

GOVT 2306: State and Local Government

Course Information

Course: GOVT 2306.008
Term: Fall 2018
Class Meetings: F 10:00am-12:45am
Location: ECSW 1.315

Professor Contact Information

Dr. Patrick F. Larue
patrick.larue@utdallas.edu

Office: GR 3.230
Office Hours: TW 11:30am-1:00pm, and by appt.

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 foundations and operations of government at the state and local level within the United States; the institutions that exist, the functions of those institutions, and the importance of those functions in our daily lives. While there are a number of similarities between national government and state-level government in the United States, there are also a remarkable number of differences. This course is a closer look at many of those differences, while also highlighting some of the similarities.

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 more local governments 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 more often, both. Knowing how these laws are created, who enforces them, and what you can do about it will be the subject of much of the content of this course. I tend to find that this course generates a greater number of discussions around the material, which makes this course quite interesting.

Course Objectives

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

- Describe the way the federal government interacts and governs alongside states and localities.
- Describe how the major institutions of government within states function, including electoral processes and outcomes.
- Identify and explain the contents of the Texas Constitution, including its historical context.
- Analyze and think critically about contemporary developments in Texas politics.

Textbook Information

Students are required to purchase the following textbook.

1. *Readings in American State and Local Government*, by Miller, Banks and Jennifer S. Holmes. Kendall Hunt Publishing. ISBN: 9781524961251

This text is supplementary to course lectures, but key portions of the text will also be used during lecture. A significant portion of your grade will be based on this textbook. This will be available in the bookstore, and online through the publisher. The most economical way to purchase this book is through this link: <https://he.kendallhunt.com/>, and searching using the ISBN above. The ebook is priced at \$40. The printed version is priced at \$80. Feel free to purchase the ebook as it is half the price and will not be needed in class.

Students are *NOT* required to purchase the following textbook, but is recommended should you feel as though you would like a textbook that will generally follow along with the course content.

1. *Governing Texas*, 3rd edition by Champagne, Harpham, and Cabellas. ISBN: 9780393283679

This text is available at the campus bookstore, and at other outlets as well. Feel free to find the cheapest used/rental/ebook version. Since these is merely a recommended text, you are welcome to use an older version. Also, *Governing* is available to check out in the library. *Readings* is not.

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. This is especially important given the political climate we are currently in. I am happy to discuss current events in class, as long as it does not make a major departure from what we are discussing in lecture. All other non-relevant events may be discussed after class or during office hours. If you are looking for suggestions on reputable news sources that are generally not skewed towards either political ideology, I would recommend The Economist, NPR, and the Washington Post.

Grading

There are 3 components of this course that will determine your final grade.

- **Four Exams**, each worth 15-20% of the final grade.
- **Online Quizzes**, worth 20% of the final grade.
- **Writing Assignment**, worth 10% of the final grade.

Final grades follow the +/- scale along the interquartile range.

Exam Information

- The 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 provided time. *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 alone. This will be discussed in more detail prior to each exam.
- Study guides will be given prior to each exam. However, these are not traditional study guides that tell you everything you need to know for the exam, and they are not meant to replace information in your notes. It is intended to help structure your studying so that you are thoroughly studying the topics covered on each exam.
- Make-up exams: You are **ONLY** eligible to take a make-up exam if you will be gone for a school-sponsored activity, and you have notified me one week in advance of the departure. A faculty sponsor/coach must also provide documentation prior to your departure. Otherwise, there are no make-up exams allowed.
- There will be an *optional* comprehensive final exam. The comprehensive final is intended for two groups of students: 1) those who missed one of the four normal exams, and 2) those who would like to attempt to replace their lowest exam grade with a higher grade. All students are eligible to take the comprehensive final, but will only replace *one* normal exam grade. If all four of your regular exam grades are higher than your comprehensive grade, then no grade replacement will occur.
- Exams 1 and 2 are worth 15% of the final grade (each), while exams 3 and 4 are worth 20% of the final grade (each).

Writing Assignment Information

- The film shown during Week 7 of the course will be the basis for the writing assignment. Details on the requirements (including the due date) of the assignment will be released in the weeks prior to the assignment being due.

Quiz Information

- There are five quizzes that will count towards your final grade. Each quiz is therefore worth 4%. The dates are found below in the syllabus.
- Quizzes will be given online through eLearning. Each quiz will be available for a specified amount of time, on specified dates.
- Quizzes will be due prior to a potential discussion of these topics in class. Therefore, do not wait to read the text, expecting that you will get all the answers you need for the quiz in class.
- Quizzes are open-book, but do not attempt to coordinate with others on quizzes. Questions are randomized, so you may not receive the same questions as others.
- Each quiz will be 10-15 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. An outage (even an unexpected one) may cause you to miss the quiz.
- Deadlines for quizzes will be 11:59:59pm on the specified dates. Completing at 12:00:00 will be considered late, and will be given a zero. Do not wait until the last minute to attempt the quiz.
- I do not reopen quizzes for any reason. *No exceptions.* Make sure you do not accidentally open quizzes. Your time will expire after one hour, and you will not be allowed to make-up the quiz or have it reopened.

More helpful information

- It is a best practice to email me (even right before) if you are coming by office hours, just to make sure I am there. I often find myself running around to various meetings and other responsibilities, so a quick heads up will save you and me some potential headaches. Understand that you and I are both busy.
- I *highly discourage* the use of laptops in class. They end up distracting yourself and others. If they become an issue, I reserve the right to disallow them in the room. If you feel as though you are one that has a tendency to multi-task, please sit in the back of the room so that you are not a distraction to others.
- 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 on exams. I handle this proactively. If I suspect that you cheat, I will move you (or the victim) into another seat, *at a minimum*.
- Likewise, you are expected to read through the University's policy on academic dishonesty. This will provide information regarding cheating on exams and plagiarism. You will find that here: <https://www.utdallas.edu/conduct/dishonesty/>.
- For most questions regarding the administrative aspects of the course, 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. 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 (or the TA's), 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.

Course Outline

The following is a general outline of each week's lecture material.

Week 1:	Introduction to the course
Week 2:	Federalism
Week 3:	The Texas Constitution
Week 4:	The Texas Constitution
Week 5:	Political Parties
Week 6:	Elections and Voting
Week 7:	Movie with discussion
Week 8:	Interest Groups
Week 9:	Texas Legislature
Week 10:	Texas Legislature
Week 11:	Texas Executive
Week 12:	Texas Courts
Week 13:	Local Government
Week 14:	Thanksgiving Holiday
Week 15:	Public Policy

Quiz Dates

The date for each quiz is as follows:

Quiz 1:	Chapter 1, Chapter 2 (US v. Lopez)	Due: 9/6
Quiz 2:	Chapter 3, Chapter 4	Due: 9/27
Quiz 3:	Chapter 7, Chapter 8	Due: 10/25
Quiz 4:	Chapter 9, Chapter 10	Due: 11/8
Quiz 5:	Chapter 11	Due: 11/21

Exam Dates

The date for each exam is as follows:

Exam 1:	9/21
Exam 2:	10/19
Exam 3:	11/9
Exam 4:	12/7
Comp. Final:	TBD

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.