

The University of Texas at Tyler

Introduction to Texas Government & Politics

POLS 2306.003 – In-Class on Tuesdays & Thursdays

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Office Hours: TT 12:30 to 2p and from 3:30 to 4:30p (and I welcome meeting by appointment). Check **Canvas** for announcements!

Welcome to the study of Texas government & politics - POLS 2306! I congratulate you on choosing to study Texas Government! This will be an exciting course and I am thrilled to have you with me for fifteen weeks of learning! We will have a wonderful semester together as we focus our efforts on the critical analysis and the communicating a clear and coherent understanding of Texas government and politics as well as our social and personal rights, duties, and responsibilities!

Course Objectives:

1. to acquaint you with the study of political science, and
2. to improve your understanding of the institutions and processes that govern Texas and other states, as well as the localities (such as cities and counties) within them.
3. The student will become familiar with the historical antecedents which make up the political culture and regions of Texas.
4. The student will learn to characterize the trends in Texas' political history.
5. The student will be able to trace the changing political partisan face of Texas from a one-party Democratic state to a state with a strong Republican party.
6. The student will become cognizant of the changes facing Texas in ethnic diversity and population growth.

Required Reading Materials:

There are two (2) books required for this course:

1. *¡Tejas!: Texas Government & Politics / Edition: 1, by Marcus Stadelmann, Robert Sterken, and Eric Lopez.*
2. *Bill Ratliff: A Profile of Courage and Leadership in American Politics*, by Robert Sterken; ISBN-13: 978-1498546959.

Additional readings and online videos will be assigned on the course Canvas site.

Method of Instruction:

The primary method of instruction will be professor-led discussion lectures, which will be open-form style, with students expected to participate in a dialogue fashion. The outline of the

textbook will serve as the basic outline for the course, although we will no doubt roam far afield and chase ideas before we are done. Come prepared to discuss the chapter of that class day. Simple rules: 1) BE ON TIME, 2) READ THE MATERIAL, 3) PARTICIPATE. It is vital that you keep up with the reading! You must come prepared! I have added a participation segment to the final grade!!

Assessment Instruments and Value:

Examination # 1 15%

Examination # 2 20%

Examination # 3 20%

Ratliff Book Assignment 15%

In-Class Attendance 5%

Texas Food Essay 5%

Final Exam 20%

Assignments and Grading: Your grade in this course will be based on the following:

Course Requirements & Evaluation

Are you learning? How much and how well are you learning? In this course, we will use several different tools to assess student learning. Since deep learning about Texas politics and government is our mission, students will demonstrate learning and

understanding using several different tools.

Each of the assessment tools we use will have a specific weight that will contribute to your overall grade in the course. While some of the tools used are not weighted heavily – they will give you guidance and feedback and others (like in-class exams) are more heavily weighted. Please pay close attention to these weights and to the expectations.

Ratliff Assignment: You must read the Bill Ratliff book and complete the writing assignment in Canvas. Late assignments will be docked one complete letter grade.

Exams: There will be three (3) in-class examinations, including the comprehensive final examination, on the dates that are indicated below, covering the assigned materials from each unit. The exams will be drawn from the material covered in the most recent section of the course: for example, Exam 2 will cover the material studied after Exam 1. The final examination is comprehensive and will cover all the course materials. During exams, no discussion among students is permitted of any kind, and all electronic devices (cell phones, calculators, pagers, computers, etc.) must be switched off.

Texas Food Essay: What does the Texas government have to do with food? In this assignment, each student will explore some aspect of the relationship between food and Texas public policy. The student will write a 500 essay about the link between Texas public policy and a specific food that is part of the Texas culture. For example, if the student is interested in Pho or Gulf Coast shrimp, then his or her essay may be about Vietnamese in Texas. More on this in class.

In-class attendance and participation: The remaining 5% of your final grade will be based on your level of participation and attendance in class. Unannounced, in-class participation assignments and quizzes will make up a portion of this grade.

Exam Content: Questions on examinations may be drawn from your textbook, materials presented in lecture, and/or additional materials provided by the instructor as announced in class. Just reading the book, or just attending class, will likely be insufficient to earn a good grade in the course.

Class Policies: I make it a general policy to treat all students as adults. While this affords you, the student, greater freedom, it also means that you must take greater personal responsibility for your performance in the course. I am always happy to meet with students to discuss their concerns about the course, but I will not necessarily assume that you are in difficulty simply because you perform poorly on assignments or disappear from class for a few days.

Please provide a respectful learning environment for your classmates. Repeated tardiness, cell phone disruptions, reading materials unrelated to the course (such as Facebook), and abuse of communication technologies (e.g., web browsing/ IMing/ texting during class) during class will adversely affect your grade; per university policy, repeated disruptive behavior may result in your involuntary withdrawal from the course. Please arrive at class on time and mute (or switch off) all cell phones, and alarms during class.

Make-up examinations must be scheduled two weeks in advance in the case of an unavoidable planned or reasonably-foreseeable absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or emergency that is properly documented.

Any extra-credit opportunities offered by the professor will be offered to all students on an equal basis. Please do not ask the professor for individualized extra credit opportunities.

Grade Appeals: If you wish to dispute a grade on an assignment for any reason other than an obvious arithmetic error on my part, you will need to type a one-page explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, at least one week after the assignment is returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination.

UT Tyler Students Rights & 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>.

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.uttyler.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

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.

Disability Services: In accordance with federal law, a student requesting an accommodation must provide documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services counselor. If you have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services office in UC 3150, or call (903) 566-7079.

Student Absence due to Religious Observance: Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor 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 instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

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.

Emergency Exits and Evacuation: Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor's directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not reenter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Campus Carry: We respect the right and privacy of students 21 and over who are duly licensed to carry concealed weapons in this class. License holders are expected to behave responsibly and keep a handgun secure and concealed. More information is available at <http://www.uttyler.edu/about/campus-carry/index.php>.

UT Tyler a Tobacco-Free University: All forms of tobacco will not be permitted on the UT Tyler main campus, branch campuses, and any property owned by UT Tyler. This applies to all members of the University community, including students, faculty, staff, University affiliates, contractors, and visitors. Forms of tobacco not permitted include cigarettes, cigars, pipes, water pipes (hookah), bidis, kreteks, electronic cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chewing tobacco, and all other tobacco products. There are several cessation programs available to students looking to quit smoking, including counseling, quitlines, and group support. For more information on cessation programs please visit www.uttyler.edu/tobacco-free.