

GOVT 2306.002 - State and Local Government Syllabus

Fall 2024

Course Information

- **Institution:** University of Texas at Dallas
- **Class Section:** GOVT 2306.002.24F
- **School:** Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences
- **Meeting Time:** MWF from 3pm to 3:50pm
- **Term:** Fall 2024
- **Class Location:** HH 2.402
- **Modality:** In-person lectures
- **Course Prerequisites:** None

Instructor Information

- **Instructor:** Kashmiri Medhi
- **Email Address:** kashmiri.medhi@utdallas.edu
- **Office Hours:** 11-12 pm MW (Office: GR 3.522).
 - Here's the [Calendly link](https://calendly.com/kxm190003-utdallas/govt-2306-002-office-hours) for 15-minute office hour sessions with me: <https://calendly.com/kxm190003-utdallas/govt-2306-002-office-hours>.
 - You will need to use this link in advance to book office hours with me. Both in-person and Microsoft Teams options are offered, and you can select your preference when booking.
- **Teaching Assistant:** Musharraf Mir Akhmadova
 - Office Hours: 11am-12pm Tuesdays and Thursdays
 - Email: musharraf.mirakhmadova@utdallas.edu

Course Description

Survey of state and local government and politics with special reference to the constitution and politics of Texas. This course provides an in-depth examination of the structures, functions, and processes of state and local governments in the United States.

Required Materials

1. Textbook: Integrated into TopHat platform
2. TopHat Subscription: Digital learning platform
 - a. Join Code: 898967

- b. ISBN: 9781774122853
- c. Registration Link: <https://app.tophat.com/register/student/>

Important Notes:

- Use your UTD email to subscribe to TopHat
- Materials are only available through TopHat, not the UTD bookstore
- If you already have a Fall 2024 TopHat subscription, you only need to purchase the textbook
- A semester-length subscription is sufficient for this course

Course Objectives and Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Evaluate the principles of state constitutions, including the Texas Constitution, analyzing their similarities and differences with the U.S. Constitution and their impact on state governance.
2. Examine the dynamic relationship between federal, state, and local governments, analyzing how this balance has evolved over time and its impact on policy implementation at different levels of government.
3. Analyze the mechanisms of state and local democracy, including elections, political parties, and interest groups, and their influence on policy-making at the state and local levels.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how public policy is formulated, implemented, and evaluated at the state and local levels, using case studies from areas such as education, criminal justice, or environmental policy.
5. Examine the factors that influence political behavior and public opinion in state and local contexts, including media, socioeconomic factors, and demographic characteristics.
6. Construct comprehensive analyses of current state and local political issues, incorporating constitutional principles, institutional roles, and policy implications specific to state and local governance.
7. Compare and contrast the structures and functions of state executive, legislative, and judicial branches, with a particular focus on Texas government.
8. Analyze the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of local government entities, including counties, municipalities, and special districts.
- 9.

Course Structure

1. In-Class Lectures (MWF, 3:00 PM - 3:50 PM)
 - a. Cover key concepts from the textbook
 - b. Attendance is mandatory and will be regularly monitored
2. Weekly Assignments
 - a. In-class activities (once per week)
 - b. TopHat discussions (weekly)
3. Required Readings
 - a. To be completed before each class session

4. Documentaries and Guest Speakers
 - a. Will be announced in advance
 - b. Attendance is mandatory

Assessment and Grading

Grading Breakdown

Component	Weight	Points
In-Class Participation	5%	55
Weekly In-Class Assignments	25%	195
Midterm Exam	25%	100
Final Exam	25%	100
Reflection Papers	20%	100
Total	100%	550

Grading Scale

Your final grade will be determined by the point total you have earned by the end of the semester.

Grades are not rounded up.

Percent	Grade	Point Range Totals
97-100%	A+	533-550
93-96.9%	A	511-532
90-92.9%	A-	495-510

87-89.9%	B+	478-494
83-86.9%	B	456-477
80-82.9%	B-	440-455
77-79.9%	C+	423-439
73-76.9%	C	401-422
70-72.9%	C-	385-400
67-69.9%	D+	368-384
63-66.9%	D	346-367
60-62.9%	D-	330-345
59% and less	F	329 and below

Assignments and Examinations

1. Weekly In-Class Assignments (25%, 195 points)

Your weekly assignments are divided into two components:

a. In-Class Activities (13 x 10 points each, 130 points total)

- Every week, you will participate in an interactive in-class activity related to the week's topic. These activities are designed to apply concepts learned during lectures and encourage active engagement. Activities will vary and may include debates, simulations,

case studies, or group problem-solving exercises. These must be completed in class and cannot be made up if missed, except for approved excused absences.

b. TopHat Discussions (13 x 5 points each, 65 points total)

- Each week, a discussion prompt will be posted on TopHat. You are required to post an initial response (worth 3 points) and two replies to classmates (worth 1 point each). Initial responses are due by Wednesday at 11:59 PM, and replies are due by Friday at 11:59 PM. This must be completed on time and cannot be made up if missed.

