

Core Course Syllabus



Course GOVT2306
Course Title State and Local Government
Professor John Eaton

Term May 23, 2022 - August 10, 2022

Meetings Meets JSOM 2.722
Monday & Wednesday
3:00pm-5:15pm

Professor's Contact Information

Office Location Office hours will be held via Microsoft Teams
Email Address john.eaton@utdallas.edu
Office Hours By appointment on Microsoft Teams
Course Page: [State & Local Government](#)

Course Description

This course will provide students with an introduction to Texas state government and politics. The course covers topics that relate to state governmental institutions, political behavior, and public policy.

Required Materials

- Technology
 - A reliable, internet-connected device with camera and microphone capabilities.
 - A reliable internet connection. While none of the material we will be using is data heavy, slow speeds can be frustrating.
 - Access to our e-learning course. All material required for the course will be there.
- **TopHat (for textbook and quizzes)**

We will be using **Top Hat Pro** (www.tophat.com) for access the digital interactive textbook, **State and Local**, that we will be using in this class. For instructions on how to create a Top Hat account and enroll in our Top Hat Pro course, please refer to the invitation sent to your school email address or consult Top Hat's Getting Started Guide (<https://bit.ly/31TGMIw>).

 - If you already have a Top Hat account, go to <https://app.tophat.com/e/193086> to be taken directly to our course. If you are new to Top Hat, follow the link in the email invitation you received or...
 - Go to <https://app.tophat.com/register/student>
 - Click "Search by school" and input the name of our school
 - Search for our course with the following join code: **193086**

The cost of the textbook is about \$45 and will be applied at checkout when enrolling in our Top Hat Pro course. Bear in mind that some textbook material may be made available in our course throughout the semester, so do not panic if you do not see any in the course upon entry. Top Hat Pro may also require a paid subscription.

Should you require assistance with Top Hat Pro at any time please contact their Support Team directly by way of email (support@tophat.com), the in-app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491. Specific user information may be required by their technical support team when troubleshooting issues.

Course Objectives

In this course, students will:

1. Learn about the interaction between federal, state, and local governments.
2. Identify, describe, and evaluate state political institutions and electoral processes.
3. Analyze and think critically about contemporary developments in Texas politics.
4. Apply course topics meaningfully to living in Texas.

Course Rules & Policies

Academic Ethics

Every member of the UTD community is expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. UTD may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of scholastic dishonesty.

- Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, statements, acts, or omissions related to applications for enrollment or the award of a degree, and/or the submission as one's own work material that is not one's own. Scholastic dishonesty may involve, but is not limited to, one or more of the following acts: cheating, plagiarism, collusion, use of annotated texts or teacher's editions, use of information about exams posted on the Internet or electronic medium, and/or falsifying academic records. While specific examples are listed below, this is not an exhaustive list and scholastic dishonesty may encompass other conduct, including any conduct through electronic or computerized means:
- Plagiarism is the use of an author's words or ideas as if they were one's own without giving credit to the source, including, but not limited to: failure to acknowledge a direct quotation.
- Cheating is the willful giving or receiving of information in an unauthorized manner during an examination; collaborating with another student during an examination without authority; using, buying, selling, soliciting, stealing, or otherwise obtaining course assignments and/or examination questions in advance; copying computer or Internet files; using someone else's work for assignments as if it were one's own; or any other dishonest means of attempting to fulfill the requirements of a course.
- Collusion is intentionally or unintentionally aiding or attempting to aid another in an act of scholastic dishonesty, including but not limited to, failing to secure academic work; providing a paper or project to another student; providing an inappropriate level of assistance; communicating answers to a classmate about an examination or any other course assignment; removing tests or answer sheets from a test site; and allowing a classmate to copy answers.

University policies

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University's policies and procedures segment for the course syllabus. Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

Class Recordings

The instructor will record meetings of this course. Any recordings will be available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the Office of Student AccessAbility has approved the student to record the instruction, students are expressly prohibited from recording any part of this course. Recordings may not be published, reproduced, or shared with those not in the class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. If the instructor or a UTD school/department/office plans any other uses for the recordings, consent of the students identifiable in the recordings is required prior to such use unless an exception is allowed by law. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Class Materials

The instructor may provide class materials that will be made available to all students registered for this class as they are intended to supplement the classroom experience. These materials may be downloaded during the course, however, these materials are for registered students' use only. Classroom materials may not be reproduced or shared with those not in class, or uploaded to other online environments except to implement an approved Office of Student AccessAbility accommodation. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Comet Creed

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

OSA Accommodations:

Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: the University of Texas at Dallas will adhere to all applicable federal, state and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required to afford equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to contact the [OSA](#) office, located in AD 2.224 or call at 972.883.2098 to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

If you are a student with OSA Accommodations that you will be using for the rest of the course, please reach out to me via e-mail as soon as possible so that I can make sure that I am meeting your needs.

