

Course Syllabus for Government 2306 (11/S2)

Texas is a state of mind. Texas is an obsession. Above all, Texas is a nation in every sense of the word
– John Steinbeck

Good thing we've still got politics in Texas -- finest form of free entertainment ever invented. – Molly Ivins

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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. This particular course also satisfies the government requirement for teacher certification as required by the Texas Education Agency.

Textbook: Maxwell, et al., *Texas Politics Today*, 14th (2009-2010) edition

Course outline:

Unit One: Politics – Chs. 1, 3, 4, & 5
Unit Two: Power – Chs. 2, 6, 8, 9, & 10
Unit Three: Policy (and local government) – Chs. 7, 11 - 14

Examinations: During the course of the semester there will be three unit examinations and six short quizzes (or equivalent). A Scantron Answer Form (882-E green) will be required for each exam. Paper for the short answer portion will be furnished. The examinations will be administered on (or about) the following dates: **19 July, 01 August, and 11 August**. 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. All make-up exams will be administered at the OC Testing Center. Keep in mind that there will be **NO** make-ups after the last date for drop-in testing and that 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. **A final grade is just that—final!**

Academic dishonesty: Cheating and/or plagiarism is not to 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/>

Drops/withdrawal: The last day to drop/withdraw for this semester is **Wednesday 03 August 2011**. Drops/withdrawals initiated after this date are granted in only the most extraordinary circumstances and are at the discretion of the instructor. Keep in mind that this is a student responsibility.

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 (not my) 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 these types of things are duly noted**
- **Stay awake ... look fascinated, even if you are bored out of your mind**
- **Don't talk during lecture ... free speech is not absolute ... but do volunteer to answer questions ... and submit pertinent comments**
- **DO NOT WORK ON OTHER ASSIGNMENTS OR READ OTHER MATERIALS DURING LECTURE!!!**
- **TURN OFF CELLULAR TELEPHONES, BEEPERS, OR OTHER SIMILAR FORMS OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS WHILE IN CLASS!!!**
- **NO TEXTING DURING LECTURE OR EXAMS!!!**
- **A CELLPHONE GOING OFF DURING AN EXAM WILL RESULT IN A FAILING GRADE FOR THAT EXAM!!!**

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
- Don't ask if this material will be on the exam ... you are responsible for everything that is covered in class
- Don't ask if there is anything that you can do to improve your grade (especially during the week prior to, of, and following the final exams) ... do what is required during the semester and you won't have this problem
- 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