If you miss 50% or more of the in-class quizzes given, you will automatically fail the course.

Midterm Exam 1 (25%): 09/29 - The midterm examination will be conducted on Canvas. This test is a timed, open-book examination. Exam questions will come from both the class lectures and the course readings. Students will have 40 minutes to complete the test.

Midterm Exam 2 or Research Paper (25%): 10/27 - The midterm examination will be conducted on Canvas. This test is a timed, open-book examination. Exam questions will come from both the class lectures and the course readings. Students will have 40 minutes to complete the test. Midterm 2 is not cumulative.

In lieu of the second midterm examination, you may write a short (1,250 word) research paper on a topic of your choosing, including those not addressed in the lectures. (Note: you must choose either the paper or the exam.) Detailed information about this optional assignment will be posted on Canvas early in the semester. Brief proposals must be submitted electronically to the instructor for approval by 9:00 a.m. on Friday, October 06. Papers due on Canvas on Friday, October 27.

Midterm Exam 3 (25%): 12/04 - - The midterm examination will be conducted on Canvas. This test is a timed, open-book examination. Exam questions will come from both the class lectures and the course readings. Students will have 40 minutes to complete the test. Midterm 3 is **cumulative**.

Missed Midterm Exams: If you have to miss an exam for any reason, please submit the relevant official documentation justifying the absence and explain the reason for requiring a make up exam. This must be done within 48 hours of missing the exam. I will not entertain make up midterm exam requests after 48 hours of the exam date and start time.

Quizzes and Assignments

The following table represents how you will demonstrate your learning and how I will assess the degree to which you have done so. Note that I round using the conventional rounding rules.

If you believe a grade does not reflect your performance, you are welcomed to dispute the grade. I ask that all grade appeals be made in writing. In the memo, explain why you should receive a higher grade on that quiz, examination, assignment, or analysis. This should be done within a week after the grade is announced and submitted after class or in office hours.

A	$\geq 94\%$	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%	F	<60%
A-	90-93%	B	84-86%	C	74-76%	D	64-66%		
		B-	80-83%	C-	70-73%	D-	60-63%		

You will get a response in writing addressing your concerns.

Course Outline

All instructions, assignments, readings, rubrics, and essential information will be on the Canvas website at <http://utexas.instructure.com>. Check Canvas regularly. Changes to the schedule may be made at my discretion if circumstances require. I will announce any such changes in class and will also communicate them via a Canvas announcement. It is your responsibility to note these changes when announced, and I will do my best to ensure that you are notified of changes with as much advance notice as possible.

Week 1:

08/21 (Monday) - Introduction

08/23 (Wednesday) - An Overview of American Exceptionalism

- *The Atlantic*, “American Exceptionalism and the Politics of Foreign Policy”.

08/25 (Friday) - Discussion

Week 2:

08/28 (Monday) - An Overview of American Exceptionalism (Cont.)

- *Foreign Policy*, “The Myth of American Exceptionalism”.

08/30 (Wednesday) - Political Institutions in America

09/01 (Friday) - Discussion (Institutions)

Week 3:

09/04 (Monday) - Labor Day - No Class.

09/06 (Wednesday) - Liberal Democracy (USA)

- *The Atlantic*, “Can Democracy Exist Without Liberalism?”

09/08 (Friday) - Discussion (Democracy)

Week 4:

09/11 (Monday) - Liberal Democracy (UK)

- *The New Yorker*, “Can’t We Come Up with Something Better Than Liberal Democracy?”

09/13 (Wednesday) - Political Systems: Parliamentary (Western Europe) vs. Presidential Democracy (USA)

- *The New Yorker*, “It’s the System, Stupid”.

09/15 (Friday) - Discussion (Political Systems)

Week 5:

09/18 (Monday) - Political Systems: Authoritarianism

09/20 (Wednesday) - Political Parties in America: A Two-Party System

- *Salt Lake Community College*, “The Historical Development of American Political Parties”.

09/22 (Friday) - Discussion (Political Parties)

Week 6:

09/25 (Monday) - Political Parties and Party Systems

09/27 (Wednesday) - Political Parties: Are US Political Parties Unique?

- *The Washington Post*, “How to fix democracy: Move beyond the two-party system, experts say”.

09/29 (Friday) - Mid-term 1

Week 7:

10/02 (Monday) - Political Cabinets in the USA

- *Guilford College*, “Diversity in Presidential Cabinets”.

10/04 (Wednesday) - Cabinet Diversity

- Liu et al. (Year TBD), “Introduction.” Chapter 1. In *Gender, Ethnicity, and Intersectionality in Cabinets: Asia and Europe in Comparative Perspective*. Book Manuscript.

