

**Human Rights & World Politics**  
GOV 365W (37530) / WGS 340 (44505)  
Spring 2024

**Current as of 15 January 2024.**

**Class Meetings:** T/TH 2:00 - 3:30pm, MEZ B0.306.

**Course Mode:**

In-person delivery, but lectures will also be recorded using UT's Lectures Online System (see below). **I strongly encourage you to attend class regularly, especially if you are thinking of asking me for a letter of recommendation or to serve as a reference down the road.**

**UT's Lectures Online system:**

This class is using the Lectures Online recording system. This system records the audio and video material presented in class for you to review after class. Links for the recordings will appear in the Lectures Online tab on the Canvas page for this class. You will find this tab along the left side navigation in Canvas. To review a recording, simply click on the Lectures Online navigation tab and follow the instructions presented to you on the page. You can learn more about how to use the Lectures Online system at <http://sites.la.utexas.edu/lecturesonline/students/how-to-access-recordings/>. You can find additional information about Lectures Online at: <https://sites.la.utexas.edu/lecturesonline/>.

**PROFESSOR**

**Dr. Rhonda Evans**

**Pronouns:** she/her/hers

**Email:** [revans@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:revans@austin.utexas.edu)

**Phone:** The number listed for me online rings into my office, and I am rarely there. So, don't count on calling me.

**Office Hours:**

Tuesdays, 4:15-5:15pm zoom only.

Every other Thursday in person (BAT 4.150) and zoom, 12:30-2:30pm: 01/17, 01/31, 02/14, 02/27, 04/10, 04/24.

All other Thursdays are zoom only.

**The TA should be your first point of contact for most matters. If you email me a question that can/should be handled by the TA, I will forward your email to the TA. In any email to me, please indicate that you are a student in this particular course. I am teaching two courses this semester.**

**Bio:** Rhonda Evans directs the Edward A. Clark Center for Australian and New Zealand Studies and is an Associate Professor of Instruction in the Department of Government. She was previously an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at East Carolina University. Dr. Evans holds a Ph.D. in Government from UT-Austin, a J.D. from the University of Pittsburgh, and a B.A. in Political Science from Kent State University's Honors College, graduating *phi beta kappa* with a 4.0 GPA. As a lawyer licensed to practice in her home state of Ohio, she served as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Tuscarawas County and as a Staff Attorney with Southeastern Ohio Legal Services. Her research is interdisciplinary in nature and reflects her training in law and political science. Dr. Evans is working on a book on the Australian Human Rights Commission. She is co-author of *Legislating Equality: The Politics of Antidiscrimination Policy in Europe* with Oxford University Press (2014). For a more personal bio, see Canvas.

**TEACHING ASSISTANT**

The TA should be your first point of contact for most matters. If you email the professor a question that can/should be handled by the TA, she will forward your email to the TA.

## HOW TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON (EMAIL/CANVAS POLICY)

Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence. We will email you at your officially registered email address, **and** notifications will be sent to that address via the Announcements function in Canvas. You are responsible for reading your email for university and course-related information and announcements. It is your responsibility to keep the university informed about changes to your e-mail address. You can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating your e-mail address [here](#).

You should check your e-mail regularly and frequently—we recommend daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-critical.

Before emailing questions about some aspect of how the course operates, review this syllabus and the Canvas page. They will likely contain the answer that you seek. Substantive questions about the course material will be answered at office hours **not via email and especially not at the eleventh hour before an exam or assignment is due.** Come and talk to us, or raise your hand in the classroom. **I enthusiastically welcome such questions in class.**

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Human rights feature prominently in contemporary world politics. Today there exists a large and highly legalized international human rights regime consisting of the United Nations (UN) and several regionally based human rights systems. Focusing on the UN, this course introduces you to the legal, political, and policy dimensions of international human rights. In so doing, it addresses the: (1) origins and future of the international human rights system; (2) legal and institutional infrastructures and processes that exist at domestic and international levels for the promotion and protection of human rights; (3) main actors involved in human rights advocacy, including states, international organizations, activists, nongovernmental organizations; (4) interests of these actors as well as the tactics that they employ to advance their interests; and, (5) the challenges of assessing the effectiveness of human rights advocacy and how these challenges can be met by employing basic precepts of quantitative and qualitative social science research.

