GOV 310L: American Government

Texas Common Number: GOVT 2301

Course Format: Online, Self-Paced

Course Authors: Eric McDaniel, Ph.D. and Daron Shaw, Ph.D.
Course Instructor: Kristie Kelly, Ph.D. Contact using the Inbox tool in Canvas.

Course Credits: 3
Prerequisites: None

Course Overview:

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. It is an innovative online course that includes lecture videos delivered by University of Texas professors Eric McDaniel and Daron Shaw, "Ten Good Minutes" interviews with experts in the fields of government, politics and public policy, and a textbook component. While the main focus of the course 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 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 by 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.

This course is independent study, which means that you can take it from anywhere, anytime. No classrooms—no set hours to sit down and do the work. Essentially, you will work at your own pace. This gives you a great deal of freedom as to when and where you’ll study, which means a great deal of responsibility for your own progress. Your instructor won’t be in a classroom to keep you on track, so you must motivate yourself to study, learn, and turn in your assignments.

The course materials are the resources you will have to help you learn about American and Texas government. You will probably need to read the text and view the videos more carefully than you would for a traditional course, perhaps even engaging with the material more than once. If you have questions, such as difficult concepts or the timing of submitting your lessons, do not hesitate to contact your instructor via the Canvas Inbox.

You have up to five months to complete the course. You will need to set your own schedule and study goals for completing all the lessons. It is always tempting to put off doing the work until the deadline looms, but we have found that students in our courses do best if they work steadily and give themselves
plenty of time for each lesson. Long periods of inactivity between lessons can inhibit your retention rate when you prepare to take the exams.

**Required Materials:**


Click the "Buy and Access The CIAG & Texas Politics Webtext" link in the course to purchase.

If your webtext subscription expires and/or you are unable to access the webtext for any reason, please contact the publisher's support team at support@soomolearning.com or by calling 888-240-0314 to extend your subscription beyond six months.

**Technical Requirements:**

All students are required to have access to an internet-enabled laptop or desktop computer. Tablets and smartphones are not supported. Computers should meet the following requirements:

- RAM: at least 2GB
- Operating System: Modern (last 2-3 years) and updated operating system (MacOS or Windows)
- Browsers: Chrome is highly recommended (if using Safari or Firefox, be prepared to use Chrome as a backup)

Confirm that your computer is able to stream the video lectures by visiting: [http://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php](http://www.laits.utexas.edu/tower/tech.php)

**Course Organization:**

The course is organized into Modules, which are units of course material that cover specific topics. Module 0 includes a course overview video prepared by the professors to explain more fully the course design. Modules 1-15 contain a set of common components, which include:

- reading assignments and “Get the Gist” questions
- textbook quizzes
- lecture videos
- lecture video slides
- study guides
- lecture quiz
- short answer assignments

Additionally, students must take two in-person proctored exams.

To view the organization of this course, click on Home in the left menu and scroll down through the list of modules. You should view and complete the Modules and Module components in sequential order.
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.

**Webtext “Get the Gist” Questions** 75 points (3.75 points each; count the 20 highest scores out of 23 chapters)

The *Central Ideas in American Government* and *Texas Politics* webtext includes “Get the Gist?” study questions. Research suggests that engaging in this kind of practice testing is an effective learning technique and helpful for mastering the information presented.

Students are required to respond to all of these review questions. You will receive credit for correct answers, with unlimited attempts. Each chapter will be worth 3.75 points, with your top 20 scores contributing to your point total for this element of the course. By submitting this assignment after Module 15, you will communicate to your instructor that you are finished and ready to receive your final score.

**Webtext Chapter Quizzes** 75 Points (5 points each; count the 15 highest scores out of 23 total quizzes)

Students are required to complete and submit a computer-graded quiz for each assigned reading chapter in the webtext. These quizzes will include material from both the *Central Ideas in American Government* and the *Texas Politics* webtext chapters. Your 15 highest scores will be counted in your final course grade.

**Lecture Quizzes** 75 Points (5 points each; 15 total quizzes)

Each module contains a lecture quiz, after the lecture videos. The lecture videos provide context and clarity to the topics in the course, with an emphasis on an in-depth understanding of government in relationship to the topic being discussed. Each of these computer-graded quizzes contains multiple-choice questions that cover lecture content and are designed to reinforce your understanding of the course material. All 15 scores will be counted in your final course grade.

**Short Answer Exercises** 50 Points (5 points each; count the 10 highest scores out of 15 total exercises)

Students will complete structured short answer questions that develop applied understanding of the material. These are instructor-graded assignments, submitted in Canvas. You can expect to receive a score and feedback within three business days. Your 10 highest scores will be counted in your final course grade.

These questions are short essay questions that ask you to synthesize the material and make connections between and among concepts. It should take an average of 4-6 sentences to answer each question.

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 information from the course material.
**Exams 300 Points (150 points each; 2 exams)**

The exams are proctored, paper-based exams that you will take at an approved testing center. You are eligible to apply to take the exams when you have submitted all of your quizzes and short answer assignments up to that point in the course.

The exams will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. You will be provided a study guide for each Module as you progress. Please note that these are only *guides*; they may not be exhaustive, and will not substitute for having an understanding of the material.

The readings, lectures, computer-graded quizzes, and short answer assignments are all designed to prepare you for the exams. There should be no surprises and you should do well if you do the readings, watch the videos, *take notes*, complete all quizzes and assignments, and pay attention to where you may need to allocate resources to studying. You can also prepare for the exams by creating your own study guides and reviewing content as you move through the course.

