



Course GOVT 2306 (section 004)
Course Title State and Local Government
Professor Mr. Evan M. Lowe
Term Spring 2020
Meetings Friday 2:00–2:50p • Blackboard Collaborate in eLearning

CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor

Name Evan M. Lowe
Office Phone 972.883.4897
Office Location GR 3.822 | virtual: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8335987276>
Email Address Evan.Lowe@utdallas.edu
Office Hours W 10-12 @ <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8335987276> & by appointment
Other Information Best means to reach me is email. *No email response Friday night or Saturday.*

Teaching Assistant

Name Min Shi
Email Min.shi@utdallas.edu
Office GR 3.318
Office Hours F: 9:00am–12:00pm

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Pre-requisites, Co-requisites, & other restrictions There are no prerequisites for this course other than an eagerness to learn and a commitment to active engagement in class.

Course Description This course will provide students with an introduction to Texas state government and politics. The course covers topics that relate to state governmental institutions, political behavior, and public policy.

Learning Outcomes By the end of the course, a student who has mastered the course material will be able to:

- Evaluate the role of interest groups, political parties, and public opinion in shaping Texas politics and policies
- Analyze and think critically about contemporary developments in Texas politics given historical background and theoretical concepts
- Identify, describe, and evaluate electoral and institutional processes
- Recognize and understand historical trends in the development of state institutions and the Texas constitution
- Meaningfully relate course topics to living in Texas

Required Texts & Materials

- (1) **TopHat Subscription (\$30)**
 - [Course Join Code: 618034](#)
 - <https://app.tophat.com/e/618034>
 - This will take you directly to the course. *Purchasing direct is less expensive than buying an access code from the bookstore.*
- (2) Champagne, Anthony, Edward Harpham, and Jason P. Casellas. **Governing Texas**. Norton Publishing
 - Amazon: <https://amzn.to/2MIRtsh>
 - Either the 3rd or 4th editions are fine
- (3) Miller, Banks and Jennifer Holmes. **Readings in American State and Local Government**. Kendall Hunt Publishing Company. ISBN: ISBN: 9781524936082 (ebook)
 - Aka “Reader”
 - Direct access for purchase: <http://bit.ly/2ONyQdG> (\$43) **least expensive**

Supplementary Texts, Readings, & Materials Additional readings may be posted on the course’s eLearning page. Reading political news in either print or electronic media is encouraged.

COURSE POLICIES

Grading Criteria

Assignment weighting:

Exam 1:	25%	[14 February, 2020]
Exam 2:	25%	[3 April, 2020]
Exam 3:	25%	[29 April, 2020]
Final Exam:		[optional]
TopHat	5%	[online lecture responses]
Reader:	23%	[Varies. See course schedule.]
Total:	103%	

University standard grading scale:
 A+ (97%+), A (94-97%), A- (90-94%), B+ (87-90%), B (84-87%), B- (80-83%), C+ (77-79), C (74-76%), C- (70-73%), D+ (67-69%), D (64-66%), D- (60-63%), F (<60%)

Grades will not be changed unless I make a computational error. Similarly, the extra 3% you may earn by successfully completing the reading assignments means that course grades will *not* be rounded up.

An 86.9%, for example, would be considered a B, not a B+. A 94.0 is an A, a 93.999 an A-; upper bounds are inclusive, lower exclusive.

If you have trouble meeting your expectations grade-wise, I encourage you to seek assistance from the Teaching Assistant or me *as soon as possible*. We will be happy to work with you to develop a plan for success in the course. If you wait until the very end of the course, there will be little than can be done to help you earn the grade you wish to earn in the course.

Grade disputes Any and all grade disputes must be addressed *in person* with the instructor within 7 days of receiving the grade. You should email me (a) a clear explanation of the basis for the dispute, (b) what grade is more representative and why, and (c) a reference that supports your objection. From there we will schedule a meeting to discuss. Grade disputes raised after 7 days will not be addressed. It is your responsibility to keep up with assignments and monitoring assignment scores.

