POLS 2306 (Online) – Introductory Texas Politics

University of Texas at Tyler
Short Summer Session 2015

Professor Eric A. Lopez
Office: BUS 227
Office Phone #: (903) 566-7428
Office Hours: Given the class format, regular office hours will not be held. However, I am readily accessible through email (expect a response within 24 hours) if you should have any questions, or would like to schedule an appointment to discuss any matter related to the course. Email: elopez@uttyler.edu
- I will only reply to email from an official UT-Tyler email account

Course Description and Objectives

Written constitutions define the powers and responsibilities of government while simultaneously establishing the limits of government. To better understand these concepts, this course is designed to provide an introductory analysis and evaluation of the political systems established by both the U.S. and Texas constitutions. Throughout the course students will:
- Critically examine the philosophical foundations of both political systems by exploring the historical debates and writings that shaped the formation of these documents.
- Distinguish and identify the key differences and similarities between the three branches of government at the National and State level.
• Appraise current events (at both the National and State level) to highlight the applicability and importance of both constitutions in today’s society.
• Consider the formation of partisan preferences and how evaluate how partisanship has shaped Texas into a one-party state and the consequences of this affiliation.

Credit Hours: 3; Prerequisites: None

**Required Texts**

3) Additional required readings will be posted in Blackboard.

**Requirements, Dates, and Grades**

Success in the class will require you to have the ability to login to Blackboard regularly (daily), since Blackboard will be used to conduct online discussions and exam distribution. Most importantly, Blackboard will be the medium used to deliver the class content. Further, this course’s brevity ensures that it will be reading/work intensive. Since we do not “meet” for class, completing the required assignments should not be too daunting as they are structured to allow you to work at your own pace.

To ease completion and distribution of course material, this course is organized into 10 Modules. Beginning with Module 1, students will need to complete the assigned readings, view all content (e.g. lectures, short videos), and complete all assignments within a given Module in order to proceed to the next Module (Blackboard does allow you to save your progress, so that you do not have to complete a given Module in one sitting). Each Module is structured as follows:

**Module Content**

1) Introduction and Learning Objectives
   • Brief overview of the learning objectives of the Module.

2) Readings and Content
   • Readings can also be found in the **Course Outline and Readings** section of the syllabus.
   • Access to Blackboard readings can also be found by clicking on the Activities link, located on the left-side menu of Blackboard. From there, find the appropriate Module.

3) Video Lecture
• Each Module contains a video lecture concerning the readings and related content.
• At the end of the lecture, you are required to complete a “Check for Understanding” Quiz or Reflection Paper.
  o Follow the directions provided.
  o These quizzes will not count towards your final grade.

4) Secondary Video(s)
• Each Module contains an additional video(s), or lecture(s), meant to offer an interesting perspective at a related issue of the Module.
• At the end of these videos, you are required to complete a “Check for Understanding” Quiz or Reflection Paper.
  o Follow the directions provided.
  o These quizzes will not count towards your final grade.

5) Student Interaction (Online Discussion)
• Per module, I will provide discussion questions in Blackboard’s Group Discussion Board. It is expected that students will offer comments, questions, and replies to the discussion questions that are posted as well as to the posts of your classmates. You are expected to actively participate in discussion for each module. I will be reading all messages and I will participate in the discussion when important/interesting point(s) are being argued or discussed. Postings are expected to be carefully crafted responses (a minimum of 4 sentences in length) and will be evaluated on:
  • The quality of the posting, which uses references from the readings, current events, or personal experience to support comments.
  • The written quality of your post.
  • The degree that the postings promote discussion with classmates.
  • Student engagement with their classmates’ posts.

Online Discussion will be graded on the following scale:

Grade  Reason
0     No Participation
50    Minimal response to the Unit Questions
75    Postings responds to the question, but 1) does not offer support for claims and 2) does not stimulate further class discussion
100   Postings fully address the discussion questions and stimulate substantial follow-up postings. Also, student actively engages in the posts of other classmates.

Please note that the Group Discussion Board will close on Sunday, May 31 at 11:59 p.m.

6) Module Quiz (Online Quizzes)
• At the end of each module, a quiz will be distributed. These quizzes will cover all information that should have been read/viewed for the module.
  o Carefully follow the directions provided.
  o These quizzes WILL count towards your final grade (A total of 10 quizzes will compose your Quiz Grade for the course.)

7) Review Questions
• Students will be provided review questions concerning the Module Content. Answering these questions will not count towards your final grade; however, they will serve as the basis for your review for both the Midterm and Final Exam.
• Access to the Review Questions can also be found by clicking on the Activities link, located on the left-side menu of Blackboard. From there, find your respective Module.
  o Therefore, keep track of the questions and be able to answer them. If you should have any questions, please don’t hesitate to email me for help/clarification.