In terms of substance, students should be able to answer the following questions by the semester's end: What are international human rights, and why are they codified in law? Why do states ratify international human rights treaties? How is compliance with international human rights law promoted through the UN? Is the international human rights system legitimate? How do international human rights law and institutions figure into human rights advocacy? Is international human rights law effective? If so, under what conditions is it effective? And, finally, how do we *know* if it works? Considering the significant resources and efforts that are devoted to international human rights institutions and advocacy each year, these are clearly very important questions. And yet, you may be surprised to discover that much remains to be learned about the efficacy of international human rights law and advocacy. Understanding why that's the case leads us to the transferable skills that this course emphasizes.

In exploring why we have limited knowledge about the effectiveness of international human rights law, we will consider various challenges to studying international human rights law from an *empirical* as opposed to a *normative* perspective. You should emerge from this course with a better understanding of the mechanics of social scientific research, enhanced critical thinking capabilities, and improved writing skills. The course will increase your knowledge about international human rights, but more importantly, it is designed to help you develop your critical thinking, writing, and research skills. These are precisely the skills that employers and postgraduate admissions committees look for in applicants. I urge you to be more deliberate in your efforts to acquire and

improve these skills as well as in your efforts to emphasize the skills you possess on your resumes, cover letters, LinkedIn pages, etc.

**Gratuitous mentorship alert!** What? You don't have a polished resume or a LinkedIn page? Get on it! The time to start working on these self-promotion tools is before you actually need them. Rest assured that some of your competitors are already on it... Your future-self will thank you! For COLA students, check out [Liberal Arts Career Services](#). All others should explore the options that their colleges and schools offer.

## TRIGGER WARNING

One cannot discuss “human rights” without also discussing the “wrongs” that human inflict on one another. Course readings and classroom discussions may, therefore, expose students to subjects that make them uncomfortable or cause discomfort. We will examine these subjects in the context of intellectual inquiry of the sort encountered at the university level. If you need to excuse yourself from the classroom to self-manage, please feel free to do so. I do not need to know why.

## COURSE MATERIALS

All course materials are freely available to you through Canvas. Materials for each class meeting are contained in a module designated for that class meeting as either PDFs or external URL links. If you have difficulty opening a URL link in Canvas, simply click the blue box labelled “Open Site in New Window.”

You're not required to purchase the book *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. By Charles Lipson (University Chicago Press, 2018), but I highly recommend it. It's available on campus ([here](#)), and a used copy can be purchased from our [Amazon](#) overlords for about \$10. A couple of chapters are available to you in the Student Resources module in Canvas.

## HOW THE COURSE WORKS

### Learning Guides:

The learning guides (located in the modules on Canvas) are designed to help you read in a more targeted and instrumental fashion. Use the learning objectives, key concepts (for those learning guides that contain them), and learning questions to help you identify and skim those sections of the material that do not relate directly to the course and meaningfully engage those sections of the material that do.

In engaging the learning questions, be sure to write out answers *in your own words*—don't just copy sentences from the material verbatim. Otherwise, it's highly likely that you won't understand the material fully and won't be able to perform well on the tests and assignments, particularly when test questions or assignments ask you to apply the material—as they will. For the key concepts (for those learning guides that contain them), you should be able to define and state the significance of each. Significance generally lies in a concept's relationship to something else, its wider implications, or both. A concept can be significant for multiple reasons and for different reasons in different contexts.

The reading should be done in a timely fashion, i.e., *before* you attend class or watch the lecture recording. Doing so will ensure that you are primed for the lecture material, and it will enhance your ability to take high quality notes. Because learning is an iterative process, this is the model that I propose you follow in this course. Read over the learning guide. Then, do the reading. Answer the learning questions and be sure that you understand the key concepts. Attend class and/or watch the lecture recordings and take notes. Periodically review your notes throughout the semester and try to understand how the material from past classes relates to the current material. Identify points that you don't fully understand and ask the TA questions at office hours in order to clarify these points. **[Gratuitous mentorship alert!]** Why not try to maximize the value that you get for your educational dollar? Do you ever pay money for something and demand less than what you paid for? No? Then, why do it with your education?

### **Can I use my laptop, tablet, or miscellaneous electronic device in the classroom?**

No, not unless laptop use is recognized as an official SSD accommodation, or you have a laptop-related accommodation pending.

### **Class Participation:**

I do not take attendance, nor do I require class participation. Being “prepared for class” means that you completed the reading before class.

