



Course	GOVT 2306.002
Course Title	State and Local Government
Professor	Joshua Montgomery
Term	Fall 2023
Meetings	Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 3:00pm - 3:50pm • HH 2.420

CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor

Name	Joshua Montgomery
Office Phone	(972) 883-6491, ext. 6491
Office Location	Green Hall 3.826
Email Address	Joshua.Montgomery@utdallas.edu
Office Hours	MW 10am-11am, F 11am-12pm, and by appointment.

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Course Description

Survey of state and local government and politics with special reference to the constitution and politics of Texas.

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 government.

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 Top Hat. Our textbook is fully integrated into Top Hat, which means that you cannot access the textbook without purchasing the Top Hat subscription.

Both can be ordered at Top Hat Course Registration: <https://app.tophat.com/register>

Click on the student portal and use the **Join Code of 742490** to locate this course.

Notes About Class Materials

- These materials are only 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 Top Hat.**
- If you already purchased a Top Hat subscription the Fall 2023 term, you only need to purchase the textbook for this course.
- You only need to purchase the semester-length subscription to complete this course.

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.

Exam Schedule

Assignment	Date Available	Date Due	Content
Exam 1	September 21 at 12am	September 22 at 11:59 PM	Chapters 1-5
Exam 2	October 26 at 12am	October 27 at 11:59 PM	Chapters 6-10
Exam 3	December 7 at 12am	December 7 at 11:59 PM	Chapters 11-15
Final Exam (Optional)	TBA	TBA	Chapters 1-15

Homework Submission

All homework assignments are completed through Top Hat. 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 21	Syllabus and Module 1 – Socioeconomic and Political Context	Homework 1	September 1
Week of August 28	Module 2 - State Constitution	Homework 2	September 1
September 4	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY		
Week of September 4	Module 3 – Federalism and the States	Homework 3	September 8
Week of September 11	Module 4 - Local Governments	Homework 4	September 15
Week of September 18	Module 5 - State and Local Government Relations	Homework 5	September 22*
Week of September 25	Module 6 - Citizen Participation, Parties, and Elections	Homework 6	September 29
Week of October 2	Module 7 - Public Opinion, Lobbying, and Interest Groups	Homework 7	October 6
Week of October 9	Module 8 - Executive Branch	Homework 8	October 13
Week of October 16	Module 9 - State Legislatures	Homework 9	October 20
Week of October 23	Module 10 - The State Judiciary	Homework 10	October 27*
Week of October 30	Module 11 - Taxes and Spending	Homework 11	November 3
Week of November 6	Module 12 - Criminal Justice Policy	Homework 12	November 10
Week of November 13	Module 13 - Social Welfare and Healthcare Policy	Homework 13	November 17
Week of November 20	NO CLASS – FALL/THANKSGIVING BREAK		
Week of November 27	Module 14 - Education Policy	Homework 14	December 1
Week of December 4	Module 15 - Environmental and Energy Policy	Homework 15	December 7*
December 8	NO CLASS – READING DAY		

*An exam is also due at 11:59pm on this date.

Assessment

Course assessment will be completed using participation, homework, and exams.

Assignment	Weight
Class Participation	5%
Homework	35%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%
Final Exam	Replaces Lowest Exam Score
Total	100%

Class Participation – 5%

Regular class participation is expected. Students who fail to participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. Class participation will be evaluated through participation in Top Hat polls, surveys, and questions that occur periodically during class. Students need to attend class in order to participate. I understand that sometimes life events require students to miss class and so I will automatically excuse 10 missed participation questions for every student. Additional excuses may be granted in the event of a medical emergency or school-sanctioned activity; documentation is required and approval is subject to the instructor's discretion.

Homework – 35%

Homework is integrated into the textbook via Top Hat 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 hypothetical 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 – 60%

Each Exams will be conducted online through Top Hat; 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. There is no class on the day exams are due.

Make-Up Exams

Since students are at least 24 hours 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

- 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.**
- **If your internet connection drops during the exam, the 75-minute timer will continue to run and extra time will not be allotted. Again, it is strongly recommended you complete the exam using a computer on-campus to ensure a stable connection.**
- As a precaution, after the exam is available, ensure you are able to view the exam. You can view the exam as an assignment even if you do not start the exam.

Final Exam - Optional

Students will have the option to take a comprehensive final exam. The final exam will replace your lowest exam score. It will cover Chapters 1-15 and be held during finals week. Since it is comprehensive, the Final Exam is longer than Exams 1-3. The final exam will be available 12 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 2 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.

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Communication

- Emails about the course must be sent using your UT Dallas email and have GOVT 2306.002 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.
- I will not reveal grades by phone or non-UTD email, as per FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) policy. Grades will appear on ELEARNING once assignments and exams are completed. Official grades are distributed by UTD at the end of semester.

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. To accommodate the start of the semester, graded assignments do not begin until the second week of class. However, all students are expected to have access to Top Hat and the textbook by the end of the first week of class. Inability to access the platform and textbook are not acceptable reasons for failing to access the material in the course. **If a student is experiencing issues accessing Top Hat, the textbook, or exams, email the instructor ASAP.**

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit offered in this course.

Course 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.

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.

UNIVERSITY STANDARD GRADING SCALE:

<https://catalog.utdallas.edu/2018/undergraduate/policies/academic#grading-scale>

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

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

The following link details all key UTD policies, including: confidential information, student conduct, academic integrity, email, grievances, accommodations for disabilities and religious observance, along with student resources. <https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

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:

<https://conduct.utdallas.edu/integrity>

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:

<https://conduct.utdallas.edu/dishonesty>

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.

Class Attendance

The University's attendance policy requirement is that individual faculty set their course attendance requirements. Regular and punctual class attendance is expected. Students who fail to attend class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty.

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.”

Academic Support Resources

The information contained in the following link lists the University’s academic support resources for all students.

Please see <http://go.utdallas.edu/academic-support-resources>.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures

The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.

Please go to <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.

Please review the catalog sections regarding the [credit/no credit](#) or [pass/fail](#) grading option and withdrawal from class.