

# GOVT 2306.003 - State and Local Government Syllabus Fall 2022

## Course Information

**Institution:** University of Texas at Dallas

**School:** Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences

**Meeting Time:** MW from 11:30 AM to 12:45 PM

**Term:** Fall 2022

**Class Location:** HH2.402

**Modality:** In-Person

**Course Pre-requisites:** None

**Course Description:** Survey of state and local government with special reference to the constitution and politics of Texas.

## Instructor Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Patrick Muenks

**Email Address:** [patrick.muenks@utdallas.edu](mailto:patrick.muenks@utdallas.edu)

**Office Hours:** By Appointment Only (MS Teams)

[Click Here to Book an Appointment](#)

## Student Learning Objectives

- **Think critically about issues related to government and politics**—analyze and appreciate historical trends in the development of government institutions (constitutions, branches of government, political parties, elections, etc.), and apply knowledge of government institutions and theoretical and scholarly approaches to understand government behavior and current events
- **Effectively communicate issues of societal and personal import with others**—meaningfully and respectfully express your positions and ideas on political and social issues to fellow students, community members, public officials, and representatives
- **Engage academically and professionally with a sense of social responsibility**—recognize that individual actions can have consequences for society just as government actions can have consequences for individuals, and engage with the world around you with awareness and empathy

- **Exercise personal responsibility in how government functions**-understand how to effectively interact with government to achieve desired outcomes, and begin a lifetime of active engagement with your state and local governments

## Student Learning Outcomes

At the completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the influence founding principles have on today's political structure, including current political and policy debates.
2. Describe state and local political systems and their ever-changing relationship to the federal government.
3. Assess the design and function of states' executive, legislative, and judicial branches in comparison to other states/the federal government.
4. Examine the impact of evolving civil rights and civil liberties protections on state governance.
5. Analyze issues, public policies, and political culture in the U.S. from an empirical (e.g., evidence-based) rather than opinionated frame.
6. Identify, describe, and analyze various mechanisms of citizen political involvement including public opinion, political parties, interest groups, and electoral processes.
7. Apply important theoretical and scholarly approaches to understanding state and local institutions' behavior, citizen involvement, and interactions between citizens and institutions of government.
8. Consider the above factors when designing, strategizing, and proposing workable policy solutions to complex governmental and societal problems facing state and local governments today.

## Required Textbooks and Materials

There are two required materials for this course: (1) a textbook, and (2) a subscription to a digital learning platform called TopHat. Our textbook is fully integrated into TopHat, which means that you cannot access the textbook without purchasing the TopHat subscription.

**Both can be ordered via this link:** *TopHat Course Registration*.

Click on the student portal and use the Join Code of **366676** to locate this course.

## Accessing the Textbook and Required Materials

Upon purchasing your subscription to TopHat and the textbook (ISBN: 9781774127582), you will have full access to the necessary course materials.

## Notes About Class Materials

- These materials are only available to order through the link above or in the invitation link sent to your UT Dallas email address; these items are not available through the UT Dallas bookstore.
- Use your UT Dallas email to subscribe to TopHat.
- If you already purchased a TopHat subscription the Fall 2022 term, you only need to purchase the textbook for this course.
- You only need to purchase the semester-length subscription to complete this course.

## What about eLearning/Blackboard?

This section of GOVT 2306 uses Top Hat for its textbook (there is no print version of the text; it is only found on online through Top Hat). We will also use it to submit homework, complete exams, access lecture slides, and view unofficial homework and exam grades. eLearning/Blackboard is UTD's chosen LMS (Learning Management System) and thus where official grades are housed for every class at the university.

## Modality: In-Person

The course is set to be taught as an in-person course meaning students are expected to attend class. If university policy requires the modality of course instruction to be adjusted, students will receive an email from the instructor with updated course information. Unless required by COVID-19 policy or through OSA, video recordings of the class will not be made available to students.

All times listed on the course calendar are in **CT (Central Time Zone)**.