Because I don’t take attendance, there’s no need to email me telling me that you won’t be there and why. If your absence is due to a serious problem that you’re experiencing that will interfere with your participation in the course, then contact [Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students \(Links to an external site.\)](#). They will work with you to communicate with your professors (including me) and apprise them of your situation. Taking this step makes it easier for professors to accommodate students in distress. If you do not have off-campus access to a computer and/or Wi-Fi, please contact [Student Emergency Services \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for support.

**[Gratuitous mentorship alert!]** As an undergraduate, I rarely missed class. I also graduated with a 4.0. Perhaps those two facts are related? Despite always being in class and always being prepared, to my detriment I very rarely spoke in class unless I was compelled to do so. Why? I was painfully shy in unfamiliar settings. I experienced firsthand the insecurities that accompany being a first-generation college student. Imposter syndrome anyone? Check! I come from families of coal miners on both my maternal and paternal lines. No one possessed any college “cultural capital” to pass down. For me, to ask a question in class was to reveal what I didn’t know. Far better to spend hours answering my own questions (in the pre-Internet era!) than to risk the public humiliation of showcasing my ignorance. Why not go to office hours and ask the professor or TA privately? Are you kidding? And risk revealing to them that I had no business being on a college campus? I only went to office hours when I was formally required to do so, and I can STILL remember how horrible I found those initial experiences—the profuse sweating and stammering. Why are we talking about this?

Oh yeah, because I clearly got over it at some point. How else did I go on to become an assistant prosecuting attorney and college professor, professions that require public speaking? I can tell you that it did not magically happen upon receiving my advanced degrees. It was hard won. To get where I wanted to go, I had to keep putting myself in uncomfortable situations and allowing myself to stumble again (and again) without allowing those stumbles to deter or define me. Success is built on a foundation of failure. If you can relate to my undergraduate experience, then I encourage you to use our classroom as a space to push yourself out of your own comfort zone. This is a safe space. Your future-self will thank you! P.S. If you think you want to go to law school, then you’d better conquer your fear of speaking in class now!

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

We will do our best to adhere to the following schedule, but we make no guarantees, especially for these times in which we live. So, stay tuned to what’s going on in the course by attending class, checking your email, and monitoring Canvas.

**PRE-COURSE REQUIREMENTS MODULE:** You cannot proceed to the course materials until you have completed the academic integrity quiz.

### Reading Assignments:

1. The syllabus. Read it. Let’s all get on the same page from day-one.
2. UT Code of Conduct.
3. Academic dishonesty.

4. Tools for tracking academic dishonesty.
5. Repercussions of academic integrity violations.

Required Assessments:

Academic integrity quiz **due by 01/23 at 11:59pm**. You must score a 95 or higher to proceed. Graded on a CR/NC basis.

## **PART I: Origins, Development, and Legitimacy of International Human Rights**

### **WEEK 1:**

#### **01/16: Introduction to the course, part 1.**

Reading assignment:

The syllabus in its entirety.

#### **01/18: Introduction to the course, part 2.**

Reading assignment:

[Kathryn Sikkink](#), *Evidence for Hope: Making Human Rights Work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 3-16; 19-21. The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can download individual chapters and view the endnotes online.

### **WEEK 2:**

#### **01/23: The puzzle of international human rights.**

Reading assignment:

[Ann Marie Clark](#), *Diplomacy of Conscience: Amnesty International and Changing Human Rights Norms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 3-11; pp. 21-27. More pages are provided than are required.

Want to know more about AI and its role in drafting UN treaties? We will read another chapter from the book later in the semester. The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can download individual chapters and view the endnotes online.

**Academic integrity quiz due by 11:59pm.**

#### **01/25: Origins and development of the international human rights system.**

Reading assignment:

[Beth A. Simmons](#), *Mobilizing for Human Rights: International Law in Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 23-41. Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can download up to 188 pages of the e-book and view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, available online [here](#).

Recommended but not required: Want to know more about the role of actors from the Global South in the origins of the international human rights regime? Read [Kathryn Sikkink](#), *Evidence for Hope*, pp. 55-93. The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can download individual chapters and view the endnotes online.

### **WEEK 3:**

#### **01/30: Origins and development of the international human rights system.**

Reading assignment:

[Beth A. Simmons](#), *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, pp. 42-56.

Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

Recommended but not required: Want to know more about the role of actors from the Global South in the development of the international human rights regime during the Cold War era? Read [Kathryn Sikkink](#), *Evidence for Hope*, pp. 94-136. The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can download individual chapters and view the endnotes online.

#### **02/01: Politics of treaty creation: Amnesty International and the Convention Against Torture (CAT).**

Reading assignment:

[Ann Marie Clark](#), *Diplomacy of Conscience*, pp. 37-69.

Want to know more about AIs role in the drafting of other UN treaties? Remember, the entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can download individual chapters and view the endnotes online.

See Canvas for supplementary materials:

These allow you to see the documents discussed in the reading and learn more about UN bodies discussed in the reading. Want to know more? In week 5, we will cover these types of documents and UN bodies in greater detail.

### **WEEK 4:**

#### **02/06: Critics of international human rights.**

Reading assignment:

[Kathryn Sikkink](#), *Evidence for Hope*, pp. 22-51.

It is admittedly unfair to introduce you to the critics of international human rights through Sikkink's rejoinder to their critiques, but I have yet to find sufficiently succinct summaries of their arguments that make them suitable readings for a single class. I will elaborate the critics' points to ensure that they are given a fair hearing, and I'll cover some criticisms that Sikkink does not address. Do your best to reconstruct the critics' arguments from Sikkink's account and consider whether Sikkink persuades you that their arguments are unfounded.

#### **02/08: International human rights as political claims.**

Reading assignment:

[Michael Goodhart](#), "Human Rights and the Politics of Contestation," in Mark Goodale (ed.), *Human Rights at the Crossroads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 31-44.

## **WEEK 5:**

**02/13: Mop up and exam review.**

**02/15: In-class exam 1.**

## **WEEK 6:**

**02/20: Guest speaker panel (because let's face it, you're not that into class right after an exam!) ☺**

Former students will discuss their experiences in law school and graduate school.

## **PART II: Architecture and Mechanics of the UN's Human Rights System**

**02/22: Assuming and avoiding treaty obligations: Ratification, reservations, and derogations.**

Reading assignment:

[Rhona K.M. Smith](#), "Human Rights in International Law" in Goodhart (ed.), *Human Rights: Politics and Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 58-66.

*Reporting to the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies Training Guide* ([United Nations OHCHR](#), 2017), pp. 2-10.

See Canvas for supplementary materials:

These allow you to see the documents discussed in the reading and learn more about UN bodies discussed in the reading.

## **WEEK 7:**

**02/27: Administering international human rights treaties: State reporting & general comments / general recommendations.**

Reading assignment:

[Rhona K.M. Smith](#), "Human Rights in International Law" in Michael Goodhart (ed.), *Human Rights: Theory and Practice*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), pp. 27-47.

[Jane Connors](#), "The Human Rights Treaty Body System," in S. Chesterman, D.M. Malone, and S. Villalpando (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Treaties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 1-9; 13-15 (only); in terms of sections, this translates into sections 1-2.2 and 2-6 (only).

*Reporting to the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies Training Guide* (United Nations OHCHR, 2017), pp. pp. 2-10; 30-62 and 26-27 (only and in that order).

See Canvas for supplementary materials:

These allow you to see the documents discussed in the reading and learn more about UN bodies discussed in the reading.

**02/29: Administering international human rights treaties: Complaint procedures, etc.**

Reading assignment:

[Jane Connors](#), “The Human Rights Treaty Body System,” in *The Oxford Handbook of United Nations Treaties* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 9-13; in terms of sections, this translates into sections 2.3-2-5 (only).

[Claire Callejon](#), [Kamelia Kemileva](#), and [Felix Kirchmeier](#), *Treaty Bodies Individual Communications Procedures: Providing Redress and Reparation to Victims of Human Rights Violations* (Geneva: The Geneva Academy of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, 2019), pp. 6-25.

*Reporting to the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Bodies Training Guide* (United Nations OHCHR, 2017), pp. 10-16.

See Canvas for supplementary materials:

These allow you to see the documents discussed in the reading and learn more about UN bodies discussed in the reading.

## **WEEK 8:**

### **03/05: Law and politics of interpreting international human rights treaties.**

Reading assignment:

[Cecilia Medina](#), “The Role of International Tribunals: Law-Making or Creative Interpretation?” in Dinah Shelton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), sections 1-4 and 6 (i.e., skip section 5).

In-class exercise – materials TBD.

