

GOVT 2306.005, 25288: State and Local Government
Spring 2020

Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00-11:15am
Meets in HH 2.402

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TEACHING ASSISTANT

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide students with an introduction to Texas' state government in the context of the federal government and other US states. The course begins with an overview of federalism and the Texas Constitution. The course moves on to cover the political institutions of state governments, including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches, as well as political parties and interest groups. The course also covers political behavior, including culture, elections, and media. We will conclude with a discussion of public policy and local government.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will:

1. Learn about the interaction between federal, state, and local governments.
2. Identify, describe, and evaluate state political institutions and electoral processes.
3. Analyze and think critically about contemporary developments in Texas politics.
4. Apply course topics meaningfully to living in Texas.

COURSE MATERIALS

Students are **required** to rent or purchase the following:

1) Miller, Banks and Jennifer S. Holmes (2017). *Readings in American State and Local Government*. Kendall Hunt Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-5249-6125-1

Electronic access to *Readings in American State and Local Government* (RASLG) can be purchased from the bookstore for \$48 (ISBN: 9781524969400). You may also purchase a

hard copy of RASLG from the bookstore for \$87.50. I am not sure if you can also find RASLG in used campus bookstores.

2) Clicker Technology: This course uses a classroom polling software known as **TurningPoint Polling**. In order to participate in the polling activities, students would need to purchase a Turning License.

The Turning License is available at the UTD Bookstore or through the TurningPoint website directly. For this course, you do not need an RF-LCD device (clicker).

That said, I highly **recommend the use of a physical clicker device** if you will be tempted to browse your phone in class, as technology use outside of polling activities and note-taking is strictly prohibited.

If you do not purchase a physical clicker device, you'll need to carry a mobile device (smartphone/ tablet/ laptop) to class in order to participate in the polling sessions.

Once you've purchased a Turning License, you'll need to sync your device with the course. Instructions on how to do so are available on eLearning.

Please visit <https://ets.utdallas.edu/elearning/resources/turning-point-students> for more details.

Clickers will be used in class to collect your attendance and in-class reading quizzes **starting on Monday, 1/27**. It is your responsibility to have everything set up and figured out by this date.

3) OPTIONAL TEXT: Champagne, Anthony, Edward Harpham, and Jason Casellas (2013, 2015, or 2017). *Governing Texas*. W.W. Norton & Company.

This textbook is **completely optional** but is provided here for your reference. You do not need to purchase this textbook to do well in the course.

GRADING POLICY

First and foremost, students are responsible for doing the assigned readings, attending class, and applying course material outside of the classroom. I reserve the right to change the elements of this syllabus (such as adding pop quizzes) if students are not meeting these basic responsibilities.

Your grade for this class will be determined by the following components:

1. Three in-class Exams (75%)
2. In-class Reading Quizzes (15%)
3. Attendance (10%)

Exams (75%): You will take three exams over the course of the semester. Each exam is mandatory and worth 25% of your final grade. These exams will assess your understanding of class material. All exams are closed-book and will take place in class. Each exam will consist of 60 multiple choice and True-False questions. Approximately forty of those questions will be drawn directly from the lecture material, and at least twenty will be drawn directly from your class readings. Thus, it is imperative to attend and actively participate in all class sessions.

While exams will primarily focus on material since the last exam, you'll need to draw on your knowledge of past course material; thus, each exam is cumulative. **Exam #1** will occur in class on Wednesday, February 12th and will cover material from Weeks 1-4. **Exam #2** will occur in class on Wednesday, March 25th and cover material from Weeks 1-9, with *primary* focus on material from Weeks 6-9. **Exam #3** will occur in class on Wednesday, April 29th and cover material from Weeks 1-15, with *primary* focus on material from Weeks 12-15. A review will take place in class the Monday before each exam.

You must bring a scantron (form 882-E) and a #2 pencil to each exam.

