

POLS 2306: Introduction to Texas Government

FALL 2021

Mark Owens

mowens@uttyler.edu

Course Time: MW 2:30 p.m. – 3:50 p.m.

Classroom: RBS 2024

Office Hours: MW 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Office: CAS 123

Key Reminders: Above the Fold

SARS-CoV-2 is transmitted in local areas (6 feet from the source) when water droplets enter an individual's mouth, eyes, or nose. It is also possible for some virus particles to stay on plastic or metal surfaces for 3 days. Here's what you can do as we meet in person:

- 1) When you are healthy, study together with a small group of students you see often.
- 2) If you are ill, hunker down where you can. Send Dr. Owens a note to set a plan.
- 3) Dust off your work space, because the public has used that desk today.
- 4) Round-up a face covering.
- 5) If you work with a lot of people indoors or travel on public transportation, get tested 3-5 days after you think you were exposed.

Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions of the American government, using the prior civic understanding each student has. The course investigates the behavioral trends that explain how individuals work within these institutions to change laws. The course also explores topics where students can challenge their understanding of government by comparing how state politics is unique from the federal government and identifying the dates of significant reforms to the lawmaking process.

Learning Objectives

The course is designed with the objective of obtaining a comprehensive knowledge of Texas's politics by the end of the semester. This can be reflected by the ability to:

- Analyze philosophical foundations of the state's political system by comparing the political culture of regions in Texas.
- Describe how branches of government in Texas interact with one another and what that means for the power one individual can have.
- Appraise current events to highlight the 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.

Students who will do the best in the course will understand how political contexts shape how institutions function and identify the processes in which the public can influence how the government operates. Note: *This section of POLS 2305 is eligible for the Service Learning Designation on your Transcript.*

Required Book is a Free Open-Source Text

Sterken, Robert, Marcus Stadelmann, and Eric Lopez. 2019. *Uncovering Texas Politics*. Tyler, TX: University of Texas at Tyler.

Student Conduct

I have high expectations for each student in this class, which are based on your academic performance to get to this point and my belief that you will treat each of your fellow classmates with respect. My goal is to facilitate a supportive and engaging class experience for everyone and one part of that is eliminating disruptive behavior. Using technology in a way that distracts others and demonstrates a lack of respect for the instructor is unacceptable.

Expectations for all work

All work must be original - including only direct quotes without any analysis will result in a 0. Work that largely summarizes or only paraphrases work from other sources will not receive more than a B-. A papers must synthesize arguments and facts to build justifications for the author's main point (or argument).

All missed in-class activities will be counted as a zero, *if not excused beforehand*.

Should it be necessary for a student to make up either the exam, that will be done toward the end of the term.

All out of class assignments are due at the beginning of the class. Failure to turn in an assignment on time will result in a penalty of one letter grade per day. Assignments not received within three days of the deadline will no longer be accepted.

All readings are expected to be completed before class. Although not all readings will be discussed in class, this does not negate your responsibility to know the assigned material.

Assignment Groups

Jot it Down Outlines: 50 points

To have an engaging conversation, we have to start with a common understanding about a topic each week. You will be presented with a few leading questions to answer based on the reading and your existing knowledge. An outline is due before our class discussions on the topic begin. Each outline/report will be worth 5 points (excellent, sufficient, lacking detail, incorrect, poor, incomplete). The top ten will count towards your overall grade.

Active Discussion: 50 points

Class discussions will mostly operate as an open floor for discussion, sparked by questions that transition between topics, and if need be will use the socratic method if participation is uneven or lacking on a topic. *Points are accumulated with correct answers.*

Examine Society in Texas: 200 points

Two research projects are designed to immerse you in the observation of public opinion and interactions. In both approaches the purpose is to identify broad general patterns from repeated and detailed observations.

Research Activity & Reflection Assignment

- 1) Interview State Residents
Assign: Write a short journal (50 points): why did people you interviewed have those opinions?
Assign: Use your experience interviewing people across the state as a research team to communicate with a state leader (See Letter instructions below, 50 points).
- 2) Content Analysis of Twitter Replies Responses
Assign: Excel sheet measuring the sentiment of a reply using a codebook for the project (50 points).
Assign: Write a 1 page brief, using paragraphs to describe the general trends you saw from the sample of tweets and replies you analyzed (50 points).

Letter to State Legislator

A key to representation is communication your interests to those with the authority to make a decision. You have the freedom to select a policy related topic that interests you and fits within the scope of state law. The purpose of this assignment is that you:

- 1) identify the appropriate recipient of your request, by addressing the letter to someone who has authority in the Texas government.
- 2) communicate your thoughts with a person who has the power to effectively address your concern, by realizing who you write to matters.
- 3) describe the action you want to be taken on the issue and justify why the action should be taken. This is important, because you can see if the action you advocate for was attempted and the legislator is able to evaluate the strength of your request by how well it aligns with your information and their goals.
- 4) *include background information from surveys done by UT Tyler and your role* to establish your expertise as an author.
- 5) recognize the limited power of each government position and each legislative action. This means your language should be precise and not defer to the reader to interpret what the parameters of your objective is.