### **Writing assignment 1 published on Canvas at 5pm.**

### **03/07: Why do states ratify (or not) international human rights treaties, part 1?**

Reading assignment:

[Beth A. Simmons](#), *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, pp. 57-80. I will discuss selected aspects of the chapter’s remaining pages in class, but you are not required to read the entire chapter.

Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

**03/11 (Monday): Writing assignment 1 due by 11:59pm (before midnight).**

## **WEEK 9: 03/11 - 03/15: Spring Break (and the people rejoiced!)**

## **WEEK 10:**

### **03/19: Why do states ratify (or not) international human rights treaties, part 2?**

Reading assignment:

[Beth A. Simmons](#), *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, pp. 57-80. Yes, this is the same assignment as above. Because it’s pretty dense, it will take us some time to work through it, and I may have some in-class exercises for you. As before, I will discuss selected aspects of the chapter’s remaining pages in class, but you are not required to read the entire chapter.



Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

## **PART III: Is International Human Rights Law Effective?**

### **03/21: How do we know if and how international human rights law works? A social science toolkit.**

Reading assignment:

[Emily Stier Adler](#) and [Roger Clark](#), *An Invitation to Social Research: How It's Done*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2015), pp. 1-24; 124-138.

I've yet to find the ideal reading for this material. Use the Learning Guide to direct your reading. Focus only on the concepts that appear on the Learning Guide and ignore the book's examples of they serve only to confuse you.

### **WEEK 11:**

#### **03/26: Measuring international human rights, part 1.**

Reading assignment:

[Todd Landman](#), "Measuring Human Rights: Principles, Practice and Policy," 26 *Human Rights Quarterly* (2004): pp. 906-21.

See Canvas for supplementary materials:

To be determined.

Poke [around on these websites](#) to see just how ubiquitous *data* and *indicators* are at the UN. In a few weeks, Sally Engle Merry will offer her perspective on what she calls "indicator culture."

**FYI:** [03/26 is the last day an undergraduate may: Q-drop a class; withdraw; change a class to pass/fail.](#)

#### **03/28: Measuring international human rights, part 2.**

Reading assignment:

[Todd Landman](#), "Measuring Human Rights: Principles, Practice and Policy," pp. 921-31.  
In-class exercise (TBD) similar to what you will perform for writing assignment 2.

See Canvas for supplementary materials:

To be determined.

Poke [around on these websites](#) to see just how ubiquitous *data* and *indicators* are at the UN. In a few weeks, Sally Engle Merry will offer her perspective on what she calls "indicator culture."

### **WEEK 12:**

#### **04/02: A critical perspective on measuring international human rights: The argument.**

Reading assignment:

[Sally Engle Merry](#), *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence, and Sex Trafficking* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 1-22.

Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through the PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

**04/04: A critical perspective on measuring international human rights: The argument applied.**

Reading assignment:

[Sally Engle Merry](#), *The Seductions of Quantification*, pp. 112-118; 124-32; 134-39.

Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through the PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

**Writing assignment 2 published on Canvas at 5pm.**

**WEEK 13:**

**04/09: Why do states comply (or not) with international human rights treaties? Theories of compliance.**

Reading assignment:

[Beth A. Simmons](#), *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, pp. 112-55.

Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

**04/10: Writing assignment 2 due by 11:59pm (before midnight).**

**04/11: Does international human rights law work? Testing the theory with quantitative data.**

Reading assignment:

[Beth A. Simmons](#), *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, pp. 202-12; 222-31; 253-55.

Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

**WEEK 14:**

**04/16: How does international human rights work? Testing the theory with qualitative data.**

Reading assignment:

[Beth A. Simmons](#), *Mobilizing for Human Rights*, pp. 236; 245-55.

Want to know more? The entire book is available [online](#) through PCL. You can view the references online. We will read more chapters from this book throughout the semester.

**Writing assignment 3 published on Canvas at 5pm.**

**PART IV: The Uncertain Future of the International Human Rights System**

**04/18: China and the UN Human Rights System**

Reading assignment:  
TBD

## **WEEK 15:**

### **04/23: Democratic Recession and the UN Human Rights System**

Reading assignment:  
TBD

### **04/25: Final exam review and course evaluations.**

**Writing assignment 3 published on Canvas by 5pm. Dr. Evans will grade this.**

**04/29: Writing assignment 3 due by 11:59pm.**

**05/03 (Friday): FINAL EXAM @ 10:30 am (location TBD).**

## **REQUIRED LEARNING ASSESSMENTS**

This course employs a variety of mechanisms to assess student learning. All of the following requirements must be met in order to receive a passing grade for the course, i.e., you don't submit one of them, you fail the entire course.

