

## Course Syllabus for Government 2306 (13/S1)

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

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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 required that public college and university students complete six semester-hours in American national, state, and local government. The survey course in national 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 federal 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 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:

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.

**Textbook:** Maxwell, William Ernest, et al., *Texas Politics Today*, 2011-2012 edition.

**Course outline:** *Politics is the possession, and distribution, of power.* – Benjamin Disraeli

Unit One: Power (chs. 2, 6, 8, and 10) **Exam date: Saturday 22 June 2013**

Unit Two: Politics (chs. 1, 3, 4 and 5) **Exam date: Saturday 29 June 2013**

Unit Three: Policy (chs. 7, 9, 11, 12, and 13) **Exam date; Saturday 06 July 2013**

Unit Four: Local Government (ch. 14) **Exam date: Saturday 13 July 2013**

**Assignments, quizzes, and examinations:** During the course of this session there will be three assignments, fourteen chapter quizzes, and four unit examinations (the last examination will be a combination unit/final examination). The unit exams will open on the following dates (all Saturdays) and remain open for 60 hours. The chapter quizzes and corresponding assignments for each unit will be available in between those dates beginning **Tuesday 11 June 2013**. Watch the Announcements and your student e-mail account for updated information.

**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, contact me for further instructions. I reserve the right to have make-ups administered in a proctored situation, such as the OC Testing Center, Student Success Center, or the LRC. **There are NO make-ups for the chapter quizzes and/or other assignments!!**

**Grading policy:** All quizzes and examinations are equally weighted. The major exams are worth 100 points each and the quizzes/assignments/posts are worth 20 points each. Final semester grades will be based on the following scale: **90-100 = A, 80-89 = B, 70-79 = C, 60-69 = D, and below 60 = F**. To arrive at your average, divide the total number of points you've scored by the total number of possible points (e.g. – 350 total points scored divided by 500 possible points = .70 or a

70 which would translate into a C for the semester grade). The maximum number of points available for this course is 840.

Also, keep in mind that once a grade is assigned, it is **final!!!** The need to retain eligibility, please your parents, get into law school, med school, grad school, etc., may be important reasons to change a grade, but they are not valid. A final semester grade is just that – final.

**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. The last day to withdraw from this session with a “W” is Tuesday **02 July 2013**. Drops/withdrawals after this date are granted only in the most warranted instances and are at the instructor’s discretion. 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.

**Miscellaneous reminders:**

- 1) **All e-mail communication is to be through OC student e-mail.** While I won’t ignore an e-mail from a personal (or other) account, all communication originating from me regarding the course will go to your student e-mail account. This is college policy!

Go to <http://www.odessa.edu/gmail/> for more information.

- 2) If you run into a problem (taking a quiz, exam, etc.), please notify me right away so that I can correct it asap. Don’t hit the back button on your browser while taking the exam as you will (most likely) get kicked off. I will reset the exam for you, but you should know that the test generator will generate a different exam (the same material, but with different questions) each time.
- 3) If resetting exams/quizzes for you becomes chronic (more than twice), I do reserve the right to have you take a paper exam in a proctored situation. Please be careful while taking the exam(s) and make sure that your system requirements meet those required by Blackboard. If you continue to have problems submitting assignments/exams, you might consider downloading the Mozilla/Firefox browser. For some reason, Blackboard seems to “play nicer” with Mozilla than with Internet Explorer ... as does Google Chrome. Go to download.com
- 4) 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. Contact me asap and I will reset it for you. If you see an **exclamation point** where your grade should be, that means that you’ve gone over the assigned time limit (30 minutes for the quizzes and 30 minutes per assigned chapter for the unit exams). **Anything beyond ten percent of the assigned time limits (that would be more than three minutes over for the quizzes and twelve to fifteen minutes for the unit exams) will result in a two point per minute deduction.**

- 5) Since you don't have to attend lecture and all of the quizzes/exams are "open-book" with more than ample time to complete them (if you are prepared), there is **no** compelling reason to offer "extra-credit" in this course.
- 6) Since there is no lecture component to this course, success is going to largely depend on your reading and comprehension skills. Read and prepare thoroughly. Consider outlining each chapter as you read it. Examine the headings, bold-faced words, and chapter summaries carefully. Contact the Student Success Center if you feel that you need assistance in this area.
- 7) 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
- 8) Again, if you need to contact me, use [gfindley@odessa.edu](mailto:gfindley@odessa.edu) (preferred), 335-6591 (office) or, if it is truly urgent and you need to get in touch right away (afternoons, evenings, weekends, etc.), call me at home (432-362-7713). If I don't answer, leave a message and I'll get back to you as soon as I can.

#### Expectations for Engagement – Online Learning

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

#### Reasonable Expectations of Engagement for Instructors

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 within 24 hours if received Monday through Thursday and within 48 hours if received Friday through Sunday; 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
  - post grades for discussion postings within one week of the discussion thread closing.
  - 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
  - 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.