

**GOV 679HA, Honors Tutorial Course**  
**Fall 2021**  
**Tuesday 3:30-6:30pm**  
**CBA 4.340**

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## **Course Description and Objectives**

The goal of this class is to introduce you to how empirical social scientists study, think, and research. We will discuss the process of theory building, hypothesis testing, and how social scientists across subfields ask and answer substantive questions. Subfields include:

- American politics
- Comparative politics
- International relations
- Political theory
- Methods
- Public law
- Public policy

The purpose of this course is to provide support for students as they write their honors thesis. I understand that you are taking this class at an unusual time. If a student misses class for whatever reason (e.g. religious commitments, care taking, etc.), they should send me an e-mail in advance and we can make alternate plans. I also understand that students may be unavailable for a longer stretch of classes. I invite the student to discuss these special circumstances during regularly scheduled office hours. Again because of the precarious time in which we're all in this class, the syllabus may change; students who miss class are responsible for learning about any changes to the syllabus.

## **Course format**

Because of the ongoing covid-19 pandemic, this course will be online at least through September 17. Changes to or continuation of the format depend on university policies and will be announced in due course.

## Grading

The following components make up the course grade:

- 20% Participation in class discussion and activities
- 40% Performance on short writing assignments
- 40% Rough draft of first 20 pages of thesis

I use the following rules to determine letter grades at the end of the course:

$$\text{Letter grade} = \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \text{A} & \geq 93 \\ \text{A-} & 90 - 92.99 \\ \text{B+} & 87 - 89.99 \\ \text{B} & 83 - 86.99 \\ \text{B-} & 80 - 82.99 \\ \text{C+} & 77 - 79.99 \\ \text{C} & 73 - 76.99 \\ \text{C-} & 70 - 72.99 \\ \text{D+} & 67 - 69.99 \\ \text{D} & 63 - 66.99 \\ \text{D-} & 60 - 62.99 \\ \text{F} & \leq 59.99 \end{array} \right\}$$

Note that these ranges are fixed. I do not round up or down.

## Flag Course

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

This course also carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

## Course and University Policies

**Academic Freedom:** I encourage and value student participation. You will no doubt encounter point of views that differ from your own. Students in this class come from a variety of personal and academic backgrounds and these backgrounds may lead to a variety of perspectives on the social world. I believe that having a variety of viewpoints will make our discussions more interesting and will allow us to learn from each other. We will maintain a respectful dialogue even when we disagree and no student's grade will be affected by his or her personal views.

**Changes to Syllabus:** The readings and schedule of the syllabus are subject to change, but any such changes will be noted with an announcement either in class and/or via email, as well as an updated copy of the syllabus posted online at the course website and/or Canvas.

**Disability Accommodations:** Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>. If you require accommodation, it is your responsibility to bring your note to me EARLY in the semester so we can work our arrangements.

**Emergency Evacuation Policy:** In the event of a fire or other emergency, it may be necessary to evacuate a building rapidly. Upon the activation of a fire alarm or the announcement of an emergency in a university building, all occupants of the building are required to evacuate and assemble outside. Once evacuated, no one may re-enter the building without instruction to do so from the Austin Fire Department, University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Students should familiarize themselves with all the exit doors of each room and building they occupy at the university, and should remember that the nearest exit routes may not be the same as the way they typically enter buildings. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructors in writing during the first week of class. Faculty members must then provide this information to the Fire Prevention Services office by fax (512-232-2759), with "Attn. Mr. Roosevelt Easley" written in the subject line.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Everyone has times in the semester where they are busy, they are sick, or life catches up to them. To allow for some flexibility in your schedule, you have 2 "late days" built into the schedule. That is, you can, for any reason, turn in an assignment up to 48 hours late. Alternatively, you may use 1 late day on 2 assignments (Anything turned in after the class period where something is due is considered late). These may only be used as whole days (i.e. you can't distribute them as hours late on all assignments). You don't need to explain why they are late. Please just note in your email that you are using your late day(s). These are the only extensions that I will grant during the semester, so if you use them both in the first week, they are gone. [Please see me to discuss any extreme cases of illness and family emergencies.]

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Using someone else's work in your own writing

without giving proper credit is considered plagiarism, a serious form of academic dishonesty that can result in severe penalties. Copying someone else's work, buying a paper and submitting it as your own, copying and pasting text (even with changes), or borrowing images from an online source, are some examples of plagiarism. Even if you plagiarize accidentally, you can be held responsible and penalized.

Learning to cite sources appropriately is an important part of becoming a professional. When you are unsure about citation, you are encouraged to **ask your instructor** (who is already an expert in the discipline) what is appropriate in the context of your assignment. Consultants at The University Writing Center can also help you determine whether you are citing sources correctly—and they have helpful guides online for using direct quotations and paraphrasing. Reviewing those skills will help you feel confident that you are handling sources professionally in your writing.

