

Syllabus for Government 2306- Texas Government

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Course Description: This course will explore the 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.

Since this course is conducted entirely online, please make sure to read the section entitled “Expectations for Engagement- Online Learning” located at the end of this document. If you cannot meet the requirements for an online learning environment, please do not enroll in this course.

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. This 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 level. You may 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.

Course Outcomes: Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

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

Textbook: Maxwell, Crain, and Santos. *TX.GOV*, Cengage, First Edition. It should be available at the campus bookstore. It does not matter to me whether you purchase the online or print edition of the text- choose whatever works best for you.

You can also buy or rent the textbook (both paper and e-text) through the publisher at:

http://www.coursesmart.com/IR/5948311/9781133964414?_hdv=6.8

Course Requirements and Grading: There will be twelve chapter quizzes, four unit examinations, and a final examination.

Exams: The unit exams will open on the following dates (see assignment schedule) and remain open for 60 hours. **You must complete the exams during the 60 hour window.** However, the exam itself should only take you around 1.5 hours.

Quizzes: You will have a quiz for each chapter, which works out to about one quiz per week. The quizzes themselves will be short (10). You may complete these on whatever day of the week you want during the corresponding week (there is a time limit), but **you must complete them by the day indicated on the syllabus.** The first quiz is delayed a couple of days in order to give you time to work out problems with getting your textbooks, setting up your computer, etc. As a result, the quiz due dates for the second and third weeks follow closely. However, if you have no problems during week one, go ahead and complete the first quiz during week one. That way, the quizzes will be spaced evenly for you. Try to be proactive in reading and taking the quizzes- if you delay, you are more likely to have a quiz come at roughly the same time as an exam.

Final Examination: The final exam will be **comprehensive.** It will cover all of the material from the course. It shouldn't take you any longer than the unit quizzes, but there will be questions from each of the units.

Each quiz will be worth 10 points. Each exam will be worth 50 points. The final exam will be worth 80 points. The total number of possible points is 400 (120 points for the quizzes, 200 points for the exams, and 80 points for the final exams). To calculate your grade, divide the total number of points you have earned by 400.

The grading scale is as follows: 90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, and below 60 = F. Grades, once posted, are final.

Course Reading and Assignment Schedule: (N.B.: this may change at the instructor's discretion. I will notify you in advance of any changes)

Unit One: Texas Culture, Federalism, and the State Constitution

Week One (Aug. 26-Sept.1): First Week of Class

Read Ch. 1 (Texas Culture and Diversity)

Ch. 1 Quiz- complete by Tues., Sept. 3 (you may complete it as early as the first week of class)

Week Two (Sept. 2-8): Read Ch. 2 (Texas in the Federal System)

Ch. 2 Quiz- complete by Mon., Sept. 9

Week Three (Sept. 9-15): Read Ch. 3 (Texas Constitution in Perspective)

Ch. 3 Quiz- complete by Mon., Sept. 16

Unit Two: Political Behavior: Elections, Parties, and Interest Groups

Week Four (Sept. 16-22): ***Exam One (Covers Chs. 1-3), Opens Tues., Sept. 17; Closes Thurs., Sept. 19***

Read Ch. 4 (Voting and Elections)

Ch. 4 Quiz- complete by Tues., Sept. 24

Week Five (Sept. 23-29): Read Ch. 5 (Political Parties)

Ch. 5 Quiz- complete by Mon., Sept. 30

Week Six (Sept. 30-Oct.6): Read Ch. 6 (Interest Groups)

Ch. 6 Quiz- complete by Mon., Oct. 7

Unit Three: Institutions

Week Seven (Oct. 7-13): ***Exam Two (Covers Chs. 4-6), Opens Tues., Oct. 8; Closes Thurs., Oct. 10***

Read Ch. 7 (The Legislature)

Ch. 7 Quiz- complete by Tues., Oct. 15

Week Eight (Oct. 14-20): Read Ch. 8 (The Executive Branch)

Ch. 8 Quiz- complete by Mon., Oct. 21

Week Nine (Oct. 21-27): Read Ch. 9 (Texas Judiciary)

Ch. 9 Quiz- complete by Mon., Oct. 28

Week Ten (Oct. 28-Nov. 3): ***Exam Three (Covers Chs. 7-9): Opens Mon., Oct. 28; Closes Wed., Oct. 30***

Special reading assignment, TBA

Unit Four: Law, Public Policy, and Local Government

Week Eleven (Nov. 4-10): Read Ch. 10 (Law and Due Process)

Ch. 10 Quiz- complete by Mon., Nov. 11

Week Twelve (Nov. 11-17): Read Ch. 11 (Public Policy in Texas)

Ch. 11 Quiz- complete by Mon., Nov. 18

Week Thirteen (Nov. 18-24): Read Ch. 12 (Local Government)

Ch. 12 Quiz- complete by Mon., Nov. 25

Week Fourteen (Nov. 25-Dec.1): Review for Exam Four

Nov. 27-30: Thanksgiving Holiday- Enjoy your turkey and mashed potatoes!