Exam 2 (final exam) covers Module 8-15 only. **You must pass the final exam to pass this course.**

**Course Outline:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Course Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Defining Government and Pre-Constitutional America</td>
<td>Chapter Quiz – CIAG: The Founding and Constitution, Lecture Quiz, Short Answer – Module 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Articles of Confederation and US Constitution</td>
<td>Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: The Texas Constitution, Lecture Quiz, Short Answer – Module 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Federalism and Building a National Identity</td>
<td>Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Federalism, Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: Local Government, Lecture Quiz, Short Answer – Module 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Civil Liberties and Civil Rights</td>
<td>Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Civil Liberties, Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Civil Rights, Lecture Quiz, Short Answer – Module 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interest Groups and Social Movements</td>
<td>Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Interest Groups, Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: Interest Groups, Lecture Quiz, Short Answer – Module 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Political Parties, Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: Political Parties, Lecture Quiz, Short Answer – Module 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Exam One Options</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7 | Congress                      | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Congress  
▪ Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: The Legislature  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 7 |
| 8 | Presidency                    | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: The Presidency  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 8 |
| 9 | Courts                        | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: The Judiciary  
▪ Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: The Justice System  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 9 |
| 10| Media                         | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: The Media  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 10 |
| 11| Public Opinion                | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Public Opinion  
▪ Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: Political Culture  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 11 |
| 12| Political Participation       | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Voting and Political Participation  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 12 |
| 13| Campaigns and Elections       | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Elections and Campaigns  
▪ Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: Election, Voting and Campaigns  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 13 |
| 14| Public Policy                 | ▪ Chapter Quiz – CIAG: Public Policy  
▪ Lecture Quiz  
▪ Short Answer – Module 14 |
| 15| Foreign Policy                | ▪ Chapter Quiz – TEXAS: Public Policy  
▪ Lecture Quiz 1  
▪ Short Answer – Module 15 |

Webtext “Get the Gist” Questions – Final Grade

EXAM TWO

CIAG = Central Ideas in American Government
TEXAS = Texas Politics
Grade Calculation:
Final grades will be calculated based on the total number of points earned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Group</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grading Rule</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Answer Exercises</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15 assignments (one per module) @ 5 points each; count only the 10 highest scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Quizzes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15 lecture quizzes (one per module) @ 5 points each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webtext Chapter Quizzes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23 reading quizzes (one per assigned chapter) @ 5 points each; count only the 15 highest scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webtext “Get the Gist” Questions</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>23 question sets (one per assigned chapter) @ 3.75 points each; count only the 20 highest scores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exams</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2 Exams @ 150 points each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total points</strong></td>
<td><strong>575</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You must pass the final exam to pass this course. You must also earn enough points from graded assignments and the exams to achieve a passing grade:

- **A** 100-93%
- **B+** 89-87%
- **C+** 79-77%
- **D+** 69-67%
- **F** 59-0%

- **A-** 92-90%
- **B** 86-83%
- **C** 76-73%
- **D** 66-63%
- **B-** 82-80%
- **C-** 72-70%
- **D-** 62-60%

Pacing Your Work:
While this course is self-paced in terms of when you complete the work and submit assignments, periodic midpoint assessments are critical to ensuring that students receive adequate support and are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Thus, this course is designed such that the modules must be completed in order, and students will not be able to move forward until they have received a grade and feedback on all assessments within a given module.

Computer-graded assignments are scored immediately. Students should expect to receive feedback on instructor-graded assignments within three business days following submission. This does not include weekends or holidays. Requests for expedited grading will be ignored, so please plan accordingly. During certain times (end of semester, spring break, etc.), instructors may experience higher-than-usual demands on their time and may need additional time for evaluation. Students should reach out to University Extension at uex@austin.utexas.edu with any concerns regarding grading turnaround.
Course Deadline:
Students have five months from their date of enrollment in which to complete their coursework. If all other coursework is complete and the final exam has been requested through the course exam manager by the student’s designated completion date, an additional 30 days will be granted in which to study for and take that exam. If the final exam has not been requested by the completion date, the student will be dropped from the course.

University Extension strongly advises students to be aware of when they may need a course grade to be recorded on their transcript. It can take up to two weeks after the final exam is complete for a grade to be officially recorded.

Getting Help:
Tech Support: gatewaytechsupport@austin.utexas.edu

For content questions or questions about assignment and grades, use the Inbox tool within Canvas to contact your instructor.

For other questions (registration, exam proctoring, transcripts, etc), contact University Extension.

University Extension Policies:
Full University Extension policies for self-paced courses may be found on the University Extension website.

Scholastic Dishonesty:
Students in this course are expected to work independently, without direct supervision, and to conduct themselves responsibly in accordance with that freedom. To obtain the greatest benefit from their course work, and for the sake of everyone enrolled in our courses, students must demonstrate the willingness to exercise self-discipline, personal responsibility, and scholastic integrity.

We expect the course work and exams that you submit for course credit to be yours and yours alone. Plagiarism and other forms of scholastic dishonesty are serious academic violations that will not be tolerated. The penalties for scholastic dishonesty include the possibility of failure in the course. Scholastic dishonesty in examinations will automatically result in a grade of F on the exam and an F in the course.

University Extension Contact Information:
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512-471-2900

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