10/06 (Friday) - Discussion (Cabinets)

Week 8:

10/09 (Monday) - Cabinet Diversity in China/USSR/Russia vs. USA

- Liu et al. (Year TBD), “Minority Cabinet Representation in Four Cases.” Chapter 3. In *Gender, Ethnicity, and Intersectionality in Cabinets: Asia and Europe in Comparative Perspective*. Book Manuscript.

10/11 (Wednesday) - Cabinet Diversity in UK/India vs. USA
10/13 (Friday) - Discussion (Case Studies)

Week 9:

10/16 (Monday) - Cabinets as an Institution: Singapore/Malaysia vs. USA
10/18 (Wednesday) - Judicial Courts in the USA

- *Pew Research Center*, “Trump has appointed a larger share of female judges than other GOP presidents, but lags Obama”.

10/20 (Friday) - Discussion

Week 10:

10/23 (Monday) - Courts as an Institution: Israel vs. USA

- Guy Grossman, Oren Gazal-Ayal, and J. Weinstein. 2016. “Descriptive Representation and Judicial Outcomes in Multiethnic Societies.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

10/25 (Wednesday) - Judiciary in the USA

10/27 (Friday) - Discussion

Week 11:

10/30 (Monday) - Midterm 2

11/01 (Wednesday) - Legislatures: US Congress

- *Pew Research Center*, “Racial, ethnic diversity increases yet again with the 117th Congress”.

11/03 (Monday) - Discussion (Congress)

Week 12:

11/06 (Monday) - Legislatures: Canada vs. USA

- *Institute for Research on Public Policy*, “Do MPs represent Canada’s diversity?”

11/08 (Wednesday) - Legislatures: Singapore vs. USA

- *The Straits Times*, “Parliament: S’pore has become less race-conscious, but has not yet arrived at a ‘post-racial state’, says Edwin Tong”.

11/10 (Friday) - Discussion (Legislatures)

Week 13:

11/13 (Monday) - Public Policy as Institutions: US Housing Policy

- *The New Yorker*, “The Unfulfilled Promise of the Fair Housing Act”.

11/15 (Wednesday) - Public Policy as Institutions: European-Style Housing Policy in the USA?

- *NPR*, “How European-Style Public Housing Could Help Solve The Affordability Crisis”.

11/17 (Friday) - Discussion (Public Policy as Institutions)

Week 14:

11/20 (Monday) - Thanksgiving Break - No Class

11/22 (Wednesday) - Thanksgiving Break - No Class

11/24 (Friday) - Thanksgiving Break - No Class

Week 15:

11/27 (Monday) - Public Policy as Institutions: Singapore’s Housing Policy vs. USA

- *The Economist*, “Why 80% of Singaporeans live in government-built flats”.

11/29 (Wednesday) - Discussion (Public Policy Case Studies)

12/01 (Friday) - Is America Exceptional?

Week 16:

12/04 (Monday) - Mid-term 3

Course Policies and Disclosures

Academic Integrity Expectations

Students who violate university rules on academic 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 academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, please visit the Student Conduct and Academic Integrity website at: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct>

Confidentiality of Class Recordings

Class recordings are not allowed for this course. Any violation is subject under FEA and could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.

Getting Help with Technology

Students needing help with technology in this course should contact the ITS Service Desk at <https://its.utexas.edu/contact>

Content Warning

Our classroom provides an open space for the critical and civil exchange of ideas. Some readings and other content in this course will include topics that some students may find offensive and/or traumatizing. I'll aim to forewarn students about potentially disturbing content and I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity.

Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. UT maintains the UT Outpost (<https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/utoutpost.php>) – a free on- campus food pantry and career closet.

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 without explicit, written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. The University is 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 of the course.

Religious Holy Days

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence as far in advance as possible of 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, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Names and Pronouns

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name, unless they have added a "chosen name" with the registrar's office, which you can do so here (http://utdirect.utexas.edu/apps/ais/chosen_name). I will gladly honor your request to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and by the pronouns you use (she/he/they/ze, etc). Please

advise me of any changes early in the semester so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit this site: <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns>. More resources available on the Gender and Sexuality Center's website: <http://www.utgsc.org>.

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island, the ancestral name for what now is called North America. Moreover, I would like to acknowledge the Alabama-Coushatta, Caddo, Carrizo/Comecrudo, Coahuiltecan, Comanche, Kickapoo, Lipan Apache, Tonkawa and Ysleta Del Sur Pueblo, and all the American Indian and Indigenous Peoples and communities who have been or have become a part of these lands and territories in Texas.