You can read the University's definition of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty in Sec. 11-402 of the Student Conduct Code. For more information, visit the Dean of Students' site.

**Regrading:** Should you wish to challenge a grade you received on a specific assignment, you must (a) write a memo detailing why you deserve more points (i.e. why you came closer to getting the right answer than points reflect) and (b) turn that memo in to me within two weeks of the class receiving the grades. Otherwise, I won't consider challenges to your grade. Once I receive your challenge, I'll regrade the entire assignment.

**Religious holidays:** A student who misses classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day should inform the instructor as far in advance of the absence as possible, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment within a reasonable time after the absence.

**Technology:** You may use tablets, smartphones, and laptops in this course. Please bring a wireless device to class. However, the use of these devices is for class purposes, not for shopping, being on social media, or making online dinner reservations. I reserve the right to limit or ban electronics if they are distracting to me or class members. Any recording—audio or visual—of class meetings must be approved by the instructor, and out of courtesy to others in the course, by peers in advance—unless said recordings are part of an Office of Disability Services approved accommodation.

## **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](mailto:advocate@austin.utexas.edu). For more information about reporting options and resources, visit [www.titleix.utexas.edu](http://www.titleix.utexas.edu) or contact the Title IX Office at [titleix@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:titleix@austin.utexas.edu).

## Readings

There are no required textbooks for this course. Most weeks will have some assigned readings, but these are suggested readings, meant to inspire thinking about your research and discussions in class. I encourage you to bring questions about the readings to class, and I will often draw on them during lectures. All readings will be available on Canvas.

In addition, students will be in charge of constructing reading lists for their thesis—if you are having difficulty finding appropriate recourses, please let me know right away. We will also cover strategies for finding relevant books and articles in class.

## Course Outline and Schedule

### Week 1. What do social scientists do?

- Major concepts: What's a research question? IVs, DVs, hypotheses
- **Assignment due:** Email me with your advisor's name

### Week 2. Thinking like a social scientist

- Major concepts: Conceptualization, operationalization, measurement, ethics
- Readings: Chapter 2 in Gerring, J. (2011). *Social science methodology: A unified framework*. Cambridge University Press.
- **Assignment due:** First draft – What is your research question and why is it important? (1 page)

### Week 3. The art of theory building

- Major concepts: Causality, scope conditions, parsimony
- Readings:

- Wagner, R. H. (2001). Who's afraid of "rational choice theory". Typescript, Department of Government, University of Texas, Austin.
- Varian, H. (2009). How to Build an Economic Model in Your Spare Time.
- Healy, K. (2017). F\*\*\* Nuance. *Sociological Theory*, 35(2), 118-127.

- **Assignment due:** 4 sources, annotated bibliography

#### **Week 4.** Doing research

- Major concepts: Literature reviews
- Readings: Knopf, J. (2006). Doing a Literature Review. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 39(1), 127-132.
- **Assignment due:** 4 sources, annotated bibliography

#### **Week 5.** Theory testing

- Major concepts: Case selection, natural experiments, and RCTs
- Readings:
  - Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political research quarterly*, 61(2), 294-308.
  - Hultman, L., Kathman, J., & Shannon, M. (2013). United Nations peacekeeping and civilian protection in civil war. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(4), 875-891.
  - Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination. *American economic review*, 94(4), 991-1013.
- **Assignment due:** 4 more sources, annotated bibliography

#### **Week 6.** Good writing

- Major concepts: Writing about research
- Readings:
  - Munger, M. (2010). 10 Tips on How to Write Less Badly. *Chronicle of Higher Education*.
  - Little, A. (2016). Three Templates for Introductions to Political Science Articles.
  - Stimson, J. Professional Writing in Political Science: A Highly Opinionated Essay.
- **Assignment due:** 4 more sources, annotated bibliography

**Week 7.** Checking in on research

- **Assignment due:** First 5 pages

**Week 8.** Peer review

- **Assignment due:** Provide 1-2 page written feedback to your partner from last class on their project using the principles of peer review. Email to Professor Langø

**Week 9.** Discussing research

- **Assignment due:** First 10 pages

**Week 10.** Peer review

- **Assignment due:** Provide 1-2 page written feedback to your partner from last class on their project using the principles of peer review. Email to Professor Langø

**Week 11.** Discussing research

- **Assignment due:** First 15 pages

**Week 12.** Peer review

- **Assignment due:** Provide 1-2 page written feedback to your partner from last class on their project using the principles of peer review. Email to Professor Langø

**Week 13.** Discussing research

- **Assignment due:** None. Work on paper.

**Week 14.** Last day of class

- **Assignment due:** First 20 pages; 1 page outlining your Winter Break Plan