2. Reflection Papers (20%, 100 points)

You will submit four original reflection papers throughout the semester via eLearning.

- Each paper is worth **33 points** (4 papers x 25 points each = 100 points total). Papers should be **500-750 words** long. Use 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Include your name, date, and assignment title at the top of the first page. Cite any outside sources using APA format. Submit via eLearning by 11:59 PM on the due date. Due dates: **September 15, October 6, November 17.**

IMPORTANT: I expect a good level of writing from ALL STUDENTS on these papers. Take this directive seriously and put significant thought and effort into your papers. Show me what you've learned and relate it back to our class. Your grade will reflect your effort.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS STRICTLY PROHIBITED: Students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or similar) on ANY PART of assignments or exams for this course. Each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools. Violations will result in a zero on the assignment and referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

3. Examinations (50%, 200 points)

There will be **two exams** during the semester, each worth 25% of your final grade (100 points each).

1. Midterm Exam (25%, 100 points)
 - Date: **October 11, 2024**

- Covers Chapters 1-7
- 2. Final Exam (25%, 100 points)
 - Date: **December 6th, 2024**
 - Covers Chapters 8-15

Exam Format and Policies:

- Multiple-choice Questions, True/False Questions, Matching Questions, Short answer Questions. Total time: 50 minutes. Exams will be taken in-person in the classroom during regular class time on your personal laptop. You may bring one page of handwritten notes only. Electronic devices other than your testing laptop are not allowed. Exams are but closed-book. You may not access your textbook or the internet during the exam. You must bring your fully charged laptop and your UTD ID on exam days.

IMPORTANT: Students are NOT ALLOWED to have any web browsers or documents open on their laptops for any portion of the test time for ANY REASON. **If you are caught with an open web browser or accessing anything other than the test, you will be referred for cheating to the Office of Student Conduct.**

Exams will cover material from lectures, assigned readings, in-class discussions, guest speakers, and any other supplemental materials covered in class.

MAKE-UP EXAMS: These will only be considered for exceptional instances of an emergency (e.g., documented serious illness or death of immediate family member), official UTD-sponsored events, or religious observances. You must contact the instructor via email as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after the scheduled exam time. Documentation may be required.

COURSE POLICIES, REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS

******All elements of this syllabus may be changed by the instructor with notice******

1. Course Overview and Expectations

This is a semester-long course. Students will be evaluated on all course materials, including lectures, assigned readings, in-class discussions, and any guest presentations during the semester.

Regular attendance and active participation are crucial for success in this course. It will be critical that you attend class and key notes will not be sent to students for any classes missed unless there are excused absences, official accommodations from the Office of AccessAbility, or per the current UTD COVID isolation policy.

2. Class Attendance/Participation (5% of final grade)

As an in-person course on American National Government, your attendance and active participation are expected for every class unless you have an excused absence per UTD policy. Please demonstrate respect for the instructor, guest speakers, and your fellow students by:

- Arriving on time
- Remaining in the classroom for the duration of the session
- Engaging actively in discussions and activities
- Not leaving the classroom once it starts

The instructor reserves the right to also deduct class participation points for negative student behaviors that adversely affect the classroom. Another classmate may NOT sign in for you for in person classes—this will be considered to be an act of academic dishonesty. Students can get class participation points by interacting with the professor and your fellow students in assigned class activities, via emails to your instructor, by asking questions during class time, or via virtual office hours appointments. Simply put, and most relevant to your grade and learning, if you are not attending, you will not be able to participate or prepare well for your exams and this will negatively affect your score in this course. I will reward students who attend class with insights into exam questions and other relevant information with key points that will help them to be successful in the class.

It is solely YOUR responsibility to get notes from classmates for whatever classes are missed in person. Make a friend at the beginning of the semester that you can count on if an emergency comes up and you cannot attend class.

3. Communication Policy

A word of caution about communications with other students outside of eLearning: if you have questions or concerns about this course at any time, you are strongly urged to send the class TA (cc: Dr. Medhi) an email or visit during office hours and avoid negative spaces (including GroupMe or other social media platforms) that may misinform or provide you false information. This syllabus provides a huge amount of information and should always be consulted prior to reaching out to other students if there is any confusion on assignments, due dates, and other requirements.

