

Course Name: - State and Local Government GOVT 2306.002

Term: Fall 2025

Instructor: Dr. Conrad Sharpe

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Institution: University of Texas at Dallas

School: Economic, Political, and Policy Sciences

Meeting Time: MWF 3:00PM – 3:50PM (In-Person)

Class Location: HH 2.402

Office Hours: Wednesday 10AM – 12PM or by appointment.

My Office: Green Building Room 3.820

Teaching Assistants:

-Ariel Ai-Men Wang: [Ariel.Wang@UTDallas.edu](mailto:Ariel.Wang@UTDallas.edu)

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### **Course Description**

This course is dedicated to introducing students to the fundamentals of State and local government and politics. There are three parts to this course. The first section is dedicated to understanding the intricate relationship between the federal and state governments. The second section examines State politics, its three branches, and citizen participation. The third and last section reviews state policies and what influences these policies.

### **Required Reading 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.

Course Join Code: 581232

Both can be ordered via this link: [TopHat Registration Link](#)

## **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 state and local government to achieve desired outcomes, and begin a lifetime of active engagement with your government.

## **Notes About Class Materials**

- These materials are only available by ordering through the link above or in the invitation link sent to your UT Dallas email address. You can purchase a voucher through the UT Dallas bookstore and redeem it through the Top Hat website. You will need both the redemption code and the course join code.
- Use your UT Dallas email to subscribe to Top Hat.
- If you already purchased a TopHat subscription for the Spring 2024 term, you only need to purchase the textbook for this course.
- You only need to purchase the semester-length subscription to complete this course.

## **Academic Honesty**

Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the UT Dallas Code of Student Conduct. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to cheating on exams, plagiarizing (from published sources or from fellow students), buying or selling assignments, altering grades, intentional deception, and collaborating with others without permission. Be very careful with the writing assignments. Use of another person's words without proper citation or copying from another person's work is considered plagiarism. I reserve the right to investigate when I suspect a violation of any of these policies. All violations of the university's academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students.

## **How to Contact Me**

The best way to contact me is by e-mail. I will make every effort to answer your questions in a timely manner (usually within 24 hours during the normal work week). If you would like to set up a specific time to talk with me directly, e-mail me and we can schedule a time that it is mutually convenient to speak by telephone through Zoom or in-person if you would prefer.

You can set up a meeting with me on Calendly: <https://calendly.com/dal601554-utdallas>

## **Homework Submission Notes**

- All homework assignments are completed through Top Hat.
- All homework assignments are due at 5:00 PMCT on the specified date.
- All homework assignments are due on Friday at 5:00 PM CT of the assigned week listed below.

## **Homework- 30% (Two Lowest Scores Dropped)**

There are 15 homework assignments in the course. Homework is integrated into the textbook via TopHat and is completed by answering the questions embedded in the weekly readings in each chapter. Final grades are calculated by taking the percent average of a student's 13 highest homework assignment scores, weighted as 40% of the final grade.

This provides students with the ability to miss up to two homework assignments without penalty. 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. Questions cannot be reopened after a submission is made. 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%

## **Exams – 60% (Lowest Score Dropped)**

There are three exams in this course: Exams 1-3. Final grades are calculated by taking the percentage of a student's three highest exam scores, weighted as 60% of the final grade. Students may miss up to one exam in the course without adversely impacting their grade. Alternatively, if a student completes all three exams, the three highest exam scores will be used to calculate their final grade.

I must stress that the material in these courses will be mixed with what I present in the classroom but also from the lecture notes that I read off so please pay attention! If I note anything important that is NOT mentioned in the PowerPoint, I will write it on the board.

Content for Exams 1-3 is primarily drawn from the lectures but will include some content from the text. For Exams 1-3, each exam covers chapters worth of content. For example, Exam 1 will only include content from Chapters 1-5 and so on.

Exams are conducted online through Top Hat but will be taken in person and will be monitored. Exams 1-3 will consist of 40-55 questions.

Here is a nifty outline on what to expect from Tophat exams: [Student: Tests \(Exams, Quizzes and Tests\)](#)

### **Make-Up Exam Policy**

Make-up exams are only scheduled for official UT Dallas-sponsored activities and religious holy days. Make-up exams will only be scheduled when the instructor is given sufficient notice of the absence prior to the exam. In this instance, sufficient notice is defined as written (email) notice sent at least 10 business days prior to the start of the exam period. If documentation is required, such as an excuse letter, then sufficient notice is not considered complete until all documentation is received. Plainly, all documentation and notice must be sent to the faculty member by email at least 10 business days prior to the opening of the exam. Students that have a religious holy day observance that conflicts with an exam must notify the faculty member by the end of the second week of this semester so that accommodation can be made.

To qualify for a make-up exam, the excused absence event must cover the entire duration of the exam window. If the student can complete an exam during the normal exam window, they are expected to do so in lieu of scheduling a make-up exam. Since exam content is drawn from lectures, all make-up exams will be scheduled after the regularly scheduled exam has occurred.

### **Attendance – 10%**

- As an in-person course, attendance is expected and taken at the beginning of each class. You will be provided with a code at the end of class that will only be viable when near the computer that distributed it. In other words, ONLY students in the assigned classroom will be able to log in.
- As an incentive to encourage attendance, there will be content covered and made available through the lecture which will not appear in the textbook but will appear on the exam. Partial notes are provided through textbook slides. To support the attendance policy, annotations or additions to the slides which are used in the lecture are not provided- students are expected to engage in note taking during the lecture.
- Consistent with the incentive outlined above, if a student misses class, they are encouraged to seek notes from a fellow classmate or to schedule an appointment during office hours. Lectures are not recorded and copies of class notes will not be sent by the instructor if a student misses class.
- A student's attendance record will be determined by the official roll (sign-in) taken during class. It is the student's duty to sign-in at the beginning of class. That means being in-class prior to the start of

class. If a student misses the sign-in, then they will not be recorded as having attended class- emails or communications claiming attendance in lieu of signing-in are not accepted.