<i>Course Requirement</i>	<i>Percentage of Final Grade</i>	<i>Due Date</i>
In-Class Exam 1	15%	Thursday, February 15
Writing Assignment 1	20%	Monday March 11 by 11:59 pm
Writing Assignment 2	20%	Wednesday, April 10 by 11:59 pm
Writing Assignment 3	20%	Monday, April 29 by 11:59 pm
In-Class Final Exam 2	25%	Friday, May 2 @ 10:30 am (location TBD)

### **Exams:**

Two exams will consist of some combination of T/F, multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, short-answer, and/or essay questions. Exam 1 will test your knowledge of readings assigned from 01/16 through 02/13. Exam 2 will test your knowledge of the readings assigned from 02/22 through 04/25, but your answers may need to demonstrate knowledge of concepts and ideas from the entire semester. You do not need a bluebook.

### **Writing Assignments:**

Three writing assignments will test your ability to apply knowledge and skills covered in the course. You will be assessed in terms of the substantive quality of your papers (i.e., did you do what you were supposed to do, and did you do it well?) and in terms of the quality of the writing. Writing assignment 3 will be an essay that requires you to reflect on your learning journey throughout the course. **Dr. Evans will grade it.** Yes, the quality of your writing counts (either for you or against you) just like it will in your postgraduate lives. We encourage you to make use of the [University Writing Center](#). I mean, why not? You're paying for it.

Because writing assignments are **meant to test your individual knowledge** rather than constitute a group effort, you may use your notes (content that you created), but **you may not use group-generated documents**. See *Sec. 11-402 Academic Dishonesty*. Use of group-generated documents for individual assignments will be treated as acts of academic dishonesty and treated accordingly.

### **What if I require SSD Accommodations?**

I strive to create a supportive learning environment for all students and to ensure that all students enjoy equal access and opportunity in the course of their educational experiences at UT-Austin. Some students require accommodations in order to achieve these objectives. Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 471-6259 (voice) or 512-410-6644 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

While it's true that the professor can see your SSD accommodations letters in the faculty portal, you are nevertheless **required to meet with the TA to discuss your accommodations within the two weeks of the course** or shortly after your accommodations have been approved if that occurs **mid-semester** so that we can be sure to meet your accommodations needs and facilitate your learning experience in the class. Accommodations will not be provided until you have met with the TA. Of course, you are not required to disclose any information about your disability. Your SSD information will be kept confidential. Help us help you.

In some instances, a student has not gone through the formal process of documenting their disability with the University. If you find yourself in this situation, visit this [website \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

If you require note-taking accommodations, notes can be collected from a student in the class and provided to you. The TA will coordinate this. The TA is your primary point of contact regarding notes.

#### **Grading Policies:**

Final course grades will be calculated according to the University's +/- system. Do we round up? It depends. To illustrate, a 93.5 (for example) would be rounded up to an A, whereas a 93.4 would be an A-. Expect ten points to be deducted for every day that an assignment is late.

90-93 A-  
87-89 B+  
84-86 B  
80-83 B-  
77-79 C+  
74-76 C  
70-73 C-  
67-69 D+  
64-66 D  
60-63 D-  
59 and below F

#### **How might I get feedback on my performance in the course?**

Glad you asked! We highly recommend that you seek out feedback on your assignments. The TA is responsible for grading. Here's what to do.

We ask that you first invest some time in evaluating your work. Our own writing can read quite differently a day or more after it was written. [That's why it's a great idea to get an early start on writing assignments.] So, for writing assignments, before meeting with the TA we ask that you take some time to re-read and self-assess your work against the general feedback provided to the class on Canvas. Consider the paper's strengths and weaknesses. Think about how you would characterize your paper. What parts of it are excellent, very good, just good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory? Which of those terms would you use to characterize its overall quality? You can share this self-assessment with the TA in an email. Your assessment will be used to inform your discussion with the TA.

Why do this? We learn by reviewing our own work in a meaningful way. This process is meant to facilitate your own active role in your educational experience. By critically assessing your own work, you are better prepared to engage in a more substantive conversation with the TA. This process is not meant to be an onerous burden or obstacle to getting feedback. Rather, it is meant to help you learn how to improve your analysis and writing skills.