4. Excused Absences

Excused absences are limited to observed religious holidays per UTD policy, military service, or official UTD events (athletics, debate, Moot Court, etc.) or due to COVID-related exposure or serious illness that students notify me of IN ADVANCE via email or in person. Students on official UTD business should bring me an official notice from your organization of class conflicts so that alternative arrangements can be made. Students who have a conflict due to religious practices need to get with me at the beginning of the semester and let me know what these dates will be so that alternate arrangements can be made for exams. I STRONGLY encourage students with a ARC paperwork to send me this paperwork via email as early in the semester as possible (preferably the first week or as soon as documentation is in hand from ARC) so we can make arrangements to accommodate your disability fully and discuss strategies to facilitate your learning in the course. Again, early and clear communication with me is absolutely essential for all absences. If you are sick with COVID or another serious illness, please contact me at least two hours prior to class. Documentation may be requested of illness at the discretion of the instructor.

Please do not ask for an excused absence to attend work, vacations, doctor's appointments, family events, or other personal matters. You do not need to inform me of such absences, but one absence will not be fatal to your class participation grade as long as it is not a test day and you submit assignments due that day before the deadline. I will not schedule exams early or late for individual students' personal issues.

5. Classroom Citizenship & Netiquette

A reminder about etiquette in the classroom including eLearning, GroupMe groups, and live classes related to this class:

- DO interact with Dr. Medhi and your fellow students and be engaged.
- DO be prepared for every class—readings done, Power Points reviewed, ready to go.
- DO put away your phones and only have course-related content on your laptops at all times during class.
- DO think critically, raise your hand in class, and feel free to discuss and debate your points with facts and well-thought out thoughts.
- DO avoid profanity directed at others. Be respectful.
- DO NOT use personal attacks, inflammatory, racist, or sexist language in our course. Any student who abuses these privileges will have their final grade penalized accordingly and at my discretion. Serious violations may result in a referral to the Dean of Students.

- DO have respect for differences of opinion in our classroom.

9. Technology Policy

Laptops are required for both of your exams.

During lectures:

- Only course-related content should be on your screen. No internet browsing, emailing, or non-class activities. Violations may result in loss of laptop privileges for the entire class

During exams:

- No web browsers or additional documents allowed. Violations will result in a zero on the exam and referral to the Office of Student Conduct

8. Exam Policies

Exams will be taken in-person during regular class time on your personal laptop. You may bring one page of handwritten note only. Electronic devices other than your testing laptop are not allowed.

Exams are closed-book. You may not access your textbook or the internet during the exam. You must bring your fully charged laptop and your UTD ID on exam days.

IMPORTANT: Students are NOT ALLOWED to have any web browsers or documents open on their laptops for any portion of the test time for ANY REASON. If you are caught with an open web browser or accessing anything other than the test, you will be referred for cheating to the *Office of Student Conduct*. Exams will cover material from lectures, assigned readings, in-class discussions, guest speakers, and any other supplemental materials covered in class.

MAKE-UP EXAMS

These will only be considered for exceptional instances of an emergency (e.g., documented serious illness or death of immediate family member), official UTD-sponsored events, or religious observances. You must contact the instructor via email as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after the scheduled exam time. Documentation may be required.

EXTRA CREDIT

There is NO extra credit possible in this class. Please do not ask Dr. Medhi for an exception to this policy during the term or after final grades post.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is taken very seriously in this course. Any form of cheating, plagiarism, or unauthorized collaboration will result in severe penalties, including a failing grade for the assignment or exam, and possible referral to the Office of Student Conduct. For more information on UTD's academic integrity policies, please visit: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Student Resources

UTD provides various resources to support your academic success and well-being:

- Writing Center: Offers writing support for all students. Visit <https://utdallas.edu/writingcenter/>
- Student Counseling Center: Provides mental health services. Visit <https://utdallas.edu/counseling/>
- Student Success Center: Offers academic coaching and support. Visit <https://utdallas.edu/student-success/>

STUDENT- DETAILED COURSE CALENDAR- GOVT 2306.002 FALL 2024

Updated 8/17/24

DATE CLASS ASSIGNMENTS/ACTIVITIES/DUE DATES:

Aug 19th, 21st, 23rd (Week 1) - Socioeconomic and Political Context

Monday

- Welcome to class and syllabus review
- Attendance policy explained
- Ensure textbooks are purchased
- Review eLearning course modules
- Assigned reading for Wednesday: Chapter 1 - Socioeconomic and Political Context

Wednesday & Friday

- Lecture on Chapter 1
- In-class activity - *State Snapshot: Analyzing Demographic and Economic Trends*
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 2 - State Constitutions