University Resources for Students

Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC)

We all benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. If you or anyone you know is experiencing symptoms of stress, anxiety, depression, academic concerns, loneliness, difficulty sleeping, or any other concern impacting your wellbeing – please connect with CMHC. The Counseling and Mental Health Center provides a wide variety of mental health services to all UT students including crisis services, counseling services with immediate support and well-being resources. CARE Counselors are also located within the academic schools and colleges. These counselors get to know the concerns that are unique to their college's students. Visit CMHC for more information: <https://cmhc.utexas.edu> or call 512-471-3515.

University Health Services (UHS)

Your physical health and wellness are a priority. University Health Services is an on-campus high-quality medical facility providing care to all UT students. Services offered by UHS include general medicine, urgent care, a 24/7 nurse advice line, gynecology, sports medicine, physical therapy, lab and radiology services, COVID-19 testing and vaccinations and much more. For additional information, visit <https://healthyhorns.utexas.edu> or call 512-471-4955.

Sanger Learning Center

Did you know that more than one-third of UT undergraduate students use the Sanger Learning Center each year to improve their academic performance? All students are welcome to take advantage of Sanger Center's classes and workshops, private learning specialist appointments, peer academic coaching, and tutoring for more than 70 courses in 15 different subject areas. For more information, please visit <https://ugs.utexas.edu/slc> or call 512-471-3614 (JES A332).

Student Emergency Services (SES)

Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students helps students and their families during difficult or emergency situations. Assistance includes outreach, advocacy, intervention, support, and referrals to relevant campus and community resources. If you need to be absent from class due to a family emergency, medical or mental health concern, or academic difficulty due to crisis or an emergency situation, you can work with Student Emergency Services. SES will document your situation and notify your professors. Additional information is available at <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/> or by calling 512-471-5017.

Important Safety Information

If you have concerns about the safety or behavior of fellow students, TAs, or professors, contact BCCAL (the Behavior Concerns and COVID-19 Advice Line) at <https://safety.utexas.edu/behavior-concerns-advice-line> or by calling 512-232-5050. Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible, however the university may be required to release some information to appropriate parties.

Classroom Safety and Covid-19

For any illness, students should stay home if they are sick or contagious, not only to stop the spread, but also to promote their personal wellness. The university will continue to provide rapid antigen self-test kits at distribution sites throughout campus. Students can receive up to four tests at a time. The university will provide symptomatic COVID-19 testing on campus for all students, faculty and staff. UHS maintains up-to-date resources on COVID, which can be found here: Covid-19 Information and Resources (<https://www.healthyhorns.utexas.edu/coronavirus.html>) and Covid-19 Exposure Action Chart (https://www.healthyhorns.utexas.edu/coronavirus_exposure_action_chart.html).

Carrying of Handguuns on Campus

Texas' Open Carry law expressly prohibits a licensed to carry (LTC) holder from carrying a handgun openly on the campus of an institution of higher education such as UT Austin. Students in this class should be aware of the following university policies:

- Students in this class who hold a license to carry are asked to review the university policy regarding campus carry (<https://www.utexas.edu/campus-carryac>).
- Individuals who hold a license to carry are eligible to carry a concealed handgun on campus, including in most outdoor areas, buildings and spaces that are accessible to the public, and in classrooms.
- It is the responsibility of concealed-carry license holders to carry their handguns on or about their person at all times while on campus. Open carry is NOT permitted,

meaning that a license holder may not carry a partially or wholly visible handgun on campus premises or on any university driveway, street, sidewalk or walkway, parking lot, parking garage, or other parking area.

- Per my right, I prohibit carrying of handguns in my personal office. Note that this information will also be conveyed to all students verbally during the first week of class. This written notice is intended to reinforce the verbal notification, and is not a “legally effective” means of notification in its own right.

Title IX Disclosure

Beginning January 1, 2020, Texas Education Code, Section 51.252 (formerly known as Senate Bill 212) requires all employees of Texas universities, including faculty, to report any information to the Title IX Office regarding sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking that is disclosed to them. Texas law requires that all employees who witness or receive any information of this type (including, but not limited to, writing assignments, class discussions, or one-on-one conversations, or third party reports) must be report it. Before talking with me, or with any faculty or staff member about a Title IX related incident, please remember that I will be required to report this information to the Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email supportandresources@austin.utexas.edu. For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>, contact the Title IX Office via email at titleix@austin.utexas.edu or call 512-471-0419.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Education Code, Section 51.252, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as sexual misconduct, including the types of sexual misconduct covered under Texas Education Code, Section 51.252. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support all impacted by a Title IX incident.

Campus Safety

The following are recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security (<https://safety.utexas.edu/>), 512-471-5767:

- Students should sign up for Campus Emergency Text Alerts at the page linked above.
- Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus must evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.
- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

- In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.
- For more information, please visit emergency preparedness (<https://preparedness.utexas.edu/>).