## Exam Schedule

Assignment	Date Available	Date Due	Content
Exam 1	September 21	September 23 at 5:00 PM	Chapters 1-5
Exam 2	October 26	October 28 at 5:00 PM	Chapters 6-10
Exam 3	December 7	December 8 at 11:59 PM	Chapters 11-15
Final Exam (Optional)	December 14	December 14 at 11:59 PM	Chapters 1-15

## Homework Submission

All homework assignments are completed through TopHat. All homework assignments are due at 11:59 PM CT on the specified date.

## Readings and Homework

Week	Readings	Assessment	Due Date
Week of August 22	Syllabus and Chapter 1	Homework 1	August 31
Week of August 29	Chapter 2	Homework 2	August 31
Week of September 5	Chapter 3	Homework 3	September 7
<b>Monday, September 5</b>	<b>No Class - Labor Day</b>		
Week of September 12	Chapter 4	Homework 4	September 14
Week of September 19	Chapter 5	Homework 5	September 21
Week of September 26	Chapter 6	Homework 6	September 28
Week of October 3	Chapter 7	Homework 7	October 5
Week of October 10	Chapter 8	Homework 8	October 12
Week of October 17	Chapter 9	Homework 9	October 19
Week of October 24	Chapter 10	Homework 10	October 26
Week of October 31	Chapter 11	Homework 11	November 2
Week of November 7	Chapter 12	Homework 12	November 9
Week of November 14	Chapter 13	Homework 13	November 16
Week of November 21	<b>No Class - Fall Break</b>		
Week of November 28	Chapter 14	Homework 14	November 30
Week of December 5	Chapter 15	Homework 15	December 7

## Assessment

Course assessment will be completed using homework and exams. Details on the grading scale along with each of the assignments can be found below.

## Grading Scale

Consistent with UT Dallas policy, students are graded on a plus/minus scale. Grades will not be rounded in this course. Extra credit is not offered in this course. Please see the grade table below:

Grade	Top of Range	Bottom of Range
A+	100	97
A	< 97	>= 93
A-	< 93	>= 90
B+	< 90	>= 87
B	< 87	>= 84
B-	< 84	>= 80
C+	< 80	>= 77
C	< 77	>= 74
C-	< 74	>= 70
D+	< 70	>= 67
D	< 67	>= 64
D-	< 64	>= 60
F	< 60	

### Assignment Weights

Assignment	Weight
Homework	40%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%
Final Exam	Replaces Lowest Exam Score
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Homework - 40%

Homework is integrated into the textbook via TopHat and is completed by answering the questions embedded in the weekly readings in each chapter. **For final assessment, students will be evaluated based on the 13 highest scored homework assignments. This means the lowest two homework grades will be dropped.** This provides students the flexibility to miss up to two homework assignments without penalty. In order to receive full credit for the homework assignments, students must answer all of the questions in each chapter. The questions are worth one point each and evaluated equally on two factors: participation and correctness. Participation is whether you progressed through the chapter and attempted each question. Correctness is whether you provided the right answer to the question. Below is a sample calculation for figuring out a grade on a homework assignment.

- Total number of questions in the chapter: 10

- Total number of questions attempted (participation): 10
- Total number of correct answers (correctness): 8
- Calculation:  $(10 * 0.5) + (8 * 0.5) = 9$
- Assignment Score: 90%

### **3 Exams - 20% Each**

Exams will be conducted online through TopHat; students are welcome to use course materials and notes. Exams will feature a variety of questions which test your recollection of topics and concepts covered in class along with your ability to critically analyze and apply those topics to the U.S. governmental system.

#### **Make-Up Exams**

Since students are given multiple days to complete an exam and may replace the lowest exam score by taking the final, medical emergencies and school-sanctioned activities are the only acceptable reasons for make-up exams. Documentation of the absence is required to schedule a make-up exam and approval is subject to the instructor's discretion. All make-up exams must be completed within one week of the scheduled due date.

#### **Additional Exam Information**

- For exam availability and dates, please see the Exam Schedule in this document.
- Once you begin the exam, you will have 75 minutes to complete the exam. If you start the exam within 75 minutes of the due date and time, you will not be allotted extra time.
- Exams are online meaning students can select the location where they will complete the exam.
- Coordination or taking the exam as a group is prohibited.
- **It is strongly recommended that you take the exam on-campus in a computer lab or in the library to ensure stable internet access.**
- For compatibility, TopHat recommends using FireFox over other browsers.