No make-up exams will be permitted except in the case of university approved absences, which include religious holy days. Written permission to take a make-up exam must be secured **at least two weeks prior** to the scheduled exam date that you have to miss; this permission must be secured in Professor Santoro's regularly scheduled office hours. You cannot take a make-up exam without written permission secured at least two weeks in advance. If you do receive permission to take a make-up exam, you must complete the make-up within one week of the scheduled exam date. Additionally, make-up exams will consist of six **essay questions**, and you will be asked to answer at least three of them. Complete guidelines and instructions for exam make-ups are available on eLearning ("Exam Make-Up Policy"). In case of severe illness with a doctor's note, students will be required to abide by the official exam make-up policy, including the six essay question make-up exam.

Reading Quizzes (15%): The weekly required readings are important toward your understanding of class material and your overall success in this course. Additionally, because at least 33% of the questions on each exam will cover the readings, it's imperative that you master the reading material. Throughout each class lecture, you'll be required to answer questions about the class reading(s) for that week. These questions will be asked via Clicker technology and will be graded for correctness. The questions will cover the main takeaways and facts from that week's reading. There will be **no make-ups for in-class exercises or quizzes**.

Students caught cheating, sharing answers, or sharing the log-in code with friends or other classmates – even through class chat rooms, such as GroupMe – will receive an automatic '0' for this portion of their grade. Additionally, students are encouraged to report answer and code sharing to the Professor in order to maintain the integrity of this course. If answer sharing becomes an issue in this course, I reserve the right to remove or modify this portion of the grade at any time, including by dropping the reading quizzes and counting each exam to be worth 30% of your grade.

Attendance and Participation (10%): Students are expected to show up, attend class, and contribute to class discussions. Attendance will be measured through use of the Clicker technology where each student will be asked to respond to participation questions throughout each class period. There will be **no make-ups for in-class exercises or quizzes**. Attendance grades will be docked for all students caught using electronic devices in the classroom outside of approved purposes (polling technology and note-taking). You can read more about the course technology policy below.

Due to the large volume of students in the class, **do not** e-mail me and tell me that you'll be missing class (except, of course, on an exam day). I expect you to handle missed classes as an adult would. Don't e-mail me and ask if you missed anything "important" – of course you did! Instead, make plans to review the slides posted on eLearning and get notes from a classmate. Reminder, there are **no make-ups for in-class exercises or quizzes**.

Extra Credit Opportunities: Extra credit WILL NOT be offered over the course of the semester. Please don't ask for additional extra credit opportunities. If you ask for additional extra credit, your course grade will drop a full notch (i.e., from an A to a B, B to a C, etc.).

GRADING SCHEME

A = 94 or above; A- = 90-93
B+ = 87-89; B = 83-86; B- = 80-82
C+ = 77-79; C = 73-76; C- = 70-72
D+ = 67-69; D = 63-66; D- = 60-62
F = 59 or below

COURSE POLICIES

Students should familiarize themselves with official UTD course policies and procedures, which can be found here: <https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>

Technology:

Cell Phones: As adults, I expect you to monitor your cell phone use accordingly. While you are allowed to use your mobile device when asked to answer clicker questions, you are not permitted to use it at any other time. I highly **recommend the use of a physical clicker device** if you will be tempted to browse your phone in class.

If we see your phone outside of the scheduled clicker activities, we will provide a verbal warning and/or ask you to leave the classroom. In addition, you will lose attendance points for the day.

After two warnings, each student will lose two points on their final course grade each time a phone is seen or heard. If a phone is answered in class, no warnings will be given and a student

will automatically lose two points on their final grade. I reserve the right to escalate this policy if it becomes a problem in the classroom and/or with a certain individual.

Laptops: Discouraged. Laptops can be used in class when individuals have a university-recognized need to do so. Other than that, I strongly discourage the use of laptops during class. When available, lecture PowerPoints will be provided to students to ensure that they are able to take handwritten notes.

You should be aware that there is a growing body of evidence that indicates students take better notes by hand and so learn more (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>), and that laptop users' tendency to "multitask" during class negatively affects the learning outcomes of those sitting around them (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254>).