8) Looking Ahead
• A short video that provides a preview of the information for the next Module.

**Compare/Contrast Paper**

The overarching theme of this class is for students to learn the differences and similarities between the systems of government established by the federal government and the State of Texas. Hence, students are required to write 1 (one) paper in which they compare and contrast one of the branches of government. I.E. A paper that compares and contrasts either the Legislative, Executive, or Judicial branches of government codified by the U.S. and Texas constitutions.

You are free to compare and contrast any branch of government you find most interesting, or easiest to write. This paper should include 1) a discussion of the main differences and similarities of the branch established by both constitutions. 2) Using one of the main differences and similarities you analyze, discuss a current event at either the federal-level or here in Texas that elucidates the point. 3) A discussion of which government’s branch you most prefer and why.

Papers will be graded according to the following rubric:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper Section</th>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Points Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>A strong introduction states the overall topic and sets the stage for the remaining paper in an interesting manner.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content (Part 1)</td>
<td>A clear elaboration of at least 7 main differences and similarities in how the branches differ from one another (e.g. size, how membership is determined, how members are elected).</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content (Part 2)</td>
<td>An appropriate current event at the National or State level is used to elucidate one of the main differences/similarities they highlight in Part 1.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content (Part 3)</td>
<td>A clear elaboration and analysis on which branch of government the student prefers.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>A strong conclusion provides a concise review of their key conclusions and analysis.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>Paper is free of grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, and egregious punctuation mistakes.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations</td>
<td>Proper citation of outside sources.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These papers should be no less than 2 (two) pages in length (doubled-spaced), typed in Times New Roman (font size 12), with 1-inch margins. If you include any information from non-class related sources, these sources should be properly cited within the text of your paper (author’s last name and publication date) and a list of all sources used should be included at the end of your paper (i.e. a bibliography page). You are expected to work on your paper throughout the course and submit it to its corresponding folder in Blackboard.

- Please note that your paper is due at 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, May 31.

*Exams*
The Midterm (time to complete: 1 hour) and Final Exam (time to complete: 1.5 hours) will be held online on the dates specified below. Each exam will be available at 12:00 a.m. and you will have a specified time to complete (see above). No exams will be accepted after 11:59 p.m. on the testing date listed below.

These exams will only cover readings and course materials prior to the date of the exam. Please note:
- Midterm will test your comprehension of material from 5/11 – 5/20
- Final Exam will test your comprehension of material from 5/21 – 5/29

**Grades and Due Dates**

The following are the weights given to the Online Discussion, Online Quizzes, the Compare/Contrast Paper, and the Exams and the date that each is due:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date (Subject to Change)</th>
<th>Grade Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm</td>
<td>Wednesday, May 20th</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Friday, May 29th</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compare/Contrast Paper</td>
<td>Sunday, May 31st</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Discussion</td>
<td>Per Module</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>Per Module</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Final grades will be granted on the following scale: A=100%-90%, B=89%-80%, C=79%-70%, D=69%-60%, and F=59%-50%.

**Policy Concerning Blackboard and Submitting Papers**

The Professor is conscious to the fact that Blackboard can be unreliable at times. If you are having trouble posting in the discussion forums, accessing posted readings, or submitting an assignment, please inform me about the issue and attach the relevant assignment. All times listed in this syllabus correspond to the Central Time Zone, since this corresponds with UT-Tyler’s time zone. Late assignments will be penalized a letter grade for each day they are late and none will be accepted after May 31, 2015.

If any conflict (other tests, travel plans, etc.) with an assignment’s due date exists that you feel will not allow you to complete any of the assignments on time, notify me of your situation by Friday, May 15, 2015. Be advised that allowances (i.e., extensions) will only be given in extreme cases with my discretion as to what I define as extreme. Late papers will only be accepted, without penalty, in the case of an unforeseen event, such as a sudden emergency (death in your family, illness, etc.), or if you have an approved absence by the Dean of Students (see also: Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities and Student Absence due to Religious Observance sections of the syllabus).
Technical Information

If you experience technical problems or have a technical question about this course, you can obtain assistance by emailing itsupport@patriots.utyler.edu or call 903.565.5555.

When you email IT Support, be sure to include a complete description of your question or problem including:

- The title and number of the course
- The page in question
- If you get an error message, a description and message number
- What you were doing at the time you got the error message

You may also visit the Help Tab in Blackboard for useful information or check out On Demand Learning Center for Students http://ondemand.blackboard.com/students.htm

Plug-ins and Helper Applications

UT Tyler online courses use Java, JavaScript, browser plug-ins, helper application and cookies. It is essential that you have these elements installed and enabled in your web browser for optimal viewing of the content and functions of your online course. Always ensure that you are using the most update version for the browser you choose to access the online learning content.