Server Unavailability or Other Technical Difficulties: The University is committed to providing a reliable learning management system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty which prevents students from completing a time sensitive assessment activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate

accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the online [eLearning Help Desk](#). The instructor and the eLearning Help Desk will work with the student to resolve any issues at the earliest possible time.

Personal Policies

Communication:

Communicating with me does not have to be a formal affair; however, it is also not like texting your friend about where to meet after class. This is a great time to learn professional communication strategies, especially since the course is mostly online. Allow 24 hours for me to reply to all emails. Also, please put “**GOVT 2306**” in the subject line of any emails to me.

Contesting your Grade:

It is understandable that, at times, you have questions or concerns with regard to a grade you received on one of your exams. In order to turn questions about your grade into a learning experience, your grade dispute will be received in the following way:

- **Cooling off period:** I will not consider any grade related inquiries within the first 48 hours after the grades have been handed out. This ‘cooling off’-period provides the opportunity to let the initial emotions subside and think more clearly about the issue at hand.
- **Office hour review:** You are able to review your exams in the Professor’s office hours. If you have a question(s) about one of the questions on the exam, I am happy to address them there. If you do not agree with me, you’ll be required to write a short memo.
- **Written memo:** Write a short memo explaining why you believe that your answer is correct, and why you therefore should have received full points. It is expected that you address the comments that I have provided for you in class or office hours. This step serves the purpose of encouraging you to critically re-evaluate the answer you gave on the exam. Looking through your notes and developing a case for your answer is an additional learning opportunity.

Course Structure

Grading Policy:

First and foremost, students are responsible for doing the assigned readings, attending class, and applying course material outside of the classroom. I reserve the right to change the elements of this syllabus if students are not meeting these basic responsibilities.

Your grade for this class will be determined by the following components:

1. Attendance (10%)
2. Weekly Quizzes in Class (15%)
3. One Response Paper (20%)
4. Three On-line Exams (55%)- Exam 1 (15%) + Exam 2 (20%) + Exam 3 (20%)

Class Lectures: Classes will take place in-person (JSOM 2.722) during the scheduled class time (M/W; 3-5:15pm) each week. Attendance will be taken each class period via **TopHat** and will count for 10% of your grade. Class sessions be recorded on eLearning with Blackboard Collaborate for later viewings. *Note*, attendance points are only given when attending class in-person.

On the course page on eLearning, click on “Blackboard Collaborate” on the upper left-hand side of the screen. The recorded sessions will be available for viewing no later than 24 hours after the scheduled class period. See ‘Class Recordings’ policy above.

Class Discussion: Discussion and critical engagement of material with others is an imperative, life-long skill. Disagreement is not a bad thing; it provides opportunities to learn, engage, and grow. That being said, given the volatile nature of politics and political issues today, discussion can be emotionally charged. I expect students to keep an open mind, seek to learn about “the other side,” and evaluate information in light of their own biases.

- Be helpful: Is your comment helpful? Remarks and responses should add to the discussion by articulating a different perspective, expanding on class material, or asking a question that is useful for other students. Debate is encouraged as long as you respond to the ideas shared by other student(s) and not attack the students themselves.
- Be polite: Is your comment polite? Remarks and responses should respect fellow users and not include insulting or abrasive language. Foul language is not permitted.
- Be sensitive: Is your comment sensitive? Remarks and responses should take care to be sensitive to users with different cultures and backgrounds.
- Be appropriate: Is the content of your remark appropriate? Users are not allowed to discuss inappropriate (e.g., obscene) material.

Disruptive Behavior: Disruptive behavior is defined as “behavior that interrupts or interferes with daily functions of the University of the education processes” by the Dean of Students at UTD. To create a safe and welcoming environment for learning, no disruptive behavior is allowed in this class. Students who make inappropriate (e.g., hostile or threatening) remarks in class will be reported to the Dean of Students and be removed from the virtual classroom.

Class Quizzes: Class quizzes are given almost every week to ensure you have read/understand and are paying attention to the readings and lectures. They will be conducted in-class on random days. Be sure to come to class having read the weeks’ chapter and take notes during the lecture. I know that sometimes life happens, and you may have to miss a class. As such, your lowest class quiz grade will be dropped- no questions asked. The same applies to your attendance grade (where you get one “free” attendance point. If you have further issues where you cannot make a class, please reach out to me via email.