Grade Components

Exams

Procedure:

- Exams will be given online in eLearning, and cover only the material in that unit.
- Exams will be available from 8a-11p on exam day, and may be taken *once*.
- If you experience a technical error while taking the exam, please begin another attempt and inform the instructor via email when you successfully complete the exam.
 - o Multiple attempts are *NOT* permitted for students who do not encounter technical issues.
- Exams are to be taken *individually*. Collaboration will be considered a violation of academic integrity and will be treated severely.
- OSA accommodations for extended time, etc. will be pre-programmed into the eLearning tests. You do not need to do anything additional to ensure your accommodations are applied.
- More information and instructions on eLearning page.

Final Exam (optional)

- The final exam will be cumulative and optional
- Final exam score will replace your lowest exam score (if you score better on the final)

Make-up Exams

Make up exams will be given for University excused absences with documentation *only*. Should a student miss an exam without a University excused absence, that student should plan to take the optional cumulative final exam. If you have a University excused absence, you must speak with me *before* the exam.

Reader Assignments

Assignments based on the assigned readings in *Readings in State and Local Government* will be available in eLearning at least one week prior to the due date. All assignments will be due by 11:59pm on the Sunday of the week that they are due.

Students will be given multiple attempts to complete these assignments prior to the due date. The highest score will be recorded. Assignments will no longer be available for credit once the due date has passed, and may not be made up regardless of the reason, technical difficulties included. It is your responsibility to complete the assignment within the time frame allotted. Do not rely on eLearning to prompt you to complete the assignment(s). You should note the due dates and set reminders if necessary.

Additionally, there is a **syllabus quiz** which will be included as a grade in Reader Assignment component of the course. The syllabus quiz will also be used to verify participation in the course prior to the census deadline. Failure to complete the syllabus quiz may result in difficulties with financial aid and/or other enrollment issues.

Overall reader grade will be calculated as *points earned/total points*. Staying on top of these assignments is the best way to be successful.

TopHat

In TopHat you will find uploaded lectures for the course in the folder titled “Online Lectures.” In this folder, you will find pages dedicated to each topic. Those pages will have embedded lecture videos with interspersed questions to simulate in-class polling. The questions will cover information presented in the preceding video lecture.

Online lectures will be available through the end of the semester. The questions in each of these lecture units, however, *do have a due date*. See course schedule for due dates. If you miss the deadline, late work will not be accepted. You are expected to keep pace with the course as though we were meeting in person.

If you’re new to Top Hat, follow the instructions in the following link to get set up and familiarize yourself with the app: [Top Hat Success Center](#). You’ll need to register for our specific course, which you can do by visiting our course website: <https://app.tophat.com/e/680741>. Our Course Join Code is 618034. You will only need to input this code once to join the course.

If you have another course that uses TopHat, you *DO NOT* have to pay the \$30 join-fee again. The fee for the textbook integration, however, is separate.

Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, please contact their Support Team directly by way of email (support@tophat.com), the in app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491. They will be able to help with technical trouble and help you if you have any questions.

Online Interaction

Given the recorded lectures, we will have reduced meetings from the University-scheduled meeting times. We will have two means of class-wide communication.

Blackboard Collaborate: Within eLearning, you will see a link in the left-hand navigation menu titled “Blackboard Collaborate.” Collaborate is an opportunity for us to all be “together” in the same place. **Once per week (F 2–2:50)**, we will meet here – also during the **scheduled exam reviews**. I will not have a lecture planned, but it is an opportunity for us to all interact, ask questions, seek clarification, etc. These sessions will also be recorded and available for viewing/download in Collaborate.

For more information and help with Bb Collaborate, see the [OIT webpage](#).

Microsoft Teams: Between Bb Collaborate sessions, this will be the place for us to interact. If you have questions or want to share something interesting and on topic, please do so there. You may be able to help each other (as the community of learning that we are) more quickly than I can. This means of communication is preferred to direct email as a matter of (a) being sure that all are able to benefit from Q&A and (b) a time management mechanism since it is not possible for me to provide individualized instruction via email or web-conversation to all of my 600+ students this semester.

