

GOVT 2306: State and Local Government

Course Information

Course: GOVT 2306.005
Term: Spring 2017
Class Meetings: MWF 3:00pm-3:50pm
Location: HH 2.402

Professor Contact Information

Dr. Patrick F. Larue
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Teaching Assistants

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Course Description

This course is the second in a two-course sequence in the Department of Political Science that satisfies the Government/Political Science requirement of the University Core Curriculum. The purpose of this course is to highlight the basic foundations of government within the state of Texas; the institutions we have, the functions of those institutions, and the importance of those functions in our daily lives.

Although this is an introductory course, this course will be more important to you than you may think. The laws that are implemented by our government impact you on a daily basis, and whether you are a psychologist, a computer scientist, or a banker, you should know how the government affects you individually. These laws can affect your job, your pocketbook, or both. Knowing how these laws are created, and what you can do about it will be the subject of much of the content of this course.

Course Objectives

Upon passage of this course, you should be able to:

- Define various key terms regarding Texas government, like federalism, the separation of powers, a prisoner's dilemma, the incumbency advantage, polyarchy, and soft media.

- Describe how the major institutions of Texas government function, including the Legislature, the Executive, the Courts, and local counties and municipalities.
- Identify and explain what is in the Texas Constitution.

Required Textbook

Governing Texas, 2nd edition by Champagne and Harpham. ISBN: 9780393936841

It is available at the campus bookstore, and at other outlets as well (maybe even for free when checked out at the library). Feel free to find a cheaper used/rental version. I always am asked about alternate texts, and alternate editions. My answer is always going to be this. You can, but it is not suggested. Weekly quizzes are based on the aforementioned text. Questions from the text will show up on the exam, and will be based on the aforementioned text. Historically, it is very difficult to make an A in this course without the textbook. The single exception to this would be purchasing the first edition of the textbook, but the disclaimer still holds. Page numbers and the exact content will be similar, but may not directly align across editions. You have been warned.

Additional materials: There are no other required materials, but consistently referring to current events would give you an advantage in this course. Staying abreast of what is happening in the news on a week-to-week basis will help you understand how things work, and why we see the outcomes we do. Who knows, after learning some of the major concepts in this course, you may be able to predict what will happen next. This is especially important given the legislative climate we are currently in.

Grading

There are 2 components of this course that will determine your final grade.

- **Three Exams**, each worth 30% of the final grade.
- **Online Quizzes**, worth 10% of the final grade.

Exam Information

- The three exams will be given on the dates listed in this syllabus. Exams are in-class, closed book, and will be collected at the end of the class period. *If you come in late, then you will not receive extra time to complete the exam.* Exam dates may change for unforeseen circumstances, but changes will be disclosed well in advance.
- Exams are based on lecture material and material from the textbook. This will be discussed in more detail prior to each exam.
- Review outlines will be given prior to each exam. These are not study guides, and they are not meant to replace information in your notes. It is merely an outline of the major topics discussed for you to make sure you are not missing major chunks of lecture material.
- Make-up exams: None. If you miss an exam for any reason, then you will be eligible for a final comprehensive exam which will be given on the date of the final exam. The score on this exam will replace the missed exam. There will also be no review for this exam. There is no make-up for the

final comprehensive. I highly suggest against relying on the final comprehensive unless absolutely necessary. Being comprehensive, this exam will test you on material from the entire semester, so I do not encourage you skipping an exam just because. Also, this exam can only replace a single missed exam, not multiple missed exams, or to try to increase your grade on a previously completed exam. If you come take the comprehensive and you have taken all 3 regular exams, you will have wasted your time.

Quiz Information

- The highest 8 of 9 online quizzes will count towards your final grade. The lowest two quiz grades will be dropped. This means you can miss up a quiz with no impact to your grade.
- Quizzes will be given online through eLearning. Each quiz will be available for a specified amount of time, on specified dates. The deadline for each quiz is 11:59pm each Sunday a quiz is assigned. If you submit the quiz at 11:59:01, the system marks the quiz as late, and you will not receive credit for the quiz.
- Quizzes are open-book, but do not attempt to coordinate with others on quizzes. Questions are randomized, so it would not behoove you to work with others.
- Each quiz will be 10 questions, and you have one hour to complete the quiz once you begin.
- I am not responsible for your inability to access eLearning. If there are scheduled outages, be aware of them. You will have 7 days to take each quiz, so it is suggested that you do not wait until the last day. An outage (even an unexpected one) may cause you to miss the quiz.
- I do not reopen quizzes for any reason. *No exceptions.* Due dates are listed in the syllabus below. Pay attention to them.