Your laptop use will be regularly monitored by the instructor and TAs in the course. If we see that you are surfing other websites or disrupting those around you, we will provide a verbal warning and/or ask you to leave the classroom. If attendance is taken that day, you will lose attendance points. After two verbal warnings, each student will lose two points on their final course grade each time. Once again, I reserve the right to escalate this policy if it becomes a problem in the classroom and/or with a certain individual.

In-class Discussion: Discussion and critical engagement of material with others is an imperative, life-long skill. Disagreement is not a bad thing; it provides opportunities to learn, engage, and grow. That being said, given the volatile nature of politics and political issues today, discussion can be emotionally charged. I expect students to keep an open mind, seek to learn about "the other side," and evaluate information in light of their own biases.

Guidelines for Class Discussion

1. *Be helpful:* Is your comment helpful? Remarks and responses should add to the discussion by articulating a different perspective, expanding on class material, or asking a question that is useful for other students. Debate is encouraged as long as you respond to the **ideas** shared by other student(s) and not attack the students themselves.
2. *Be polite:* Is your comment polite? Remarks and responses should respect fellow users and not include insulting or abrasive language. Foul language is not permitted.
3. *Be sensitive:* Is your comment sensitive? Remarks and responses should take care to be sensitive to users with different cultures and backgrounds.
4. *Be appropriate:* Is the content of your remark appropriate? Users are not allowed to discuss inappropriate (e.g., obscene) material.

Disruptive Behavior: Disruptive behavior is defined as "behavior that interrupts or interferes with daily functions of the University of the education processes" by the Dean of Students at UTD. To create a safe and welcoming environment for learning, no disruptive behavior is

allowed in this class. Students who make inappropriate (e.g., hostile or threatening) remarks in class will be reported to the Dean of Students and asked to leave the classroom.

No Plagiarism: In particular, you should familiarize yourself with the concept of plagiarism – see the “Academic Integrity” section from the link above. Plagiarism is NOT tolerated in this course. If you have any questions about this, ask me before you turn in an assignment.

Religious Holidays: You must notify me of your pending absence **at least fourteen days** prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss an examination in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed exam within a reasonable time **before** the absence provided your notice comes at least fourteen days beforehand. You must follow the complete guidelines and instructions for exam make-ups, which are available on eLearning (“Exam Make-Up Policy”), in order to have your absence excused.

Communication: In this class, e-mail will be used to communicate course deadlines and important announcements. You are responsible for checking your official UT Dallas e-mail every day for class work and announcements. All course communication will be either through eLearning or UTD email.

Due to the size of the course, for most questions, your TA should be your first point of contact. If you need clarification on lecture material, e-mail the TA directly. If your TA is unable to answer your questions adequately, they will reach out to me to respond.

There are some exceptions to this policy, however. For example, if you need to let me know you are missing an exam, you should contact me directly. If there is an emergency, extenuating circumstance, or something that you just don’t feel comfortable sharing with your TA, please e-mail me. If you have written documentation from the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA), you should plan to come to my office hours so that we can discuss what accommodations look like for you in this course. If you e-mail us about something that can be answered by the syllabus, we will simply direct you to the syllabus.

All e-mails must be sent through your UTD e-mail address. University policy dictates this, and we do not deviate from this. **We will not discuss grades over e-mail; grades can only be discussed face-to-face.**

You are expected to follow these guidelines when constructing your e-mail:

- Be respectful and polite.
- Include an appropriate salutation (greeting).
- Use complete sentences and follow standard grammar rules. Do not use slang words, acronyms or other informal language.
- End the e-mail with your first and last name.

If you follow the guidelines above, you should expect a response for us within a 24-hour period on weekdays.

