

Course Syllabus for Government 2306 (12/FA)

Politics is the possession, and distribution, of power. – Benjamin Disraeli

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Course description: Origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

Course objective: Since 1947, the Texas state legislature has required that public college and university students complete six semester-hours in American national, state, and local government. The survey course in Texas government is designed not only to meet that requirement but also to provide you with the basic knowledge and understanding of government activity at the state and local level. This course should also give you a better understanding of certain germane disciplines such as history, sociology, philosophy, literature, and economics while preparing you for careers in teaching, public service and the law. You also benefit from taking a course such as this by not only learning how government affects your life but how you can affect public policy.

Textbook: Maxwell, et al., *Texas Politics Today*, 15th (2011-2012) edition

Course outline:

Unit One: Power – Chs. 2, 6, 8, and 10

Unit Three: Exercise – Chs. 7, 9, and 11 – 13

Unit Two: Pursuit – Chs. 1 and 3-5

Unit Four: Local Government – pp.338-40 in Ch. 13 and Ch. 14

Course outcomes: Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
2. Demonstrate an understanding of state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens
8. Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.

Examinations: During the course of the semester there will be three unit examinations, six short quizzes (or equivalent), and a combinatoin unit/final exam. A Scantron Answer Form (882-E green) will be required for each exam. The unit examinations will be administered on (or about) the following dates: **25 Sept, 23 Oct, 20 Nov, and 11 Dec**. The quizzes will occur at random.

Examination make-up policy: Remember that making up a missed examination is a privilege and **NOT** a right! If you have to miss an exam, see me for further instructions. **There are NO make-ups for the quizzes.**

Grading policy: All examinations are equally weighted and will count for 80% of the course grade. The short quizzes/assignments will count for the other 20%. Final semester grades will be based on the following averages: **90-100=A, 80-89=B, 70-79=C, 60-69=D, and below 60=F**. Also keep in mind that once a grade is assigned, it is **final!!!** The need to retain eligibility (athletic or otherwise), please your parents, get into law school, med school, etc., may be important reasons to change a grade, but they are not valid. The only reason to change a grade is my error.

Academic dishonesty: Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Suspected cheating or plagiarism may result in a reexamination in a controlled environment, a failing grade, or dismissal from the course. As per OC Board Policy **the option is with the instructor:** *In cases of **academic dishonesty**, the instructor has the authority to impose appropriate scholastic penalties.*

Academic assistance: Help with preparing for exams, writing essays, setting up student e-mail, Blackboard, etc., is available at the Student Success Center. Contact them at 335-6878 or <http://www.odessa.edu/dept/ssc/>. The Odessa College Student Success Coaches will help you stay focused and on track to complete your educational goals. If an instructor sees that you might need additional help or success coaching, he or she may submit a Retention Alert or a Starfish Alert. A Student Success Coach will contact you to work toward a solution.

Drops/withdrawal: The last day to drop/withdraw for this semester is **Wednesday 14 November 2012**. Drops/withdrawals initiated after this date are granted in only the most extraordinary circumstances and are at the discretion of the instructor. Please keep in mind that this is a student responsibility.

Student Evaluation of Instruction: The SEI process for face-to-face and online courses is scheduled for the week of November 26th.

Attendance policy: Attendance is mandatory and, along with class participation, may influence part of your final grade. Roll will be taken for every class period that we are not testing. If you miss any class time be aware that all material covered in your absence is your responsibility. If you are late to class, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are not counted absent. Excused absences may require documentation.

Bonus points: If you attend class, take notes, read the assigned material, and prepare for the exams, "extra credit" is generally not necessary. However, since students invariably ask about opportunities for "extra credit," I have decided to offer up to ten **pre-average** points for any **one** of the following:

- 1) if you are not registered to vote, register
- 2) if you are already registered, get someone else (family member, friend, etc) to register
- 3) vote in a local, state, or national election
- 4) volunteer to work at the Parker House Museum
- 5) donate blood (may be done by proxy)
- 6) by joining and participating in the Student Government Association

Documentation will be required and bonus points awarded at my discretion. Ten is the maximum.

Special needs: Odessa College complies with Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act and with the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. Issues with special needs will be referred to the Office of Disability Services.

Classroom conduct policy:

- **Attend class ... it's the easiest part of your college/university experience**
- **Be on time ... don't leave ... it's rude, it's disrespectful, and it's duly noted**
- **Stay awake ... look fascinated, even if you are bored out of your mind**
- **Don't talk during lecture ... do volunteer to answer questions and submit pertinent comments**
- **DO NOT WORK ON OTHER ASSIGNMENTS OR READ OTHER MATERIALS DURING LECTURE!!!**
- **A CELLPHONE GOING OFF DURING AN EXAM WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE!!!**

Additional tips:

- Don't ask if you missed anything important when you miss a class ... or classes ... if it wasn't important, we wouldn't have talked about it ... you are responsible for everything that is covered in class
- Do take advantage of office hours ... it's a good way to get to know the instructor and be remembered ... in a positive way
- Be aware that college is an adult environment ... lecture topics may include material that is controversial in nature as well as adult language and subjects

Expectations for Engagement – Face to Face Learning

To help make the learning experience fulfilling and rewarding, the following Expectations for Engagement provide the parameters for reasonable engagement between students and instructors for the learning environment. Students and instructors are welcome to exceed these requirements.

Reasonable Expectations of Engagement for Instructor

1. As an instructor, I understand the importance of clear, timely communication with my students. In order to maintain sufficient communication, I will
 - provide my contact information at the beginning of the syllabus;
 - respond to all messages in a timely manner through telephone, email, or next classroom contact; and,
 - notify students of any extended times that I will be unavailable and provide them with alternative contact information (for me or for my supervisor) in case of emergencies during the time I'm unavailable.
2. As an instructor, I understand that my students will work to the best of their abilities to fulfill the course requirements. In order to help them in this area, I will
 - provide clear information about grading policies and assignment requirements in the course syllabus, and
 - communicate any changes to assignments and/or to the course calendar to students as quickly as possible.
3. As an instructor, I understand that I need to provide regular, timely feedback to students about their performance in the course. To keep students informed about their progress, I will
 - return classroom activities and homework within one week of the due date and
 - provide grades for major assignments within 2 weeks of the due date or at least 3 days before the next major assignment is due, whichever comes first.

Reasonable Expectations of Engagement for Students

1. As a student, I understand that I am responsible for keeping up with the course. To help with this, I will
 - attend the course regularly and line up alternative transportation in case my primary means of transportation is unavailable;
 - recognize that the college provides free wi-fi, computer labs, and library resources during regular campus hours to help me with completing my assignments; and,
 - understand that my instructor does not have to accept my technical issues as a legitimate reason for late or missing work if my personal computer equipment or internet service is unreliable.
2. As a student, I understand that it is my responsibility to communicate quickly with the instructor any issue or emergency that will impact my involvement with or performance in the class. This includes, but is not limited to,
 - missing class when a major test is planned or a major assignment is due;
 - having trouble submitting assignments;
 - dealing with a traumatic personal event; and,
 - having my work or childcare schedule changed so that my classroom attendance is affected.
3. As a student, I understand that it is my responsibility to understand course material and requirements and to keep up with the course calendar. While my instructor is available for help and clarification, I will
 - seek out help from my instructor and/or from tutors;
 - ask questions if I don't understand; and,
 - attend class regularly to keep up with assignments and announcement