GOVT 2306:
State and Local Government

Course Information

GOVT 2306
Summer 2016
Section 2306-0U2
TueThu 12:30pm-2:45pm, GR 3.420

Contact Information

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Hours: TueThu 2:45pm-3:45pm, and by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of politics and political institutions at the local and state level with a focus on Texas. The purpose of this course is to serve as an introduction to the actors, institutions and processes of state and local governments. Since this is an introductory course, we will cover many topics such as Federalism and the States, State Constitutions, State Executives, Legislatures and Judiciaries, Political Culture and Economy of Texas, etc. While we will not go into deep detail in any one particular topic, this class will provide you with the skills necessary to understand how our state and local governments work, and the ability to think critically and logically about their functions.

The information in this course is more practical than you might think: whether you are an engineering, business, or political science major, as a citizen it is important that you be informed about how government works. Businessmen find it difficult to navigate government that they do not understand, and engineers cannot get a patent unless they know the rules and laws that protect inventions, and citizens have almost no hope of finding out anything by calling a government agency in a phone book.

Student Learning Objectives

On completing this core curriculum course, students will be able to:

- provide examples and apply important theoretical and scholarly approaches to explaining national institutional behavior, citizen involvement, and interaction between citizens and institutions of government.
- analyze and appreciate historical trends in the development of government institutions and their constitutional foundations.
- identify, describe and analyze various mechanisms of citizen political involvement.
- identify and appreciate their social and personal responsibility in the broader context of politics and political institutions.

Required texts and materials

The following book has been ordered for this course:

Champagne and Harpham 2015. Governing Texas. 2nd edition. W. W. Norton.

This text is available at the UTD bookstore, Off-Campus Books, Amazon etc. Off Campus Books allows rentals of this text. There is also an e-book for this course if you would prefer an on-line version. It is available for purchase/access at `http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294989817`

Students regularly ask me if they can use another (i.e., cheaper) edition. That choice is up to you and I have no opinion other than to note that the quizzes and exams are based on the text listed above. Required readings will be approximately 60 pages per week. You should read carefully the material at least once before class. Chapter references in the course outline are to this text.

Students should also stay abreast of current events in American politics. Current events will figure prominently in class discussions, assignments, as well as examples. I recommend making a habit of reading a daily paper or its equivalent website such as the Dallas Morning News, Los Angeles Times, New York Times or the Chicago Tribune. Alternatively you may also wish to read a weekly news magazine or its web equivalent such as The Economist, Newsweek, Time, or U.S. News and World Report.

Grading and Course Policies

Grading

There are **FIVE** major graded components to this course:

1. **Exam 1 — 9 June** (25% of final grade).
2. **Exam 2 — 30 June** (25% of final grade).
3. **Exam 3 — 21 July** (25% of final grade).
4. **Highest 8 of 9 online quizzes via eLearning** (10% of final grade).
5. **Final paper on topic to be assigned later — 31 July. Details will be covered in class and posted in eLearning,** (15% of final grade).

There is no extra credit available in this course. Note the grading criteria and plan accordingly for your success.

Grades are based on the standard grading scale: A = 100-90, B = 89-80, C = 79-70, etc., with pluses / minuses at my discretion and based on class performance.

If you have any questions about your grade on an assignment, please wait until 24 hours after receiving your assignment before discussing the grade with the professor. There are no exceptions to this policy. If you wish to have an assignment re-graded, it must be returned to the professor within two days of the day it was returned (if I am not available that day, ask the staff of the School of Economic, Political and Policy Sciences to leave it in my box). Assignments to be re-graded must include a memo stating the reason why you believe they assignment should be re-graded. Finally, re-graded assignments can be graded higher, lower, or the same as the initial grade.

Exams

The three exams will be given on the dates noted in the course plan of this syllabus. Exams will be given in-class. More information about the exams will be given before the exam dates. The exams are based on lecture material AND required readings.

If you miss an exam for an acceptable reason (medical/family emergencies or university events), you can take a makeup exam at the discretion of the professor. Before you are allowed to take a makeup exam, you need to furnish proof of the reason for missing the original exam date. Students may take a makeup exam to replace up to one missed exam during the regularly scheduled periods. If you miss more than one exam, you will receive a zero for the additional missed exam. There are no exceptions. The makeup exam cannot be made up if missed. The makeup exams may only be taken to replace a single missed exam, not to raise your grade or replace an earlier exam. Plan your schedule and course preparation accordingly.

eLearning and Assessments

eLearning is used in this class for quizzes, review, and to check your progress in the class. You can access the course eLearning page at http://elearning.utdallas.edu. Additional information about how to use eLearning is available at this site as well. You will need your UTD netid to access this site. eLearning is also how I will communicate with you. You are responsible for announcements made through eLearning. You may forward messages from eLearning to your regular e-mail account. Please select a forwarding address in your mail preferences if you do not regularly check your eLearning mail or UTD email.