## Final Exam - Optional

Students will have the option to take a comprehensive final exam. It will cover Chapters 1-15 and be held during finals week. **The final exam will replace your lowest exam score.** The final exam will be available 24 hours. Once you begin the final exam, you will have 2 hours and 30 minutes to complete the exam. If you start the exam within two hours and 30 minutes of when it is due, you will not be allotted extra time.

**The date and time for the final exam will be updated once the schedule for finals week has been announced.**

## Course Policies

### Communication

- Emails about the course must be sent using your UT Dallas email and have GOVT 2305 in the subject line. Failure to do so may result in a delayed response from the instructor. Per UT Dallas policy, I will not respond to student emails sent from non UT Dallas email accounts.
- Expect all email messages to be responded to within two business days.
- You may also reach out to the instructor using e-Learning. Please see the e-Learning tutorials for additional information and guides.

### Late Work

Late work is not accepted. The student's lowest two homework grades will be dropped and students may replace one exam score by taking the final exam.

### Extra Credit

There is no extra credit offered in this course.

### Courseroom Citizenship

This course is meant to serve as an introductory survey of the U.S. Federal Government. Course material may cover topics that some considered to be controversial or provocative - the instructor will do their best to present this material in the context of the subject being discussed. It is incumbent on students to treat all members of the classroom with respect and to maintain a cordial atmosphere as we engage in discussions.

## Academic Integrity

Every student at UT Dallas is expected to exercise independent thought and expression as he or she strives for academic achievement. Incorporated in the quest for intellectual growth are the expectations of honesty, originality in written and oral expression, a respect for the exchange of ideas, and acknowledgement and recognition of the abilities and contributions of others. Please see the university's [academic integrity](#) page for details and tips.

Academic dishonesty is unacceptable under any circumstances. This includes but is not limited to plagiarism, collusion, cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, failure to contribute to a collaborative project, and sabotage. If a student is thought to be engaging in academic dishonesty, they will be referred to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct. For additional details on what may constitute academic dishonesty, please refer to the [university's webpage](#).

## Academic Accommodation Information

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Dallas to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and state and local regulations regarding students and applicants with disabilities. In compliance with these laws, the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA) is dedicated to maintaining an environment that guarantees students with disabilities full access to educational programs, activities and facilities.

**It is the student's responsibility to identify himself/herself to OSA and to provide documentation of a disability.** Strict documentation guidelines exist for different types of disabilities. See the [OSA website for details](#). The student meets with OSA, who determines appropriate accommodations after reviewing documentation prepared by a licensed professional.

Instructors are under no obligation to provide accommodations for a student who does not identify himself/herself as a student with a disability. If a student requests accommodations for a disability but has not provided the faculty member with an Accommodation Letter from OSA, the instructor will immediately refer the student to OSA.

## Classroom Conduct Requirements Related to Public Health Measures

UT Dallas will follow the public health and safety guidelines put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and local pub-

lic health agencies that are in effect at that time during the Fall 2021 semester to the extent allowed by state governance. Texas Governor Greg Abbott's Executive Order GA-38 prohibits us from mandating vaccines and face coverings for UT Dallas employees, students, and members of the public on campus. However, we strongly encourage all Comets to get vaccinated and wear face coverings as recommended by the CDC. Check the [Comets United: Latest Updates webpage](#) for the latest guidance on the University's public health measures. Comets are expected to carry out [Student Safety](#) protocols in adherence to the Comet Commitment. Unvaccinated Comets will be expected to complete the [Required Daily Health Screening](#). Those students who do not comply will be referred to the Office of Community Standards and Conduct for disciplinary action under the [Student Code of Conduct – UTSP5003](#).

## Class Recordings

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. Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

The instructor may record meetings of this course. These recordings will be made available to all students registered for this class if the intent is to supplement the classroom experience. 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.

## Comet Creed

This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:

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