

Government 2306: State and Local Government
Dr. Douglas C. Dow
Autumn 2014 MWF: 1:00-1:50PM CV Seminar Room - GC 1.208B
Office Hours: MWF 12:00-1:00PM and by appointment (GC 2.206)
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Course Objectives

This honors seminar is designed as an introduction to the constitutional structure, institutional processes, and political cultures of Texas, within the federal system of the United States. Our first goal will be to understand how American sub-national politics is contoured by its ever-evolving federal constitutional system. We will seek answers to a number of questions: What were the origins of the federal design in the American Constitution? How have the beginnings of, and historical developments in, government continued to shape contemporary politics? How have powers been divided and shared between the national government and the states? What are the functions of state and local government? How does the Texas Constitution resemble and differ from the U.S. Constitution? What has been the relationship between federalism, racism and the protection of civil rights and liberties?

The second goal of the course will be to understand those organizations, actions, and processes through which citizens behave politically. What is political culture? How do people come to develop and represent political beliefs, values and aspirations? What is civil society, and what kinds of groups do people create and join to promote their ideas and interests? How do these groups interact with governmental actors themselves? We shall explore the development and evolution of political parties, the growing dominance of interest groups, the importance of public opinion and the role of political culture in shaping the information Americans and Texans have about their government and society. Special attention will be paid to exploring the impact of the government and of civil society upon the electoral process in Texas.

This semester's course coincides with federal and state elections. American voters will be electing one-third of the Senate, and the entire House of Representatives. A number of significant state and local elections will also be decided, including the first Texas Governor's race without an incumbent in twenty years. As our third goal, we will be tracking this election cycle, learning about its history and structure, as well as the major issues, controversies and races. Each student will be responsible for researching one important race, and on the day after the general election will briefly analyze that race for the rest of the class.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation: An important requirement for this honors seminar will be active participation in class discussion, debate and analysis. Regular attendance is required, and the professor will take attendance for each class. Please bring to class each day the texts under discussion – we will be referring to particular passages regularly. Each student is expected to have completed the day's readings before class. Be prepared to talk. Everyone will be expected to demonstrate civility and a respect for the thoughts, opinions and beliefs of others. Notes or

summaries will not be provided for missed classes. Cell phones and all other electronic noise-makers should be turned off (not on vibrate) during class. Because of the frequency by which many students using laptops to take notes also succumb to the temptations to surf the Web, check email, IM, or otherwise disengage themselves from class discussions, laptop use will not be permitted during class.

Exams: There will be three closed-book, closed-note, in-class blue book essay exams. They will cover both assigned readings, as well as lecture and discussion material. Each exam will be worth 15% of the final grade. The questions will be distributed one week in advance of the exam.

Précis: Each student will be expected to write one précis, of between 8-10 pages, for one of the three roundtable readings. Précis should be double-spaced, and no smaller than 12 point font. Please number all pages, and use internal citations. Print single sided pages only. This précis will be worth 30% of the final grade. Students are asked to submit a hard copy of the essay to the professor and an electronic copy to turnitin.com. This is an iterative assignment, which means that students have the opportunity to re-write their précis, based on the professor's comments. This is voluntary, not required, but students may earn up to five points added to their original grade.

For those unfamiliar with this type of assignment, a précis stands somewhere between a summary and a critique, more than a mere recitation of what the author said, but less than an original interrogation of the author's premises or conclusion. Think of it as a characterization of "what the text is doing." Amongst the questions a précis should ask includes: what is the author's main thesis, why this thesis is important, what are the author's main conclusions, and what evidence or arguments are used to arrive at the conclusions. Most good book reviews are written in a précis style, and it is recommended to read some to get a better idea of this type of assignment. The way you read a book changes based upon the questions you are asking of it. Writing a précis, or holding a conversation about a book for three hours, will require each student to read more actively.