- If a student is experiencing difficulty utilizing the sign-in portal, they should reach out to the instructor as soon as possible to resolve the issue.

## **Extra Credit**

- There are two types of extra credit opportunities over the course of this semester and they are:
  - **Type 1: Jeopardy Bash!**
    - Jeopardy 1 (Exam 1)
    - Jeopardy 2 (Exam 2)
    - Jeopardy 3 (Exam 3)
- These jeopardy sessions will be hosted the class BEFORE the exam.

### Rules:

- As our class size is a bit large, I will split the classroom up into distinct teams.
- I will randomly nominate a person to be their representative and they will compete in the jeopardy game.
- The winning team will be given 2 extra credit points on the exam. (This is weighted by percentage. As there is 50 questions per exam which equals 2 points per question, the extra credit is worth one question.)
  - Example: You make a 42 out of 50. I apply the point to your score which is now a 43 out of 50.
- To receive these extra credit points a team member MUST be present in the audience.
  - I check for this through Top Hat since I will take attendance at the end of class as usual.
- **Type 2: Movie Essays (2 points each)**
  - Mr. Smith Goes to Washington
    - [Mr Smith Goes To Washington : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)
  - All the King's Men (1949)
    - [All The King's Men \(1949\) Directed By Robert Rossen Starting Broderick Crawford, John Ireland, Mercedes McCambridge, Joanne Dru : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)
  - 12 Angry Men
    - [12 Angry Men \(1957\) : Sidney Lumet : Free Download, Borrow, and Streaming : Internet Archive](#)
- **Example of how the Points work:**
  - 1. You earn a 42 out of 50 which is an 84.
  - 2. You ask me to apply your points to that exam and you just so happen to have all three points awarded by your extra credit essays.
  - 3. I apply each specific point to the exam totaling 45 (42 plus 3 equals 45). This equals out to a 90 in terms of your grade for THAT exam.

Rules:

Remember, you need to do the following to get your extra credit:

1. Watch the Movie
2. Write a 250-word essay detailing the movie and how it relates to American Politics
3. Submit your essay with the following title in the Email Title: "Your Name" "Movie Name" "Course Name" "Class Section" and upload it to the designated elearning section. That way I have everything organized 😊
4. If you want to choose another movie, you have to get it approved by me.
5. These points can be applied to ANY exam of your choice and are worth 2 points each once you submit them. This is following the same scale as the Jeopardy bash (2 points = 1 question on an exam).
6. Once you are done with your movie essays, submit a word document with "Your Name" "Points Awarded" "Class" such as "Conrad Sharpe" "Points Awarded" "Texas State and Local Politics"

-In this word document, I want you to tell me WHICH of your exams you would like me to apply these points to and NO, I will not apply these points to your final grade.

**Exam Schedule**

<b>Exam</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>1</b>	September 29 <sup>th</sup>	Chapters 1 - 5
<b>2</b>	November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Chapters 6 - 10
<b>3</b>	December 8 <sup>th</sup>	Chapters 11 - 15

## Class Schedule

August 25 <sup>th</sup>	Introduction
August 27 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 1
August 29 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 1 continued
September 1 <sup>st</sup>	NO CLASS (LABOUR DAY)
September 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Chapter 2
September 5 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 2 continued
September 8 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 3
September 10 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 3
September 12 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 3
September 15	Chapter 4
September 17 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 4 continued
September 19 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 4 continued
September 22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>Chapter 5</b>
September 24 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 5 continued
September 26 <sup>th</sup>	Jeopardy Bash!
September 29 <sup>th</sup>	Test 1
October 1 <sup>st</sup>	Chapter 6
October 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Chapter 6 continued
October 6 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 7
October 8 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 7 continued
October 10 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 7 continued
October 13 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 8
October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 8 continued
October 17 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 8 continued
October 20 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 9
October 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Chapter 9
October 24 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 9 continued
October 27 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 10
October 29 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 10 continued
October 31 <sup>st</sup>	Jeopardy Bash!
November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Test 2
November 5 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 11
November 7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Chapter 11 continued</b>
November 10 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 12
November 12 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 12 continued
November 14 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 12 continued
November 17 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 13
November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 13 continued

November 21 <sup>st</sup>	Chapter 13 continued
November 24 <sup>th</sup>	<b>No Class (Fall Break)</b>
November 26 <sup>th</sup>	<b>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</b>
November 28 <sup>th</sup>	<b>No Class (Thanksgiving Break)</b>
December 1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Chapter 14</b>
December 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Chapter 15</b>
December 5 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Jeopardy Bash!</b>
December 8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>

### **Grading Scale**

Consistent with UT Dallas policy, students are graded on a plus/minus scale. Please see the grade table below:

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

### **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.”

### **Mental Health Services**

- Students experiencing anxiety or distress, either from the topics discussed in this class or from other stressors, are encouraged to seek self-care via the on-campus services provided:

### **Student Counseling Center**

- Phone: 972-883-2575
- Location: Student Services Building SSB 4.600
- If you are having a mental health crisis you can call the 972-UTD-TALK or 911 24 hrs/7 days a week

### **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

- Please review the section within the UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures webpage.

### **Academic Support Resources**

- Please visit the Academic Support Resources page to view the University's academic support resources for all students.

### **UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures**

- Please visit the Syllabus Policies page to view the University's policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus.
- Please review the catalog sections regarding the credit/no credit or pass/fail grading option and withdrawal from class.

**You read the entire syllabus! Good on you!**