Instructor Policies

- I discourage the use of laptops in class. They end up distracting yourself and others. If laptops become an issue, I reserve the right to outright disallow them.
- Do not use your phone in class. You don't need it. If you do need it, come talk to me. I'm happy to accommodate. Otherwise, I reserve the right to ask you to leave if it is distracting to others, or to me.
- Be respectful of others. Given this is a course on government, divisive political discussions may result. These are encouraged within a forum that encourages dignity and respect.
- Do not cheat. I handle this aggressively. If I suspect that you cheat, I will move you into a secluded area. *At a minimum.* You could also be referred to Judicial Affairs, and risk expulsion from the University. Don't risk it.
- You are not children. I treat you as such. You are responsible for your grade. The level of effort you put into this course will reap a particular grade output. If you put much into this course, it will reap dividends. If you put little into it, then little you will earn.
- For most questions, the teaching assistants should be your first point of contact. You should contact me directly if you need to let me know you are missing an exam, for example. If you need clarification on lecture material, coming to my (or TA) office hours would serve you best. Other questions about exam content, for instance, should be sent directly to your teaching assistant. If you email me or a

teaching assistant about something that can be answered by the syllabus, we will simply direct you to the syllabus.

- If you email me, it must be through your UTD email address. University policy dictates this, and I do not deviate from this. Grades can only be discussed face-to-face. I highly recommend setting an appointment or coming to office hours in order to respect your privacy.
- There are no individual bonus opportunities or extra credit.
- Attendance will be taken periodically throughout the semester. Although not formally part of your grade, exemplary attendance will be considered when assigning final grades.

Course Outline

This outline is tentative and subject to change.

Jan 9: Introduction
Jan 11: Political Culture and Ideology, pt.1 | Chapter 1
Jan 13-16: No Class
Jan 18: Political Culture and Ideology, pt.2 | Chapter 1
Jan 20-23: Federalism | Chapter 3
Jan 25-30: The Texas Constitution | Chapter 2
Feb 1-Feb 6: Civil Rights
Feb 8: Reading Day/Review
Feb 10: **EXAM 1**

Feb 13-15: Public Opinion
Feb 22-24: No Class
Feb 27: Political Protest
Mar 1-6: Voting
Mar 8-10: Political Parties | Chapter 4
Mar 13-17: No Class - Spring Break
Mar 20-22: Elections | Chapter 5
Mar 24: Reading Day/Review
Mar 27: **EXAM 2**

Mar 29: Interest Groups | Chapter 6
Mar 31-Apr 3: The Legislature | Chapter 7
Apr 5: The Executive, pt.1 | Chapter 8
Apr 7: No Class
Apr 10: The Executive, pt.2 | Chapter 8
Apr 12-14: The Courts | Chapter 9
Apr 17: Local Government | Chapter 10
Apr 19: Taxes and Finance | Chapter 11
Apr 21-24: Public Policy in Texas | Chapter 12-13
Apr 26: Reading Day/Review
Apr 28: **EXAM 3**

TBD Comprehensive Final Exam (*Only for those who have missed an exam.)

Quiz Schedule

Quizzes are found in the Quizzes folder on eLearning.

Quiz 1:	Chapter 1 Due 1/22
Quiz 2:	Chapter 3 Due 1/29
Quiz 3:	Chapter 2 Due 2/5
Quiz 4:	Chapter 4 Due 2/19
Quiz 5:	Chapter 5 Due 2/26
Quiz 6:	Chapters 6-7 Due 4/2
Quiz 7:	Chapters 8-9 Due 4/9
Quiz 8:	Chapters 10-11 Due 4/16
Quiz 9:	Chapters 12-13 Due 4/23

University Policies and Miscellany

- University policies regarding email communication, withdrawals, grievances, incompletes, holidays, and disability accommodations can be found at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.
- This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.