Reviewing exams is a bit tricky given that the TA's office hours are online only. As a class, students will be given an opportunity to review their exams in the classroom. We will provide advance notice as to the day on which this will occur. After class, students may raise questions with the TA or arrange to do so at office hours. Students who are absent on that day can make special arrangements to see their exam by emailing the TA.

### **What if I want to contest my grade?**

The TA will grade exams and writing assignments according to a key generated by the Professor and will consult with the Professor during the grading process.

Before lodging a grade complaint for a writing assignment, we ask that you first follow the process described in the previous section, entitled "How Do I Get Feedback on my Work?" Before lodging a grade complaint for an exam, you must first meet with the TA to review your exam. In either case, contact the TA via email within seven days of grades being posted to Canvas. The TA will meet with you and may exercise discretion to alter the grade.

If you thereafter remain dissatisfied with your exam or writing assignment grade, you may lodge a formal grade complaint in writing by emailing the Professor within three days of meeting with the TA. Understand that the Professor will re-grade the writing assignment/exam in its entirety and may assign a higher **or** lower overall grade than that originally assigned by the TA. Students who remain dissatisfied with a final course grade may elect to pursue action at the College-level. More on that [here \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

### **Do you offer extra credit or make-up work?**

No. Work hard. There will be none, nada, zilch. This is my line in the sand. Understand that when you ask a professor to offer you extra credit or make-up work you are asking *them* to do *extra work* to help you, someone who clearly didn't do the requisite work or who failed to achieve a particular grade.

### **But, what if I need a particular grade in this course in order to graduate, get into law school, or maintain my scholarship, my academic standing, or my parents' love or financial support?**

The burden is on you (not us) to hit that mark. Your best strategy is to work hard, make use of the TA's office hours, get feedback on your work, etc. from the beginning of the course in order to maximize your performance throughout the course. *Your* grade is entirely up to *you*. Apprising us of your plight at or near the semester's end, pleading for special treatment, and attempting to lay a guilt trip on us will not work. The Professor has zero patience for this sort of entitled, manipulative, and unprofessional behavior.

### **What if I'm really struggling in the course or with life more generally?**

We've all been in a tough spot a time or two in our lives, so we get it. We really do. First step, let us know you're struggling. We don't need all the details. Just reach out for help. The Professor and TA are here to help you. Visit our online office hours as soon as you experience difficulty. Do not delay! Come by and discuss the material with us. Solicit feedback on drafts of your assignments. Request feedback on assignments on which you performed poorly. We want to see you succeed. Help us help you in a timely fashion!

If you experience a personal or family emergency (e.g., COVID-19 issues, death in the family, protracted sickness, serious mental health issues, etc.) that prevents you from participating in the course, contact [Student Emergency Services in the Office of the Dean of Students \(Links to an external site.\)](#). They will work with you to communicate with your professors (including me) and let them know of your situation. Taking this step makes it easier for professors to accommodate students in distress. If you do not have off-campus access to a computer and/or Wi-Fi, please contact [Student Emergency Services \(Links to an external site.\)](#) for support.

The University also provides resources to help if you experience a mental health crisis (e.g., depression, anxiety, etc.). Call the confidential **Counseling and Mental Health Center** ([Links to an external site.](#)) Crisis line at 512-471-CALL (2255). Call from wherever you are even if you aren't sure you're in a full-blown crisis but sincerely need help. Staff are there to help you. You're paying for these services. Please use them if you need them.

## **IMPORTANT (MUST-READ) ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES**

### **Academic Integrity:**

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education at UT; therefore, we will not tolerate acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification or attempts to cheat, plagiarize, or falsify with regard to exams or the writing assignment. Should we determine that an academic integrity violation has taken place, we will follow the University's formal process for dealing with such matters. You are expected to be familiar with the UT Honor Code: <https://catalog.utexas.edu/general-information/appendices/appendix-c/student-discipline-and-conduct/>. We refer you specifically to *Subchapter 11-400. Prohibited Conduct* in its entirety. Also consult the section on **sharing course materials and intellectual property policies** that appear in the final, **must-read** section of the syllabus.