Turnitin.com: We will be using **turnitin.com** to guard against plagiarism for the précis. Each student must submit her or his paper to **turnitin.com**. I have established an account for this class. For those who have never used this website before, on the homepage there is a brief tutorial on setting up your class account. You will need both your class ID # and class enrollment password. Be careful: the password is case-sensitive:

Class ID #: 8039299
Class Enrollment Password: Dallas

Roundtable Sessions: We will hold formal student-led roundtable discussions lasting one week for each of our three supplementary readings. Roundtables are student lead discussion and debate. Each participant will be expected to come prepared with the book, notes on the book, as well as a list of approximately five to seven questions, comments, or quotations for further deliberation. Everyone participates – no one merely listens.

Meet Your Lawmaker: Three days during the semester, we will have guest lectures. For each of our Meet Your Lawmaker days, we will have a member of the Texas Legislature, or other

political officials, come to speak to our class on a topic concerning Texas politics. As the schedule gets firmed up, I will be announcing who will speak, and I will distribute appropriate background information on each lawmaker.

Election Round-up: November 2014 marks a federal election, in which the American electorate will select the entire House of Representatives, and one-third of the Senate. There are also a number of critical state and local races to consider, including the governor and lieutenant governor. Each student will be selecting one critical race, and will be responsible for reporting back to the class on this election during our Election Roundup on Wed. November 5.

Quizzes: Most classes will begin with a brief quiz covering the readings that are required for that day. These quizzes will test recollection of the reading material and will aid as a starter for class discussion. The accumulation of quizzes, combined with attendance and the quality of participation (especially during the roundtables and the election round-up), will account for 10% of the final grade.

Film and American Political Culture: There will be three assigned films to watch, and each film will be accompanied by a short article. Copies of each film will be left in the CV Lounge for students to view. There will be a set of questions to answer about each film, designed to explore its meanings within a broader American/Texan political culture. Taken together, the three film assignment will count for 15% of the final grade.

Make-Ups: Make-up exams, or extensions on paper deadlines, will be given only in documented emergency situations and at the discretion of the professor. The professor reserves the right not to accept any unexcused late papers or exams. In cases in which you will be absent from class, you should notify the professor via email as soon as reasonable possible.

Syllabus Changes: The professor reserves the right to amend this syllabus during the semester. Any changes will be announced in class, and students will be responsible for obtaining and following the new information.

Grading Scale: All exams will be graded on a 100-point scale. The following conversion chart will be used to translate numbers into letter grades:

A: 94-100	B-: 80-83	D+: 67-69
A-: 90-93	C+: 77-79	D: 64-66
B+: 87-89	C: 74-76	D-: 60-63
B: 84-86	C-: 70-73	F: below 60

University Policies

All of the requirements and processes contained in this syllabus and made by the professor shall comply with university wide policies. For more information on UTD's academic policies, including student conduct and discipline, religious holidays, academic integrity, email use, withdrawal from the class, grievance policies, incomplete grade policies, and disability services, please go to: <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Course Texts

Each of the following texts is required, and can be purchased at the on-campus book store and at Off Campus Books (561 W. Campbell Rd. #201, Richardson, TX 75080; ph. 972-907-8398). Please make sure that you are using the proper edition of the textbook assigned for the class. All other readings will either be handed out in class, emailed, or available online.

- Anthony Champagne and Edward Harpham. *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2013)
- John Paul Stevens. *Six Amendments: How and Why We Should Change the Constitution*. (Little, Brown and Co., 2014)
- Martha C. Nussbaum. *From Disgust to Humanity: Sexual Orientation and Constitutional Law* (Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Jacob S. Hacker and Paul Pierson. *Winner-Take-All Politics: How Washington Made the Rich Richer – And Turned Its Back on the Middle Class* (Simon & Schuster, 2010)

Course Schedule

8/25: Introductions

Read: Syllabus.

8/27: Foundations of American Federal Politics:

Read: Articles of Confederation; United States Constitution.

There will be no official seminar meeting today or 8/29, as Dr. Dow will be out of town attending an academic conference.

8/29: An Introduction to Texas Demographics

Read: Ch. 1 - pp. 3-34.

9/1: Labor Day

No seminar meeting. University closed for official holiday.