Students caught cheating (i.e. sharing answers)– such as through class chat rooms, (i.e. GroupMe) – will receive an automatic ‘0’ for the respective portion of their grade. Additionally, students are encouraged to report answer sharing to the Professor in order to maintain the integrity of this course. If answer sharing becomes an issue in this course, I reserve the right to remove or modify this portion of the grade at any time, including by dropping the class quizzes and counting each exam to be worth the remaining percentage of your grade.

Response Papers: You will have two opportunities to write one response paper (as marked in the course schedule). You are welcome to write responses for both occasions; only your top grade will be considered for your final grade.

These papers will consist of your **one-page** response to a given topic covered in a particular lecture. These lectures are asterisked* in the Course Schedule. A more in-depth prompt for each

paper will be uploaded to eLearning. These prompts will specifically tell you what each paper should include to get full credit. Papers will be due *no later than* one week following the topic's coverage in the lecture at **11:59pm** in eLearning through the Turnitin link. Because you have flexibility on which response paper you decide to complete, **no late responses will be accepted.**

You should familiarize yourself with the concept of plagiarism – see the “Academic Ethics” section above. Plagiarism is NOT tolerated in this course. If you have any questions about this, ask me before you turn in an assignment.

Exams: You will take three exams over the course of the semester. Each exam is mandatory. The first exam is worth 15% of your final grade; the second and third exams are worth 20%. These exams will assess your understanding of class and reading material. They are **NOT** open-note or open-book. Each exam will consist of 40 multiple choice and True-False questions. It is imperative to attend and actively participate in all class sessions. Exams will be accessed using Lockdown Browser. More information regarding this browser can be found in the eLearning “Exams” tab.

You'll have a full 24 hour window in which to take the exam. So, each exam will “open” to you at 12am on the day of the exam and close at 11:59pm.

- Exam #1 will occur on Friday, June 17th and will cover material from Weeks 1-4
- Exam #2 will occur on Friday, July 8th and will cover material from Weeks 5-7
- Exam #3 will occur on Friday, August 5th and will cover material from Weeks 8-11

Exam Time Length: The exams, consisting of 40 questions, will be 30 minutes long. Studies show that approximately 45 seconds per question is more than enough time for students who know the material to be able to answer the question. With 30 minutes, you have 45 seconds per question.

Extra Credit Opportunities: Extra credit WILL NOT be offered over the course of the semester. Please do not ask for additional extra credit opportunities.

GRADING SCHEME

A = 94 or above; A- = 90-93

B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82

C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72

D+ = 67-69; D = 63-66; D- = 60-62

F = 59 or below

COURSE SCHEDULE

Following this schedule is imperative to your success in this class. You should familiarize yourself with it. While the topics will remain, some of the dates and readings may need to change depending on how much material we are able to go through together. In order to ensure that the class is flexible, this schedule is subject to change. In the cases where it does change, I will communicate it both in class and via e-mail.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Assignment	Assignment Due
1	5/23	Introduction & Pol. Culture	Chapter 1	None
	5/25	Political Culture		
2	5/30	No Class- Memorial Day		None
	6/1	Federalism	Chapter 2	
3	6/6	Texas Constitution*	Overview -TX Declaration of Causes -Declaration of Independence (Both on eLearning)	None
	6/8	Texas Constitution		
4	6/13	The Legislature	Chapter 8	*Response Paper by 6/13 at 11:59pm Exam 1 by 6/17 at 11:59pm
	6/15			
5	6/20	The Executive Branch	Chapter 7	None
	6/22			
6	6/27	The Judiciary	Chapter 9	None
	6/29			
7	7/4	No Class- Independence Day		Exam 2 by 7/8 at 11:59pm
	7/6	Political Parties	Chapter 5.2	
8	7/11	Public Opinion & Media	Chapter 6	None
	7/13	Franchise of Voting	Chapter 5.1	
9	7/18	Voter ID laws*	Chapter 5.1	None
	7/20	Campaigns & Elections	Chapter 5.1	
10	7/25	Criminal Justice	Chapter 12	*Response Paper by 7/25 at 11:59pm
	7/27			
11	8/1	Local Government	Chapters 3 & 4	Exam 3 by 8/5 at 11:59pm
	8/3			

In addition the above, students are expected to:

- know that this syllabus, including course schedule, is subject to change at the discretion of the Professor;
- read related policy material at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.