### **GroupMe, etc.:**

Why is it that nearly all students despise “group-work” but are only too eager to collaborate on compiling group documents? Because I understand that group discussions among students can facilitate the learning process, I do not discourage those. I do, however, prohibit the construction of group documents related to graded assignments. This is a distinction *with* a difference. I will be happy discuss it with you. Use of GroupMe or other similar mechanisms for the compilation of group work to be used by individuals for their graded assignments will result in failure of the course. **I am a former Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for the State of Ohio. Do not give me a reason to slip back into prosecutorial mode. Note that failure to know and understand the policy (i.e., ignorance) is no defense.**

### **Accommodations for Religious Holidays and Students with Disabilities:**

The TA will manage all accommodations. By UT Austin policy, you must notify us of your pending absence at least 14 days prior to 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. Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities, (512) 471-6259, <http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/>.

### **Intellectual Property Policy:**

This course was created by Dr. Evans, and as such, it is her intellectual property. Students are, therefore, not permitted to disseminate by any means any of the course content created by Dr. Evans, including lecture recordings, power point presentations and slides, or other learning materials. Students who do so without permission will face legal action in a court of law.

### **Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited:**

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (exams or writing assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am 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 in the course.”

### **The Professional Environment:**

Unless instructed otherwise, you should address professors as either “Dr.” or “Professor,” which would make me either “Dr. Evans” or “Professor Evans.”

Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the professor with the student’s legal name, unless they have added a “preferred name” with the Gender and Sexuality Center (<http://diversity.utexas.edu/genderandsexuality/publications-and-resources/>). We will strive to honor **your request** to address you by a name that is different from what appears on the official roster, and we will strive to address you by the gender pronouns you use (she/he/they, etc.). **Bear in mind that there are roughly 100 students in this class (which is one of three courses that I’m teaching this semester).** Please advise us of any changes early in the semester so that we may make appropriate updates to our records. For instructions on how to add your pronouns to Canvas, visit <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/633028/pages/profile-pronouns>.

### **Email Policy:**

See also the policy at the start of the syllabus. The text of your email should clearly state the nature of your inquiry, the name of the course, and either your name as it appears on the course roster or the preferred name that you provided to us. All email correspondence from us to you will be automatically sent to your official UT email address. Therefore, you should know your official UT email address, and as a matter of practice, you should check your account regularly. I have endeavored to make this syllabus as thorough and clear as possible. Before emailing questions about the course, review the syllabus. It just may contain the answer that you seek. Substantive questions about the course material that require lengthy explanations or discussion will only be answered in class (where they are especially welcomed) or during office hours. I will not respond to these types of questions by email.

### **Classroom Behavior:**

This applies with equal force in the online world. It’s important that we have a classroom atmosphere that optimizes teaching and learning, and we all share the responsibility for creating a civil and non-disruptive forum. Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that does not disrupt teaching or learning. Here are some guidelines for classroom behavior: (1) pay attention during class; (2) classroom discussion should be civilized and respectful to everyone and relevant to the topic we are discussing; and, (3) any discussion from class that continues on any listserv or class discussion list should adhere to these same rules and expectations. It is a good rule to let professors know at the start of class if you will need to “leave” early.

## **TITLE IX REPORTING AND TEXAS SB212**

Reporting Title IX is a federal law that protects against sex and gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, 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 unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature 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.

Beginning 1 January 2020, Texas 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) must be reported.

**We are Responsible Employees and MUST (we are legally required to) report any Title IX related incidents that are disclosed to us in writing, discussion, emails, or one-on-one exchanges. 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 would like to speak with someone who can provide support or remedies without making an official report to the university, please email [advocate@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:advocate@austin.utexas.edu). For more information about reporting options and resources, visit <http://www.titleix.utexas.edu/>.

Although graduate teaching and research assistants are not subject to Texas Senate Bill 212, they are still mandatory reporters under Federal Title IX laws and are required to report a wide range of behaviors we refer to as unprofessional or inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature, including the types of conduct covered under Texas Senate Bill 212. The Title IX office has developed supportive ways to respond to a survivor and compiled campus resources to support survivors.

#### **Safety Matters:**

Occupants of buildings on the UT-Austin campus are required to 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 professor in writing during the first week of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class professors. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, the UT-Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: [www.utexas.edu/emergency](http://www.utexas.edu/emergency). The Office of Campus Safety and Security can be reached at 512-471-5767, <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/>, and the Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL) can be reached at 512-232-5050.