

	Course	PSCI 4396.001 Data Mining and Government Transparency
	Professor	Dr. Gregory S. Combs
	Term	Spring 2012
	Meetings	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:30-12:45pm in SOM 2.904

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

Email Address	gcombs@utdallas.edu
Office Location	GR 3.810 (Please email me before coming by)
Office Hours	Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:00am - 11:00am (or by appointment)
Other Information	Please do not send me electronic messages through eLearning (Blackboard).

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description	This explores the prevalence of government transparency in the United States and elsewhere, and examines the technological feats one must undergo to employ and interact with the underlying data that drives public agencies and institutions. The professor anticipates that interested students will come from a variety backgrounds, and therefore expects students to actively contribute and collaborate with their classmates in any group projects related to the coursework.
Required Texts & Materials	<p><i>Open Government: Collaboration, Transparency, and Participation in Practice.</i> Daniel Lathrop and Laurel Ruma, eds. O'Reilly Media, 2010. ISBN 978-0596804350.</p> <p>Note: The textbook is also available online or as an ebook (DRM-free ePub): http://shop.oreilly.com/product/9780596804367</p>

COURSE POLICIES

Grading Criteria

You should carve out regular amounts of time each week to complete required coursework. It is your responsibility to turn in any assignments on time. It is also your responsibility to ensure you are pulling your own weight in group projects. Free-riding your way is a sure way to destroy your chances of a good grade in an elective class.

Grade Allocation:

25 % -- Classroom Participation, Reading Preparation and Attendance

10 % -- Project/Paper Proposals

45 % -- Group Projects and/or Papers

20 % -- Final Presentations

Grading Scale: Grade percentages will be translated into the final letter grade for the course as follows:

A+: 97-100	B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	
A: 94-96	B: 84-86	C: 74-76	D: 64-66	F: 59-less
A-: 90-93	B-: 80-83	C-: 70-73	D-: 60-63	

COURSE POLICIES

Canvas by Instructure	<p>Due to the fact that the university's eLearning/Blackboard system induces migraines, we will use Canvas by Instructure to manage the course. The course's Canvas site is located at: https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/269655</p> <p>Canvas by Instructure is a technology based learning aid. Because of this, occasional, brief outages are possible. According to Murphy's law, problems occur when least convenient. Procrastinate at your own risk. I will not except excuses for late or incomplete assignments, regardless of power outages, login problems, Internet unavailability, and the like.</p> <p>If you are unfamiliar with Canvas or need help, please contact us or visit the following website for specific assistance: http://support.instructure.com</p>
Extra Credit	<p>I may announce any opportunities for extra credit during the course of the semester. I will only offer extra credit opportunities at my discretion. Any opportunities that may arise will account for no more than 5% of your final grade.</p>
Course Requirements	<p>You will have the option of either participating in a group project or writing a research paper, or you may choose to do both. Collaboration is at the very heart of this course. I will not tolerate free-riding. If you feel left out or left behind in the discussions or the assignments, it is your responsibility to instigate productive changes, or you should see me for suitable alternative assignments if group-work is not your strong suit. (I am sympathetic to <i>focused, driven</i> loners).</p> <p>Whatever your path, you are nevertheless expected to participate in the lectures and discussions with the preparation and enthusiasm of a consummate professional.</p> <p>Before you embark on your paper/project you must have me approve the topic or focus. Therefore, any projects and papers must be preceded with proposals. Moreover, you have to keep me informed about what you're working on and about your progress.</p> <p>Final presentations will be scheduled during the last week of classes.</p> <p>Attendance and Participation – Active participation in class discussions is an imperative requirement for this course. Regular and prompt attendance is required. I expect each of you to read and be conversant for each day's required materials BEFORE the course meeting. Be prepared to speak fluently on topics relevant to the day's discussion. Please remember the basic courtesies when disagreeing with others in the room. Speak clearly, concisely, and do not engage in shouting matches. At the same time, if you merely sit there and absorb without examining the issues critically, you are missing out. The college campus is truly one of the last places to voice your ideas in a public forum.</p> <p>Finally, the worst time to worry about course requirements and grading is during the last two weeks of the semester. If you encounter problems at that point, you have few alternatives and my enthusiasm for accommodations is severely diminished.</p>
Student Citizenship	<p>Civility and mutual respect not only with me, as the professor, but also with your fellow students is positively mandatory. If you cannot conduct yourself as a responsible, civil adult, you will be referred to the appropriate University administrative department and may suffer penalties as a result.</p>

