

POLS 2306 – Texas Government

Instructor: Lucas Lothamer

Time: T/Th 2:00-3:20p

Location: Arts and Sciences 158

Office Hours: T/Th 9:00-10:30a & 12:30-1:30p and by appointment

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Course Description: Many Americans are only vaguely aware of what it is state governments do. Are they lower-tier entities tasked with carrying out the will of the federal government? Are they separate entities with their own sovereignty? What exactly are state governments and where do they stand regarding the federal government of the United States? In this class we will explore the concept of the 10th Amendment and its bestowment of power to the state governments, the creation and evolution of the Texas government and Constitution, as well as the foundations and workings of the three branches of the Texas government. Furthermore, we will examine campaigns and elections, public opinion, political parties, interest groups, and the many local governments that exist in and around the Texas government.

Time Management

In order to do well in this course you **MUST** take responsibility for your work habits and ensure you do all the work. In other words, if you start to neglect your work, put things off, and fall behind it will be extremely difficult to do well in this course. For that reason, it is imperative you regularly check your email and make a plan on when you will work on your assignments, ensuring they will be completed by the posted deadline. Additionally, you should plan to study and prepare for all posted exams and the final.

Communication

I am always available to chat and happy to meet with students. If you ever need to chat you can either stop by during office hours or email me to make an appointment (either in office or online). You can also email me with any questions or concerns. When emailing, please allow 24 hours for a response (emails over weekends may not be responded to till Monday).

Be sure to only email me using your student email account. Due to FERPA, I will not be able to respond with course information to personal email accounts.

Textbook

The book for this course is provided to students at no cost and is available at the link below:

<https://www.uttyler.edu/press/files/uncovering-texas-politics-in-the-21st-century.pdf>

Course Attendance Policy

Students are heavily encouraged to come to every class to both participate in class discussion and take notes on all new material. Doing so drastically increases your likelihood of performing well on exams. Additionally, everyone is expected to be respectful and courteous throughout the course.

Assignments

Lecture Quizzes 25%

Reading Quizzes 25%

Exams 30%

Final Exam 20%

Lecture Quizzes will consist of multiple-choice questions based on the material covered in class. Students will be given three attempts at these quizzes and I will only keep the grade of the highest attempt scored. My suggestion is that students do the first attempt with no notes to test themselves on where they stand regarding the material. They can then use the second and third attempt with their notes to find the answers to questions they missed. This method should serve as a helpful test prep for the in-class exams and final. I will drop the lowest of two lecture quizzes.

Reading Quizzes will consist of open-ended questions based on the assigned reading. The quiz will be open and will not be timed to allow students to look at the question while doing the reading. Answers will be recorded via open-ended responses. I will drop the lowest of two reading quizzes.

Exams will be in class and closed book/notes. These exams will consist of multiple choice and short-answer questions which will be based heavily off materials discussed in class. I will drop the lowest exam grade.

Final Exam will be held during the university scheduled timeslot for this course. This exam will be cumulative, meaning it will cover all material discussed throughout this course.

Note: I understand that certain life events happen and that sometimes events are outside of your control. Such events may include, but are not limited to, power outages, illness, family priorities, etc. For that reason, I have dropped the two lowest reading and lecture quizzes and the lowest exam grade. These drops are not “freebies” but are instead intended to cover such unrollable events. In other words, if you miss a posted quiz due to technical issues that will count as one of your drops.

Letter Grades:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69
F = 59 and below

I will round up to the nearest decimal point. For example, if you end with an 89.5 I will round that from a B to an A. There will be no exceptions to this grading policy.

Late Work

As a general rule I will not accept late work. This means all assignments, quizzes, exams, etc. are due by their posted due date. Only in extreme extenuating circumstances, such as a medical emergency, shall late work be considered.

Disability Services

I will abide by all accommodations approved by the university to ensure fair accessibility. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the instructor and inform them of the necessary accommodation on or around the first day of class. Do not wait to do so right before an exam! To apply for services please follow the link below:

<https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/disability-services/>

Title IX Reporting

The University of Texas at Tyler is committed to the principle that the university's learning and working environment be free from inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subjected to disciplinary action, whether on or off campus. I will report any and all behavior that fits the definition of sexual harassment to the appropriate office.

On-Campus Food Pantry

The Patriot Pantry is dedicated to helping students, staff, faculty and community members in need. Its mission is to provide food and personal care items to members of the UT Tyler community. Our pantry is completely donor funded, and it is our goal that no student goes to class hungry! For more information please visit <https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/service-learning/food-pantry/>

Student Counseling

Ut Tyler provides in-person and online counseling services to students. For more information please visit <https://www.uttyler.edu/student-life/health-wellness/student-counseling-center/>

Academic Dishonesty

I take cheating or plagiarism very seriously. 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.uttyler.edu/mainsite/conduct.html>.

Academic dishonesty includes any instance where a student attempts to ignore exam instructions or to pass off material from a third party (including AI) as their own. When in doubt whether something consists of cheating or plagiarism please ask me!

Artificial Intelligence Policy

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

AI is not permitted in this course at all. I expect all work students submit for this course to be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. For this course, I expressly forbid using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process, including brainstorming. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

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: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>

Course Schedule

The following is the planned schedule for the semester. While I do not foresee any changes to this, I reserve the right to make necessary changes to the syllabus in order to accommodate unforeseen events or due to the pace of the course.

8/26 – Course Introduction/Syllabus

8/28 – Federalism

Read pages 23-29

9/2 – Federalism

9/4 – Understanding Political Culture in Texas

Lecture Quiz 1 due in Canvas by 9/6 11:59pm CST

9/9 – Texas Constitution

Read pages 29-45

9/11 – No Class

Reading Quiz 1 due by 9/12 11:59pm CST

9/16 – Texas Constitution

9/18 – Texas Legislature

Read Ch. 6

Lecture Quiz 2 due in Canvas by 9/20 11:59pm CST

9/23 – Texas Legislature

Reading Quiz 2 due by 9/24 11:59pm CST

9/25 – Exam 1

9/30 – Special Interest Groups

Read Ch. 5

Reading Quiz 3 due in Canvas by 10/1 11:59pm CST

10/2 – Special Interest Groups

Lecture Quiz 3 due in Canvas by 10/4 11:59pm CST

10/7 – Political Parties

Read Ch. 4

Reading Quiz 4 due in Canvas by 10/8 11:59pm CST

10/9 – Political Parties

Lecture Quiz 4 due in Canvas by 10/11 11:59pm CST

10/14 – Campaigns and Elections

Read Ch. 3

Reading Quiz 5 due in Canvas by 10/15 11:59pm CST

10/16 – Campaigns and Elections

Lecture Quiz 5 due in Canvas by 10/18 11:59pm CST

10/21 – Exam 2

10/23 – Texas Executive

Read Ch. 7

Reading Quiz 6 due in Canvas by 10/25 11:59pm CST

10/28 – Texas Executive

10/30 – Texas Executive

Lecture Quiz 6 due in Canvas by 11/1 11:59pm CST

11/4 – Texas Judiciary

Read Ch. 8

11/6 – Local Government

Lecture Quiz 7 due in Canvas by 11/8 11:59pm CST

11/11 – Local Government

11/13 – Texas Economic and Financial Situations

Lecture Quiz 8 due in Canvas by 11/15 11:59pm CST

11/18 – Exam 3

11/20 – Critical Issues in Texas

11/25 – 11/27 – Thanksgiving Holiday (No Class)

12/2 – 12/4 – Final Exam Review Week

12/9 – 12/11 – Final Exams (Our final exam time will be the assigned time as scheduled by the University)