Have some pie for me!

Week Fifteen (Dec. 2-7): ***Exam Four (Covers Chs. 10-12), Opens Tues., Dec. 3; Closes Thurs., Dec. 5***

Review for Final Exam

Dec. 7: Last day of classes.

Final Examination:

Week Sixteen (Dec. 9-12): Final Examination Period.

Final Exam opens Dec. 9 at 8 a.m. Complete within 60 hours (deadline is 8 p.m. Dec. 11). The final exam will be comprehensive- it will cover material from the entire course.

Tips/Nuts and Bolts:

- 1.) Please contact me through your **student email account only**, not from your personal, non-academic email accounts. If you contact me through these other accounts, it is 1) difficult to realize that it is one of my students, and 2) possible that it might get filtered into the spam folder. **When you do email me, please note the course and section number in the subject line of your email.** That way, I will get to your email sooner when wading through the vast number of messages a day that I receive. Putting this information in the subject line will help ensure that your message takes priority.
- 2.) The online course content will work better the more up to date your computer is. Please try to do what you can to make these updates happen. Make sure that your system meets the requirements specified on Blackboard before signing up for an online course. A **functional computer** (whether your own, a library's, or a parent's) is **necessary for success in this course**, and you will need to use your computer quite frequently. If this is a problem, please consider taking the course in the traditional, campus-based manner. Again, remember that the Student Success Center (inside the LRC) provides computers, tutors, and a good environment to test in. If you run into a (technical) problem, there's someone to help right away. Call 432-335-6878 for additional information. Please see the Expectations for Students for Online Learning located at the end of this document.
- 3.) Do not go over the assigned time limit (30 minutes for the quizzes and 30 minutes per assigned chapter for the unit exams). If you go beyond the allotted time, Blackboard will auto-submit your quiz/exam. If you see a **clipboard/writing pad/notepad** where your score should be once you've completed your exam, that indicates that your exam (for whatever reason) wasn't submitted properly.
- 4.) *Please keep in mind that this is **not** a self-paced or an open entry course.* It is an internet course that is conducted in much the same way as an on-campus, face-to-face class with regard to deadlines, etc. You will need to be able to access the course daily (including holidays & weekends). Also, please keep in mind that an internet/web course is, to a large extent, self-taught. In exchange for the convenience of not attending class and missing the nuances, emphasis, emotion, and passion that comes with lecture, you'll have to depend heavily on your diligence in order to succeed. **Since there is no lecture component to this course, success is going to largely depend on your reading and comprehension skills.** This is why the textbook, along with those skills, is so critical. If you have some doubt(s) about your abilities in this area, you might want to consider enrolling in one of the face-to-face classes instead.
- 5.) Since you don't have to attend lecture and all of the quizzes/exams are essentially "**open-book**" with more than ample time to complete them (if you are prepared), there is

every opportunity for you to excel in this course. Read and prepare thoroughly. Consider outlining each chapter as you read it. Examine the headings, bold-faced words, and chapter summaries carefully.

Expectations for Engagement – Online Learning

Reasonable Expectations of Engagement for Students. Please read over the following. It is crucial to your success in this class to meet these expectations.

1. As a student, I understand that I am responsible for keeping up with the course. To help with this, I will
 - line up alternative computer and internet access in case my primary computer crashes or my internet services is unavailable;
 - recognize that the college provides free wi-fi and computer labs during regular campus hours to help me with accessing my course; and,
 - understand that my instructor does not have to accept my technical issues as a legitimate reason for late or missing work if my equipment or 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
 - getting “kicked off” of the system during tests or quizzes;
 - having trouble submitting assignments; and
 - dealing with a traumatic personal event.

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,
 - access my course several times during the week to keep up with assignments and announcements.

General Class Policies- Please refer to this section prior to emailing me with a question regarding any of these topics.

Make-up Policy: No extensions will be given for any assignment or examination without a written medical excuse or prior approval from me. There are no make-ups for missed quizzes.

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 e-mail, Blackboard, etc., is available at the Student Success Center: 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.

Drop/Withdrawal Policy: Dropping and/or withdrawing from the course is your responsibility. Please refer to the student academic calendar for appropriate drop dates and other important deadlines. Contact the Registrar's office (432-335-6404) for additional information.

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.