Aug 26th, 28th, 30th (Week 2) - State Constitutions

Monday, Wednesday & Friday:

- Lecture on Chapter 2
- In class activity: *Constitutional Comparison: Texas vs. Other States*
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 3 - Federalism and the States
- **Documentary: TBA**

Sep 2nd, 4th, 6th (Week 3) - Federalism and the States

- **Monday: Labor Day—no class today!**

Wednesday and Friday

- Lecture on Chapter 3
- In-class activity: *Power Play: Navigating Federal-State Relations*
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 4 - Local Governments
- **Guest Speaker: TBA**

Sep 9th, 11th, 13th (Week 4) - Local Governments

Monday, Wednesday and Friday

- Lecture on Chapter 4
- In-class activity: *Build-A-City: Designing Local Government Structures*
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 5 - State and Local Government Relations
- **First Reflection Paper due Sunday, Sep 15th by 11:59 PM**
 - eLearning

Sep 16th, 18th, 20th (Week 5) - State and Local Government Relations

Monday, Wednesday and Friday

- Lecture on Chapter 5
- In-class activity: Intergovernmental Negotiation Simulation
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 6 - Citizen Participation, Parties, and Elections
- **Documentary: TBA**

Sep 23rd, 25th, 27th (Week 6) - Citizen Participation, Parties, and Elections

Monday, Wednesday and Friday

- Lecture on Chapter 6
- In-class activity: State Election Strategy Game
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 7 - Public Opinion, Lobbying, and Interest Groups:
- **Guest speaker: TBA**

Sep 30th, Oct 2nd, 4th (Week 7) - Public Opinion, Lobbying, and Interest Groups

Monday, Wednesday and Friday

- Lecture on Chapter 7
- In-class activity: Tracking Special Interests in Your State
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 8 - The Executive Branch
- **Second Reflection Paper due Sunday, Oct 6th by 11:59 PM**

Oct 7th, 9th, 11th (Week 8) - The Executive Branch

- Lecture on Chapter 8
- Exam review sessions
 - Review Chapters 1-7
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 9 - State Legislature
- **MIDTERM EXAM on Friday, Oct 11th**
 - Bring fully charged computers, & ID

Oct 14th, 16th, 18th (Week 9) - State Legislature

- Lecture on Chapter 9
- In-class activity: Legislative Process Simulation
- **Documentary: TBA**
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 10 - The State Judiciary

Oct 21st, 23rd, 25th (Week 10) - The State Judiciary

- Lecture on Chapter 10
- In-class activity: TBA
- **Guest Speaker: TBA**
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 11 - Taxes and Spending

Oct 28th, 30th, Nov 1st (Week 11) - Taxes and Spending

- Lecture on Chapter 11
- In-class activity: State Finance Challenge
- Discussion Post
- Assigned reading: Chapter 12 - Criminal Justice Policy
- **Third Reflection Paper due Sunday, Nov 3rd by 11:59 PM**

Nov 4th, 6th, 8th (Week 12) - Criminal Justice Policy

- Lecture on Chapter 12
- In-class activity: Justice Reform Workshop
- Assigned reading: Chapter 13 & 14 - Social Welfare and Health Policy & Education Policy
- Discussion Post
- **Documentary: TBA**

Nov 11th, 13th, 15th (Week 13) - Social Welfare and Health Policy & Education Policy

- Lecture on Chapter 13 and 14
- In-class activity: Evaluating State Welfare Programs & Local Education Policy Dilemmas
- Discussion Post

- Assigned reading: Chapter 15 - Environmental and Energy Policy
- Guest Speaker: TBA

Nov 18th, 20th, 22nd (Week 14) - Environmental and Energy Policy

- Lecture on Chapter 15
- In-class activity: Green State Initiative: Developing Sustainable Policies
- Discussion Post
- **Fourth Reflection Paper due Sunday, Nov 24th by 11:59 PM**

Nov 25th, 27th, 29th (Week 15)

- **Monday, Wednesday & Friday: NO CLASS! THANKSGIVING BREAK!**

Dec 2nd, 4th, 6th (Week 16)

- Monday and Wednesday: Final Exam Review
- **FINAL EXAM on Friday, Dec 6th**
 - Bring computers, & ID
- **There is no other final exam in this class—this is the last class meeting date.**

Congratulations to our graduating seniors! Best wishes for your future endeavors! 🍀

University Policies: For detailed information on UTD policies regarding Student Conduct & Discipline, Academic Integrity, Incomplete Grades, Withdrawals, etc., visit:
<http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Syllabus Changes: The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus as needed. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on eLearning.