9/3: American Political Culture: Democracy, Liberalism and Republicanism

Read: Jeffrey Toobin. "Our Broken Constitution"; *Federalist* #10, #39, #51.

9/5: Dual Federalism in the Early Republic

Read: Jack Rakove. "American Federalism: Was There an Original Understanding?"

9/8: States' Rights Arguments in American History

Read: Chapter 2 - pp. 39-64; Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions.

9/10: The Growth of National Supremacy

Read: David Brian Robertson. "The New Deal"; *Hammer v Dagenhart* (1918); *Wickard v Filburn* (1942).

9/12: The Return of the Anti-Federalists?

Read: David Brian Robertson. "Federalism and Conservative Governance after 1980"

9/15: Meet Your Lawmakers

Guest Speaker: TBA

9/17 Contemporary Controversies over Federalism

Read: *NFIB v Sebelius* (2012).

9/19: First In-Class Exam

9/22: John Paul Stevens Roundtable

Read: *Framed* (all). **Due: Stevens précis.**

9/24: Stevens cont.

9/26: Stevens cont.

9/29: Political Culture in Texas

Read: Cal Jilson. "The Texas Way."

10/1: Locked in the Past?: Reconstruction and the Texas Constitution

Read: Ch. 3 - pp. 71-100.

10/3: Does Texas Need Its Eighth Constitution?

Read: Janice May. "Texas Constitution."

First "Film and American Political Culture" Assignment Due

10/6: Critical Engagements with Political Design in Texas

Read: Cal Jilson. "Texas: The Myth vs. The Reality."

10/8: The Texas Legislature

Ch. 7 - pp. 181-207; Ch. 11 – pp. 311-324.

10/10: The Plural Executive in Texas

Read: Ch. 8 - pp. 213-242; Ch. 11 – pp. 324-338.

10/13: Meet Your Lawmaker

Guest Speaker: TBA

10/15: The Texas Judicial Branch

Read: Ch. 9 – pp. 247-273.

10/17: Local Political Institutions

Read: Ch. 13 - pp. 379-401.

10/20: Martha Nussbaum Roundtable

Read: *From Disgust to Humanity* (all). **Due: Nussbaum précis**

10/22: Martha Nussbaum cont.

10/24: Martha Nussbaum cont.

10/27: Criminal Justice in Texas

Read: Ch. 10 – pp. 281-305.

10/29: Texas Public Policy

Read: Ch. 12 - pp. 345-374.

10/31: Second In-Class Exam

11/3: An Introduction to Political Pluralism

Read: Ch. 5 – pp. 135-157.

11/5: Election Day Roundup

Student Presentations

11/7: The Evolution and Development of Political Parties in Texas

Read: Ch. 4 – pp. 105-129.

Second “Film and American Political Culture” Assignment Due

11/10: Meet your Lawmaker

Guest Speaker: Representative Myra Crownover (R-Denton)

11/12: Interest Groups in Texas

Read: Ch. 6 - pp. 161-176; *Citizens United v Federal Election Commission* (2010).

11/14: Contemporary Problems with Pluralism

Read: Morris Fiorina – “Parties, Participation and Representation in America

11/17: Hacker and Pierson Roundtable

Read: *Winner Take All Politics* (all). **Due: Hacker/Pierson précis**

11/19: Hacker and Pierson Cont.

11/21: Hacker and Pierson Cont.

Autumn Break: 11/24-11/28

12/1: Race and Political Pluralism in Texas: The Rise of Jim Crow

Read: *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896); *Smith v Allwright* (1944).

12/3: Jim Crow and Its Decline

David Brian Robertson. “Federalism and Race.”

12/5: Voting Rights

Read: Voting Rights Act of 1965; *Shelby County v Holder* (2013).

Third “Film and American Political Culture” Assignment Due

12/8: Redistricting Controversies

Read: David Richards. “Texas Redistricting: A Democratic Lawyer’s Perspective.” J.D. Pauerstein. “Texas Redistricting: A Republican Lawyer’s Perspective.”

12/10: Third In-Class Exam