NOTE: Mozilla Firefox is the recommended browser for Blackboard:

- Adobe Reader allows you to view, save, and print Portable Document Format (PDF) files.
  http://get.adobe.com/reader/
- Java Runtime Environment (JRE) allows you to use interactive tools on the web.
- Adobe Flash Player allows you to view content created with Flash such as interactive web applications and animations.
  http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/
- QuickTime allows users to play back audio and video files.

Netiquette Guide

"Netiquette" is network etiquette, the do's and don'ts of online communication. Netiquette covers both common courtesy online and informal "rules of the road" of cyberspace. Review and familiarize yourself with the guidelines provided.

Students’ Rights and Responsibilities

To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link:
“Make Up” Policy

Make up exams will only be offered to those students that have a University approved absence, a doctor’s note detailing your inability to take the exam on the date provided on this syllabus, or a sudden emergency (i.e. death in your family, illness) that prohibits your attendance for the exam on the date provided on this syllabus. Anyone who has not satisfied any of these requirements and does not take the exam will be given a grade of “0.”

Student Absence Due to Religious Observance

Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the Professor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities

If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the Professor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the Professor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

Policy on Academic Integrity

The UT Tyler community regards cheating as an extremely serious matter and deals severely with those who violate the standards of academic integrity.

Examples of academic dishonesty include (but are not limited to):

- Copying from another person’s test paper
- During a test, possession of materials not authorized by the person administering the test
- Discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination or the divulging of examination contents to another when the Professor has allowed the exam to be kept by the student
- Working with others in taking tests or preparing academic assignments when not authorized by the Professor
- Obtaining by any means another person’s work and submitting that work as one’s own. This includes the downloading of academic papers or the purchase of papers written by others.

If a student is suspected of academic dishonesty, the classroom instructor may ask the student to meet with him or her to discuss the incident. A student may admit to allegations of academic dishonesty, waive the right to a hearing and accept penalties imposed by the instructor. The student may also deny all allegations and ask to see the Dean of Student Affairs. An accused student may accept the decision of the Dean of Student Affairs or ask for a hearing before an
impartial hearing officer appointed by the university. Witnesses may be called and evidence
presented. The hearing officer will consider all evidence and make a decision. The decision of
the hearing officer may be appealed to the President by either the student or the Dean of Student
Affairs. For a discussion of possible penalties, please see:
http://www.uttyle.edu/judicialaffairs/scholasticdishonesty.php

Class Conduct and Threatening Behavior

Given the nature of political discourse, some of the topics discussed and debated in class may be
sensitive to some students. It is expected that students, regardless of the subject matter, maintain
civility in their class comments. The University and the Professor seek to promote a safe
environment where students may participate in debates, discussion, and other objectives
concurrent with the educational process without compromising their health, safety, and welfare.
Concurrent with this ideal, mutual courtesy and respect should govern all classroom conduct and
responses to discussion posts. Therefore, threats of physical harm or verbal abuse will not be
tolerated in this class.

Disability Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act
(ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University offers accommodations to
students with learning, physical and/or psychiatric disabilities. If you have a disability, including
non-visible disabilities such as chronic diseases, learning disabilities, head injury, PTSD or
ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational
environment you are encouraged to contact the Student Accessibility and Resources office and
schedule an interview with the Accessibility Case Manager/ADA Coordinator, Cynthia
Lowery Staples. If you are unsure if the above criteria applies to you, but have questions or
concerns please contact the SAR office. For more information or to set up an appointment please
visit the SAR office located in the University Center, Room 3150 or call (903) 566-7079. You
may also send an email to: cstaples@uttyle.edu

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness and Census Date Policies

Students repeating a course for grade forgiveness (grade replacement) must file a Grade
Replacement Contract with the Enrollment Services Center (ADM 230) on or before the Census
Date of the semester in which the course will be repeated. Grade Replacement Contracts are
available in the Enrollment Services Center or at: http://www.uttyle.edu/registrar. Each
semester’s Census Date can be found on the Contract itself, on the Academic Calendar, or in the
information pamphlets published each semester by the Office of the Registrar.

Failure to file a Grade Replacement Contract will result in both the original and repeated grade
being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates are eligible to exercise
grade replacement for only three course repeats during their career at UT Tyler; graduates are eligible for two grade replacements. Full policy details are printed on each Grade Replacement Contract.

