



GOV 310L: American Government

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

How This Course Works

This course is online and is self-paced. Students have five months from their date of enrollment to complete the course. All coursework and proctored exams are submitted or taken online.

While this course is self-paced in terms of when you complete the work and submit assignments, periodic assessments are critical to ensuring that students receive adequate support and are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Thus, this course is organized into modules that must be completed in order. Students will only be able to move forward once they have received a grade on all assessments within a given module.

Review the course outline and assignment descriptions carefully. Computer-graded assignments are scored immediately. You can expect to receive feedback on instructor-graded assignments or exams within three business days following submission. This does not include weekends or holidays. Requests for expedited grading are not accommodated, 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.

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 with the Office of the Registrar.

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.

Required Materials

Texas Politics, 9th Edition, by the Texas Politics Project. Online webtext, ISBN 978-1949164954, Soomo Learning. (This is a custom webtext; students must purchase using the direct link provided within the course website.)

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)

Course Organization

The course is organized into 8 modules containing a set of common components: reading assignments with “Get the Gist” questions, textbook quizzes, lecture videos and slides, study guides, lecture quizzes, and short answer assignments.

The following groups of assignments will constitute the graded work of the course. You must receive a grade on all assignments in a module before the next module will open.

Computer-Graded Webtext “Get the Gist” Questions

The *Texas Politics* webtext includes “Get the Gist?” study questions. 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 6.25 points, with your top 12 scores contributing to your point total for this element of the course. By submitting assignment 45 after Module 8, you will communicate to your instructor that you are finished and ready to receive your final score.

Computer-Graded Webtext Chapter 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 the *Texas Politics* webtext chapters. Your 10 highest scores will be counted in your final course grade.

Computer-Graded Lecture Quizzes

Each module contains lecture quizzes 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.

Instructor-Graded Short Answer Exercises

Students will complete structured short answer questions that develop applied understanding of the material. These questions are short essay questions that ask you to synthesize the material and make connections between and among concepts. Your 10 highest scores will be counted in your final course grade.

Exams

This course requires that you take two proctored exams. The exams will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions.

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.

You must pass the final exam to pass the course.

Course Outline

| Module | Topic | Assessments |
|--------------|--|--|
| 1 | 1.1 Pre-Constitution and Founding 1.2 Articles of Confederation and US Constitution 1.3 Federalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 1 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 2 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 3 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 4 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 5 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 6 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 7 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 8 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 9 |
| 2 | 2.1 Public Opinion 2.2 Elections, Voting, and Political Participation 2.3 Campaigns and Elections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 10 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 11 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 12 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 13 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 14 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 15 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 16 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 17 |
| 3 | 3.1 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights 3.2 Interest Groups and Social Movements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 18 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 19 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 20 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 21 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 22 |
| 4 | 4.1 Political Parties 4.2 Media | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 23 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 24 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 25 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 26 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 27 |
| MIDTERM EXAM | | |
| 5 | 5.1 Congress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 28 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 29 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 30 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 31 |
| 6 | 6.1 Presidency | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 32 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 33 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 34 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 35 |

| Module | Topic | Assessments |
|------------|--|--|
| 7 | 7.1 Courts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 36 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 37 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 38 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 39 |
| 8 | 8.1 Domestic and Economic Policy 8.2 Foreign Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 40 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 41 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 42 ▪ Computer-Graded Assignment 43 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 44 ▪ Instructor-Graded Assignment 45 |
| FINAL EXAM | | |

Grade Calculation

Final grades will be calculated based on the total number of points earned.

| Assignment Group | Points | Grading Rule |
|----------------------------------|--------|---|
| Short Answer Exercises | 50 | 15 assignments (one per lecture) @ 5 points each; count only the 10 highest scores |
| Lecture Quizzes | 75 | 15 lecture quizzes (one per lecture) @ 5 points each |
| Webtext Chapter Quizzes | 75 | 14 reading quizzes (one per assigned chapter) @ 7.5 points each; count only the 10 highest scores |
| Webtext "Get the Gist" Questions | 75 | 14 question sets (one per assigned chapter) @ 6.25 points each; count only the 12 highest scores |
| Exams | 300 | 2 Exams @ 150 points each You must pass the final exam to pass this course |
| Total points | 575 | |

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% | | |

Getting Help

- Video Technical Support: gatewaytechsupport@austin.utexas.edu
- Webtext Support: support@soomolearning.com
- For content questions or questions about assignment and grades, use the Inbox tool within Canvas to contact the course instructor.
- For other questions (registration, 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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