Link to join our Team: [Follow this link](#)

Need help with MS Teams? The University office of Information Technology has put together a webpage that provides all sorts of instructions and use guides here: <https://www.utdallas.edu/oit/howto/microsoft-teams/>

Extra Credit No extra credit will be offered in this course. Please do not make requests for extra credit, as they will not be granted. You may *earn* “extra” points on your course grade by completing your reader assignments on time and for full credit. Please take advantage of this opportunity.

Late Work No late work will be accepted.

Class Attendance ~~**Expected.** No grade is assigned, but you need to be in attendance to earn the in-class portion of the TopHat points. Attendance will be necessary for success in this course, as some material presented in class may not be presented in the text. Furthermore, attending classes is a responsibility that goes along with enrollment. Each of us has plenty of other responsibilities, but it is our job to be sure to give the appropriate time to each of those. Attendance not only benefits each student individually, but also contributes to a classroom atmosphere that will benefit all.~~

Course Conduct

Online Participation I *strongly* encourage you all not to look at this transition to online coursework as an opportunity to become passive in your own education. If anything, this is an opportunity to work to develop self-discipline and responsibility – skills that will serve you well in college and beyond.

Comet Creed *This creed was voted on by the UT Dallas student body in 2014. It is a standard that Comets choose to live by and encourage others to do the same:*

“As a Comet, I pledge honesty, integrity, and service in all that I do.”

In short: Academic integrity will be taken seriously and violations will be reported according to University policy. Don’t cheat.

UT Dallas Syllabus Policies and Procedures *The information contained in the following link constitutes the University’s policies and procedures segment of the course syllabus. Please go to <https://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies> for these policies.*

Email & Communication Students are expected to either check their UTD email or to make arrangements so that their UTD mail is delivered to an inbox that is checked. All course communication will be either through eLearning or UTD email. It is the student’s responsibility to be sure they receive course communications.

While in-person contact is preferred, if you must email the instructor, please observe the following email requirements. Emails which do not meet these requirements will not be answered.

- Include your name, course number, course section, appropriate salutation, and a direct question. I teach multiple courses and sections (roughly 1,000 students per semester), and need to know who you are, what course you’re in, and how to respond. "In your government course" doesn't help since I am teaching multiple "government" courses. Please include course number and section.
- Check the syllabus for an answer to your question. If the question is directly addressed by the syllabus, I will not respond. If you see your question is

addressed but you need clarification, please indicate that and I will be happy to help.

- Do not use texting language. While I understand language norms change and evolve, if u r gonna email me about sumthin in tha class n u wtn me 2 kno wat u mean cuz like im not gonna guess @ wat u mean n send responses about sumin I think u ment but like isn't actually wat u meant. This is a matter of clarity and professionalism.
- If you do not receive a response in a reasonable amount of time (and you've checked to be sure your email doesn't fall into one of the above categories), please follow up. I intend to respond to all emails within 24-48 hours and it is possible that yours has been accidentally overlooked.

Miscellaneous

Religious
Observances

I will make accommodations for religious holidays and observances that conflict with course assignments and due dates. It will be the student's responsibility to bring any conflict to my attention so we can discuss the accommodation. Must be notified prior to conflict.

Sexual
Discrimination
Policy

Students considering sharing personal information in email, in person, or within assignments or exams should be aware that faculty members and teaching associates/assistants and graduate/research assistants are required by UT Dallas policy to report information about sexual misconduct to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Per university policy, Sexual Misconduct Policy - [UTDBP3102](#), faculty have been informed that they must identify the student to the UT Dallas Title IX Coordinator. Students who wish to have confidential discussions of incidents related to sexual harassment or sexual misconduct should contact the Student Counseling Center (972-883-2575 or the 24/7 Crisis Hotline at 972-UTD-TALK or 972-883-8255), the, a health care provider in the Student Health Center (972-883-2747), a clergyperson (or other legally recognized religious advisor) of their choice, or an off-campus resource (e.g., rape crisis center, doctor, psychologist). Students who are sexually assaulted, harassed, or are victims of sexual misconduct, domestic violence, or stalking, are encouraged to directly report these incidents to the UT Dallas Police Department at 972-883-2222 or to the Title IX Coordinator at 972-883-5202. Additional information and resources may be found at <https://www.utdallas.edu/institutional-initiatives/title-ix/resources/>.

