



**Course** GOVT2306.HN4  
**Course Title** State and Local Government  
**Professor** Joshua Montgomery  
**Term** Spring 2025  
**Meetings** Monday and Wednesday 11:30am - 12:45pm  
Administration Building – AD 2.238

---

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor Name Dr. Joshua Montgomery  
Office Location Physics Building (PHY) 1.702  
Email Address [Joshua.Montgomery@utdallas.edu](mailto:Joshua.Montgomery@utdallas.edu)  
Office Hours 10am-11am MW (in office); 11am-12pm T (on Teams); 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/Outcomes

- 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:

This course will draw on a number of sources including books, articles, news stories, and videos. These materials will be posted in eLearning or can be accessed through the UT Dallas Library.

The primary texts for the course are:

- Chriss, William J. 2024. *Six Constitutions Over Texas: Texas' Political Identity, 1830–1900*. Texas A&M University Press.
- Davis, Terri B. and Nelson, James P. 2017. *The Texas Constitution: The People, History, and Government of the Lone Star State*. Lamar University Literary Press.

## 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.

## Course Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Week 1: Begins Jan 21	<b>Foundations of Government</b>	Chriss: Introduction, Prologue, and Appendix Chriss: Chapter 1
Week 2: Begins Jan 27	<b>Early Texas History &amp; Federalism</b>	Chriss: 45-59 Chriss: 80-89 and <i>Declaration of Causes</i> (eLearning)
Week 3: Begins Feb 3	<b>TX History Federalism Cont.</b>  <b>Introduction to Policy Paper</b>	Chriss: 90-105 Morphis Dedication & Chapter 17 (on eLearning); Ndiokubwayo article (eLearning)
Week 4: Begins Feb 10	<b>Texas Reconstruction &amp; Federalism</b>	Chriss: 105-126 Chriss: 127-147 Joseph article (eLearning)
Week 5: Begins Feb 17	<b>Texas Political Culture</b>	Choose two of three reading options on eLearning
Week 6: Begins Feb 24	<b>Political Parties and Polarization</b>	<i>Federalist 10</i> (eLearning) Davis and Nelson: Chapter 5
Week 7: Begins Mar 3	<b>Interest Groups and Lobbying</b>	Sapsford article (eLearning) Schneider article (eLearning) Reilly article (eLearning)
Week 8: Begins Mar 10	<b>Elections</b>	NYT articles (eLearning) Barragan and Choi 2024 (eLearning)
<b>Spring Break – March 17 to March 23 – NO CLASS</b>		
Week 9: Begins Mar 24	<b>Texas Legislative Branch</b>	Davis and Nelson: Chapter 6 Svitek article (eLearning) Mendez article (eLearning)
Week 10: Begins Mar 31	<b>Texas Executive Branch</b>	Davis and Nelson: Chapter 7 Beal article (eLearning)
Week 11: Begins Apr 7	<b>Texas Judicial Branch &amp; Criminal Justice</b>	Davis and Nelson: Chapter 8 Niven and Rock article (eLearning)
Week 12: Begins Apr 14	<b>State &amp; Local Government</b>	Davis and Nelson: Chapter 4 <i>Abbott v. Harris County et al. (2023)</i> (eLearning)
Week 13: Begins Apr 21	<b>Taxes and Spending</b>	Robin Hood articles (eLearning) Medicaid articles (eLearning)
Week 14: Begins Apr 28	<b>Environment</b>	Basseches et al. article (eLearning)
Week 15: Begins May 5	<b>Policy Paper Presentations &amp; Course Wrap-Up</b>	

## Graded Assignment Schedule

Assignment	Date Due
Discussion Posts	Every Sunday at 11:59pm
Policy Paper Guide	February 9 at 11:59pm
Exam #1	March 2 at 11:59pm
Policy Paper	April 13 at 11:59pm
Policy Paper Presentation	May 4 at 11:59pm
Exam #2	May 9 at 11:59pm

## Assessment

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

Assignment	Weight
Attendance	20%
Discussion Posts	25%
Policy Paper Guide	10%
Policy Paper	20%
Policy Paper Presentation	5%
Two Exams	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

### Attendance and Participation – 20%

An important element of this honors seminar is active participation in class discussion, debate and analysis. Be prepared to talk. Regular class attendance is expected. Students who fail to attend and participate in class regularly are inviting scholastic difficulty. That said, I understand that life events sometimes require students to miss class and I will automatically excuse two (2) missed classes for each 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 my discretion.