Sending a professional e-mail is a good skill to develop early on in your career. I encourage you to consult the guides found on the following webpages:

- <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>
- <http://chrisblattman.com/2010/11/08/students-how-to-email-to-your-professor-employer-and-professional-peers/>

Contesting your Grade: It is understandable that, at times, you have questions or concerns with regard to a grade you received on one of your exams. In order to turn questions about your grade into a learning experience, your grade dispute will be received in the following way:

- **Cooling off period:** Neither I nor your TA will consider any grade related inquiries within the first 48 hours after the grades have been handed out. This 'cooling off'-period provides the opportunity to let the initial emotions subside and think more clearly about the issue at hand.
- **Office hour review:** You are able to review your exams in the Professor's regularly scheduled office hours. If you have a question(s) about one of the questions on the exam, I am happy to address them there. If you do not agree with me, you'll be required to write a short memo.
- **Written memo:** Write a short memo explaining why you believe that your answer is correct, and why you therefore should have received full points. It is expected that you address the comments that I have provided for you in class or office hours. This step serves the purpose of encouraging you to critically re-evaluate the answer you gave on the exam. Looking through your notes and developing a case for your answer is an additional learning opportunity.

No Lecture Recordings: You are not allowed to make video- or audio-recordings of the classes without my express, written permission. I reserve the right to legal action in case I observe you doing so. Academic freedom and honest communication in the classroom require a certain degree of privacy for all participants. Video- or audio recording will seriously impede the willingness of students to come forward and engage in open and honest discussion.

If your Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA) accommodations permit you to record the lectures, you must set-up an in-person meeting with me, and an official copyright agreement will need to be signed **before** you may record any class lecture. The OSA has this form.

Office Hours: As this is a large class, office hours will be especially helpful for your navigation of and success in this course. All students are encouraged to come to the professor's and TAs' office hours throughout the semester. If you come to the professor's office hours on 1/15, you will be eligible to receive one extra credit point. This is limited to the first twenty-five students; accordingly, it's in your self-interest to not broadcast this to your peers in the class.

Again, other UT-Dallas policies can be found at: <https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Following this schedule is imperative to your success in this class. You should familiarize yourself with it. While the topics will remain, some of the dates and readings may need to change depending on how much material we are able to go through together. In order to ensure that the class is flexible, this schedule is subject to change. In the cases where it does change, I will communicate it both in class and via e-mail.

Week	Date	Topics	Reading Assignment
1	Monday, 1/13	Course Introduction	Chapter 2: The States and the Political Setting (pages 23-30 only)
	Wednesday, 1/15	Texas Political Culture	
2	Monday, 1/20	No class: MLK	Chapter 2: <i>United States v. Lopez</i>
	Wednesday, 1/22	Federalism	
3	Monday, 1/27	Texas Constitution	“Declaration of Causes”: http://bit.ly/2PcxWrW
	Wednesday, 1/29		
4	Monday, 2/3	Legislature	Chapter 7: Who Passes Business’s “Model Bills”?
	Wednesday, 2/5		
5	Monday, 2/10	Review #1	
	Wednesday, 2/12	Exam #1	
6	Monday, 2/17	Executive & Governor	Chapter 8: Do Governors Matter?
	Wednesday, 2/19		
7	Monday, 2/24	Judiciary	The State of Capital Punishment: http://bit.ly/2NKwjCH
	Wednesday, 2/26		
8	Monday, 3/2	Political Parties	Chapter 5: Political Parties and the Recruitment of Women to State Legislatures
	Wednesday, 3/4		
9	Monday, 3/9	Interest Groups	Strickland (2020) – on eLearning
	Wednesday, 3/11		
10	Monday, 3/16	Spring Break!	
	Wednesday, 3/18		
11	Monday, 3/23	Review #2	
	Wednesday, 3/25	Exam #2	
12	Monday, 3/30	Voting	Chapter 3: State Politics and Presidential Voting, 1988-2000
	Wednesday, 4/1		
13	Monday, 4/6	Campaigns & Elections	Chapter 3: TBA
	Wednesday, 4/8		
14	Monday, 4/13	Policy	Chapter 11: Measuring Public Support for Environmental Policies in the States
	Wednesday, 4/15		
15	Monday, 4/20	Local Government	Chapter 10: Tax Incentive Competition and Economic Development
	Wednesday, 4/22		
16	Monday, 4/27	Review #3	
	Wednesday, 4/29	Exam #3	