The Census Date is the deadline for many forms and enrollment actions that students need to be aware of. These include:

- Submitting Grade Replacement Contracts, Transient Forms, requests to withhold directory information, approvals for taking courses as Audit, Pass/Fail or Credit/No Credit.
- Receiving 100% refunds for partial withdrawals. (There is no refund for these after the Census Date)
- Schedule adjustments (section changes, adding a new class, dropping without a “W” grade)
- Being reinstated or re-enrolled in classes after being dropped for non-payment
- Completing the process for tuition exemptions or waivers through Financial Aid

The Census Date for this semester is Tuesday, May 12, 2015.

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy

Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the census date (see Academic Calendar for the specific date).

Exceptions to the 6-drop rule may be found in the catalog. Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Enrollment Services Center and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Enrollment Services Center if you have any questions.

Social Security and FERPA Statement

It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g. via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

Changes to the Syllabus
The information contained in this syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the Professor.

**Course Outline and Readings** (subject to change)

**Week 1 (May 11 – May 15)**

5/11: *Introduction to the Course*
- Review the syllabus and familiarize yourself with Blackboard (click on the “Start Here Star” in the Home Page).
- Students are expected to email the Professor to confirm that they have read the syllabus and understand the assignments/requirements for this course (if any questions should arise during your review of the syllabus, please do not hesitate to email me for clarification).
- “Introduce” yourself in your Group Discussion Board.

5/11 & 5/12: *Module 1 – Revolutionary Thought*
- 5/12 – FYI: CENSUS DATE
- John Locke – Second Treatise of Civil Government, Chs. 1-2 (Blackboard)
- Samuel Adams – The Rights of the Colonists (Blackboard)
- Thomas Paine – Common Sense (Blackboard)
- Virginia Declaration of Rights (Blackboard)
- The Declaration of Independence (Blackboard)

5/13 & 5/14: *Module 2 – Support for the U.S. Constitution*
- Constitution of the United States (Wootton)
- The Federal Bill of Rights (Wootton)
- The Remaining Amendments, #’s 11-27 (Blackboard)
- *Federalist #’s* 1, 2, 9, 10, 23, 39, 47, 84, 85 (Wootton)
- Wootton, pgs. 97-110

**OPTIONAL:**
- Wootton, pgs. 1-97 and pgs. 110-14

5/15 & 5/18: *Module 3 – The Texas Constitution*
- The Texas Constitution (Maxwell Chapters 1, 2, & 3)

5/18 & 5/19: *Module 4 – Voting and Elections in Texas*
- Voting and Elections in Texas (Maxwell Chapter 4)
- Political Parties (Maxwell Chapter 5)

**Midterm Exam (May 20)**
- Exam must be completed by 11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, May 20th.
5/21 & 5/22: Module 5 – The Legislative Branch
- Article 1 of the Constitution of the United States (Wootton)
- 17th and 20th Amendments of the Constitution of the United States (Blackboard)
- House of Representatives: Federalist #’s 52, 55, 57 (Wootton)
- Senate: Federalist #’s 62, 63 (Wootton)
- The Texas Legislature (Maxwell Chapter 7)

5/22: Module 6 – The Legislative Process
- The Legislative Process (Maxwell Chapter 8)

5/25 & 5/26: Module 7 – The Executive Branch
- Article 2 of the Constitution of the United States (Wootton)
- 12th, 20th, 22nd, 25th, and 27th Amendments of the Constitution of the United States (Blackboard)
- Federalist #70 (Wootton)
- Thomas Jefferson – First Inaugural (Blackboard)
- Texas’ Governor and the Bureaucracy (Maxwell Chapters 9 & 10)

5/26: Module 8 – The Electoral College
- Wendland, Jay, Eric Lopez, and Nikkita Edmond. “Moving Beyond Debate and Speculation: The Role of Federalism in Electoral College Reform.” (Blackboard)

- Article 3 of the Constitution of the United States (Wootton)
- Federalist #’s 78, 83 (Wootton)
- Marbury v. Madison (1803) (Blackboard)
- Texas’ Judicial Branch (Maxwell Chapter 11)
- OPTIONAL:

- Murphy, Pritchett, Epstein, and Knight. “Judicial Selection and Retention.” (Blackboard)
- Marshall, Thurgood. “Comments on the Missouri Plan.” (Blackboard)
- New York Times – Ouster of Iowa Judges Sends Signal to Bench (Blackboard)

Final Exam (May 29)
- Exam must be completed by 11:59 p.m. on Friday, May 29th.

Compare/Contrast Paper Due (May 31)
- Paper must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, May 31st.