### Discussion Posts – 20%

Students are required to post two (2) **substantive** comments for each week's discussion board. One comment must respond to the prompt and one comment must respond to the post of another student. All of the requirements for in-person civility also apply to online conversations. Everyone will be expected to demonstrate a respect for the thoughts, opinions and beliefs of others – this does not require agreement, but civility.

### Policy Paper Guide – 10%

Students are required to complete a decision guide as part of the policy paper writing assignment in the course. This guide is designed to help students an informative and

compelling policy paper by identifying a Texas policy that interests them as well as academic resources that will assist them in writing the paper. A rubric that outlines expectations and grading criteria will be posted on eLearning. The policy paper guide must be submitted through TurnItIn on eLearning.

### **Policy Paper – 20%**

Students are required to submit a policy paper that evaluates the success of a Texas policy of their choice. A policy paper that advocates for a change in state policy or the creation of an entirely new policy is acceptable. A rubric that outlines paper expectations and grading criteria will be posted on eLearning. The policy paper must be submitted through TurnItIn on eLearning.

### **Policy Paper Presentation – 5%**

Students will prepare a single power point slide that describes the substance of their policy paper (at a minimum this includes the issue and recommendation). A rubric that outlines the presentation expectations and grading criteria will be posted on eLearning. The policy paper presentation slide must be submitted through eLearning.

### **2 Exams – 20%**

Students will write two essay exams. The exams will be open book/open notes. They will cover assigned readings, as well as lecture and discussion material. Each exam will be worth 10% of the final grade. Students will have 48 hours to complete the exams. All exams must be submitted through TurnItIn on eLearning as a Word document, double spaced, and using 12-point font. **There is no final exam.**

## **GENERAL COURSE POLICIES**

### **Make-Up Exams**

**ONLY** medical emergencies and school-sanctioned activities are acceptable reasons to request a make-up exam. 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.

### **Late Work**

Late work is not accepted.

### **Extra Credit**

No individual extra credit opportunities are offered in this course. Extra credit for the entirety of the class may be offered at the instructor's discretion.

### **Communication**

- Emails to me about the course must be sent using your UT Dallas email and list the section number in the subject line. Failure to do so may result in a delayed response. 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.
- 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.

## **Syllabus Changes**

The instructor reserves the right to amend this syllabus during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class, in an email, and on e-Learning. Students will be responsible for getting and following the new information.

## **Course Citizenship**

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.*

## **UNIVERSITY STANDARD GRADING SCALE**

Grading Schema and Grading Criteria: The grading scale is the standard undergraduate scale, with the point scale outlined below: A+ = 97 and above A = 94-96, A- = 90-93, B+ = 87-89, B = 84-86, B- = 80-83, C+ = 77-79, C = 74-76, C- = 70-73, D+ = 67-69, D = 64-66, D- = 60-63, and F = below 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>

## **Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Plagiarism**

Students may not use AI tools to produce written content that is turned in for a grade. This includes, but is not limited to exams, discussion posts, papers, or presentations. The use of Grammarly and other similar programs or services is prohibited. The use of generative AI is permissible during in-class discussions as long as such use is immediately disclosed. Generative AI may be consulted for idea generation and research – but I strongly

recommend independently verifying any results obtained through such tools. Any unauthorized use of AI will be considered plagiarism.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The University of Texas at Dallas is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (2008), you are required to register with the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC), located in the Administration Building, Suite 2.224. They can be reached by email, calling 972-883-2098, or at their website. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please register and request services by completing the Request for Services form with the proper documentation and meeting with the Director of ARC at the beginning of the semester.

### **Class Recordings**

Students are expected to follow appropriate University policies and maintain the security of passwords used to access recorded lectures. Unless the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC) 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 accommodation approved by the AccessAbility Resource Center (ARC).** Failure to comply with these University requirements is a violation of the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

### **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>.

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