Quizzes

You must take quizzes online through eLearning. The are accessible via the Assessments tab on the left menu. The following rules should be noted for each quiz:

- The quizzes are "open book." You may refer to the book and to lecture materials while you take the quizzes.
- The order of questions is randomized, so there is no advantage to working with someone on them. You should work independently of other students to make sure you have mastered the material.
- It is your responsibility to take the quiz before it expires and to note the date and time of the expiration. These dates are all noted in the "Calendar" tab on the left menu in eLearning. You have an approximately one week window to take each quiz, so plan accordingly. There is a 3 hour time window once you start a quiz during which you will be able to take the each chapter quiz. Plan to set aside enough time to complete the quiz in the appropriate time.
- I am not responsible for your inability to access eLearning. Plan for any outages in eLearning (they are announced and posted in My eLearning). Any problems you have accessing eLearning are your problem not mine.
- You are probably going to want to save or print the quizzes once you have completed them. They are going to make up to a majority of the questions you are asked on the exams. If you do not take the assessment, you have no later access to the questions or answers. Do not e-mail me asking me to change this, since the default policy is to only make quizzes available to those who have completed them.
- I will only count your highest 8 of the 9 quizzes. There are no makeups for the quizzes. If you miss a quiz, you will receive a zero and it will be dropped unless you have two or more missed quizzes. Please plan accordingly. In the end missing each quiz after the first one you miss lowers your final grade by 1.5 points. So missing all of the quizzes will lower your final grade by more than a whole letter grade. Although the quizzes are open book and only consist of 12% of your grade, they are essential to your level of success in the class. Missed quizzes cannot be made up or reviewed for the exam. Up to 50% of the exam material will come from the quizzes. The rest of the material will come from readings and the lectures.

Quiz schedule:
Quiz 1: May 25-June 2
Quiz 2: June 3-7
Quiz 3: June 10-14
Quiz 4: June 15-17
Quiz 5: June 18-23
Quiz 6: June 24-28
Quiz 7: July 1-6
Quiz 8: July 7-12
Quiz 9: July 13-19

Final Paper

There will be a final paper in the course. It will be on a current topic I will assign before it is due. You are to write a response to the posted topic that meets the following criteria:

- Your response/essay should be FIVE to SEVEN double-spaced pages, 1 in margins.
- Your essay is meant to be analytical, not opinionated. I care less about your opinion and more about your using the course materials and lectures to answer the questions posed.
- Essays will be written, recorded, and graded in eLearning.
- Further details will be presented in class and on eLearning.

Attendance

Class attendance is required. I will take attendance throughout the term. You are responsible for any announcements made or information given during class.

University Policies

University course-related policies about e-mail, course withdrawls, grievance procedures, incomplete grades, disability services, and holiday policies are at `http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies`.

Course conduct and expectations

The following rules apply in class:

1. You may not use laptops, iPads, iPhones, or other portable electronic devices during the lecture. I have found that they are too distracting and take away from your attention to the lecture. Your Facebook or Twitter update can wait until the end of class.
2. Turn off your cell phone. It is VERY distracting to others. "Off" means that it does not ring OR vibrate. (Exceptions to this policy can be made, come to talk to me.)
3. Do not fall asleep. It is rude and distracting. Bring coffee if you need it (I do.)
4. Be polite and courteous to your fellow students.
5. Note that this syllabus is not a contract. It is subject to change at my discretion. While we may be studying political science, this class is not a democracy.
6. Respect my time and I will respect yours. We are both busy.
7. Grade disputes must follow university policies about how to contest a grade. If you contact me to contest a grade I will immediate refer you to the University policy and will follow it to the letter.
8. Problems with *eLearning* are not my problem. You need to note 1) the outages schedule and 2) when assignments are due. If you start an assignment and do not complete it before it is due, then it is your problem, not mine. If you leave a quiz until the last minute it is at your peril, not mine.
9. *You are expected to be pro-active in anticipating and planning for any absences or problems you will have in completing course work.* Make arrangements for possibly missed work prior to the due date is preferable and more likely to be successful than doing it after the due date. Plan for absences and missed work accordingly.
10. You are responsible for things: therefore if you miss something I announced or fail to complete an assignment, my response will be "How is this my problem?"

Course Calendar

The dates listed for each topic are approximate and will depend on how quickly we move through material. You should read the material for each date *before* class. Also note that you will need to check eLearning periodically for updates and announcements. Readings are listed under the lecture topics below.

24 May:	Introduction
26 May:	Politics and Government
31 May:	Federalism: Texas and the Nation — Ch 3
2 June:	The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas — Ch 1
7 June:	State Constitutions — Ch 2
9 June:	**EXAM 1**
14 June:	State Legislatures — Ch 7
16 June:	State Executives — Ch 8
21 June:	State Judiciaries — Ch 9
23 June:	Crime and Corrections Policy — Ch 13
28 June:	Parties and Elections — Ch 4 and 5
	Public Administration
30 June:	**EXAM 2**
	Midterm grades due
5 July:	Interest Groups and Campaigns — Ch 6
7 July:	Public Policy — Ch 12
12 July:	Public Policy in Texas
	Frontline – "Separate and Unequal"
14 July:	State-Local Relations — Ch 10
19 July:	Local Government in Texas
21 July:	**EXAM 3**
26 July:	**NO CLASS**
28 July:	**NO CLASS**
31 July:	**Final Paper due**

These descriptions and timelines are subject to change at the discretion of the Instructor.