COURSE SCHEDULE		
DATE	TOPIC / ASSIGNMENT	READINGS
Jan 17 - Jan 19	Introduction to Course	Syllabus
	Leading by Example (Apps) ...	Chapter 1
Jan 24 - Jan 26	Introducing Government 2.0	Chapter 2
	Everybody Wants Democracy (Right?)	Chapter 13 & 14
Jan 31 - Feb 2	Follow The Money Trail (If you can)	Chapter 17 & 19
	<i>Project Discussions / Data Mining Workshop</i>	
Feb 7 - Feb 9	Legislative Voyeurism	Chapter 18 & 20
	All Your Data Are Belong to Us	Chapter 22 & 24
Feb 14	<i>Data Mining Workshop</i>	
Feb 16	Project Meetings or Work / No Class Held	
Feb 21 - Feb 23	Proposals	
Feb 28 - Mar 1	Don't Underestimate Visual Appeal	Chapter 23
	The Ins and Outs of Transparency	Chapter 25 & 26
Mar 6 - Mar 8	<i>Data Mining Workshop</i>	
	"Freedom" of "Information" "Act" and "You"	Chapter 27 & 30
Mar 13 - Mar 15	Spring Break - University Closed	
Mar 20 - Mar 22	<i>Data Mining Workshop</i>	
	When Governments Get It (& Socrata)	Ch 11, 12, & 34
Mar 27 - Mar 29	Progress Report / Mini-Presentations	
Apr 3 - Apr 5	Project Meetings or Work / No Class Held	
Apr 10 - Apr 12	<i>Data Mining Workshop</i>	
	Resistance, and Bloody-Red Tape	Chapter 21 & 28
Apr 17 - Apr 19	Privacy Good, WikiLeaks Bad	Chapter 29
	<i>Data Mining Workshop</i>	
Apr 24 - Apr 26	Taking it to the Streets	Chapter 7 & 9
	Final Presentations	
May 1	Final Presentations, Continued	
May 3	Project / Paper Submissions Due	

Additional UTD policies regarding student conduct and discipline, academic integrity, email use, withdrawing from class, grievance procedures, incomplete grades, disability services, religious holy days, and resources to help you succeed can be found at: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Great Moments in Data Mining History

Most of these have APIs or other means of accessing their collated data.

[Open States Project](#) from the [Sunlight Foundation](#).

[Influence Explorer](#) (aka [Transparency Data](#))

[OpenGovernment.Org](#) - Currently covers a handful of states

They collect and collate their information from a variety of resources.

[IBM's Many Bills](#) - A visual legislation explorer

[GovTrack.us](#) - Tracking the U.S. Congress

[OpenCongress.Org](#)

[Project Votes Smart](#)

[LittleSis](#) - National lobbyist and influence watchdog with a data API

For Developers Who Want to Get Involved

[Code for America](#).

[Socrata](#) - An Open Government Data API, see examples [here](#).

Current datasets available (freely) on Socrata.

Example: [UT System Salaries](#).

Regional Resources

[Open States Project](#) from the [Sunlight Foundation](#).

[National Institute on Money in State Politics](#) - Follow the Money

[Texas Transparency](#) - From the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts

[Texas Ethics Commission](#) - State Campaign Finance and Lobby Reports

[Texas National Resource Information System](#)

[Texas State Data Center](#) - Geospatial data for the State of Texas

[Sunshine Review](#)

[Your friendly local Federal Reserve Bank](#)

[Open Data Resources](#), a one-stop portal to (tons of good) links @ [Texas.Gov](#)

National Resources

[U.S. Census Bureau](#)

[Federal Election Commission](#) - Federal Campaign Finance and Lobby Reports

[Library of Congress](#) - THOMAS - Congressional legislative data

[US Geological Survey](#)

[Integrated Public Use Microdata Series](#) - Social and Economic Research

[Pew Research Center](#) (lots of miscellaneous survey data)

[MapLight](#) - Money's influence on politics

Freedom of Information Act Requests

[The Office of Government Information Services](#) - FOIA Ombudsman

International Resources

OpenGovernmentData.org - Citizens' advocate and resource for transparency
[Geoserver](http://Geoserver.org) - Community-driven geospatial project