Incidents in or out of class may be reported here:

<http://www.utdallas.edu/oiec/complaints/>

ADA
Compliance

The course follows policies and procedures articulated by UT Dallas with respect to ADA compliance. ([Policy UTDBP3100](#))

It is the policy and practice of UT Dallas to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need academic accommodations for this class, you are encouraged to register with the Office of Student AccessAbility (OSA). Some aspects of the course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is typically taught may be accommodated to facilitate your participation and progress. OSA will assist you in determining academic accommodations that are appropriate for your situation. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. To avoid any delay, please contact OSA as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and disability accommodations cannot be provided until an OSA Letter of Accommodation has been given to the instructor. Students who have questions about receiving accommodations, or those who have, or think they may have, a disability (mobility, sensory, health, psychological, learning, etc.) are invited to contact OSA for a confidential discussion. OSA is located in the Administration Building, AD 2.224 They can be reached by phone at 972-883-2098, or by email at studentaccess@utdallas.edu.

Mental Health

Students who feel anxious, overburdened, or otherwise in need of support, should be aware of the resources UT Dallas offers with respect to mental health. The Student Counseling Center provides services and programs to assist students in achieving emotional well-being and to help manage personal demands that may get in the one of your academic success. They provide counselling, learning disability assessments, and a variety of other services. Please see their website for more information: <http://www.utdallas.edu/counseling/>

ASSIGNMENTS & ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Date(s)	Readings & Assignments	Due (by 11:5p on date listed)
Week 1 Jan 13–17.	Introduction to Texas Government & Politics	
Jan 20	MLK (No Classes)	
Week 2 Jan 21–24	Texas Political Culture - <i>GovTex</i> *: Chapter 1; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapter 2	1/26: Syllabus Quiz,
Week 3 Jan 27–31	Texas Constitution(s) - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 2	
Week 4 Feb 3–7	Federalism - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 3; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapters 1&2	2/2: Reader ^o Ch 1&2
Week 5 Feb 10–14	Local Government - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 10; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapter 10 <u>Exam Review (2/12)</u> EXAM 1 (2/14)	2/16: Reader Ch. 10
Week 6 Feb 17–21	Legislature - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 7; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapter 7	
Week 7 Feb 24–28	Legislature - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 7; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapter 7	3/1: Reader Ch. 7
Week 8 Mar 2–6	Executive - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 8; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapter 8	3/8: Reader Ch. 8
Week 9 Mar 9–13	Judiciary - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 9; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapter 7	
Week 10 Mar 16–20	Spring Break (No Classes)	
Week 11 Mar 23–27	Spring Break v2	
Week 12 Mar 30–Apr 3	Judiciary - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapter 9, <i>Readings in...</i> Chapter 9 <u>Exam Review (4/1 • 2:00–2:50 in Bb Collaborate)</u> EXAM 2 (4/3)	4/5: Reader, Ch. 9; TopHat lecture
Week 13 Apr 6–10	Elections/ Political Parties - <i>GovTex</i> Chapters 5, 4; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapters 3 & 5	4/12: Reader Ch. 3; TopHat lecture
Week 14 Apr 13–17	Interest Groups & Lobbying - <i>GovTex</i> Chapter 6	4/19: Reader, Ch. 5; TopHat lecture
Week 15 Apr 20–24	Policy & Finance - <i>GovTex</i> : Chapters 11, 12; <i>Readings in...</i> : Chapter 11	4/26: Reader Ch. 11; TopHat lecture
Week 16 Apr 27–30	<u>Exam Review (4/27 • 2:00–2:50 in Bb Collaborate)</u> EXAM 3 (4/29)	
May 1	Reading Day (No Classes)	
Finals Week May 2–8	FINAL EXAM Tentative, pending official University announcement: 4 May	

* *GovTex* refers to the textbook, *Governing Texas*.

^o “Reader” refers to the supplementary book titled *Readings in American National Government*.

The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.