Letter Requirements: Format your letter as a professional correspondence with appropriate placement of addresses (letterheads are acceptable), salutations, date, and single spaced. Additionally, staff and representatives receive a great deal of correspondence so the letter needs to be short (not more than two pages). Be clear, concise, and descriptive as you specify what goal you seek, why, and how that should be done.

State Constitutional Convention: 100 points

Texas has had the same constitution since 1876, which has been amended 507 times. Get to know what is in the state constitution and how it can be changed. This project will include multiple assignments where you will keep, revise, or amend the current Texas Constitution to present a new document. Once you are familiar with the structure of the constitution's articles, you will be able to work on clauses and identify concepts the state has not yet included in the constitution. At the end of the semester, as a group, you will propose a new constitution for the state of Texas (much like the state did in 1974, when the plan fell by 3 votes in the Legislature).

Exams: 200 points

Four exams are each worth 50 points. The final exam, worth 100 points *will be* cumulative in that you are asked to draw connections across topics covered throughout the class. Each exam will offer different types of short-answer, matching, and multiple choice questions. Each question will hold different point values. *Missing an exam without the confirmation of an alternative test date, before the exam date, will result in a zero.*

Grading¹

Jot It Down Outlines	Weekly	50 points
Active Discussion	In-Class	50 points
Interviews & Content Analysis	As Assigned	100 points
Exam	Sept 29	100 points
Letter to a Legislator	Nov 29	50 points
Social Media Brief	Nov 1	50 points
Constitutional Convention	Nov 29-Dec 1	100 points
Final Exam	Dec TBD	100 points
TOTAL		600 points

¹Should the class schedule need to be amended, I will advise the class in advance by email and via the course page

Class Schedule

Week One Thinking About Texas, **August 23-25**

Week Two Texas's Population

Aug 30-Sept 1 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 1

Barreto, Matt A. and Angela Gutierrez. 2019. "Party Coalitions and Demographic Change: How Latinos Change Politics in California and Texas." In *Two Perspectives on Demographic Changes in the States Ahead of the 2020 Presidential Election*. Washington, D.C.: Bipartisan Policy Center.

Cortina, Jeronimo. 2020. "From a distance: Geographic proximity, partisanship, and public attitudes toward the US-Mexico border wall." *Political Research Quarterly* 73(3): 740-754.

Week Three Polling the Public

Sept 8 *Readings:* Martin, Florian. 2014. "Is Harris County Liberal or Conservative?" Houston Public Media's report on a study by Mark Jones from Rice University.

Owens, Mark. 2016. "East Texans support Trump, but at lower levels than 2012." *Texas Tribune: TribTalk*.

Week Four Constitution

Sept 13-15 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 2

Smith, Jr., Griffin. "We the People. Texas Monthly, January 1974.

Menon, Sangita. "Bill Seeks to Amend Texas Constitution to Ban Slavery. KUT, May 8, 2021.

Week Five Voting

Sept 20-22 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 3

Cortina, Jeronimo and Brandon Rottinghaus. 2019. "Vote Centers and turnout by election type in Texas. *Research and Politics* 6(3): 1-7.

Shaw, Daron R. and James G. Gimpel. 2012. "What if We Randomize the Governor's Schedule? Evidence on Campaign Appearance Effects From a Texas Field Experiment." *Political Communication* 29(2): 137-159.

Week Six Constitution Drafting Workshop & Exam

Sept 27-29 *Categories:* Limitation vs. Expansion.

Assignment of Authority

Full Substitute

Perfecting Amendments (Pronoun, specify new definitions)

Exam: In class on Wednesday September 29

Week Seven Parties

Oct 4-6 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 4

Huerta, Juan Carlos and Beatriz Cuartas. 2021. "Red to Purple: Changing Demographics and Party Change in Texas." *Social Science Quarterly*.

Myers, Adam S. "Secular geographic polarization in the South: The case of Texas, 1996-2010." *Electoral Studies* 32(1): 48-62.

Week Eight Interest Groups

Oct 11-13 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 5

Week Nine Texas's Legislature

Oct 18-20 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 6
Jones, Mark. 2021. "The 2021 Texas House from Right to Left." *Texas Tribune*.
Hamm, Keith, and Robert Harmel. 1993. "Legislative Party Development and the Speaker System: The Case of the Texas House." *Journal of Politics* 55(4): 1140-1151.

Week Ten Texas's Governor

Oct 25-27 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 7

Week Eleven Courts in Texas

Nov 1-3 *Readings:* Sterken et al., Ch. 8
Rubin, Griffin. 2019. "Liable for Libel - The Texas Supreme Court's Opinion on Opinions and Implications." *S.M.U. Law Review* 72(2): 335-342.

Week 12 Field Research for Second Survey, **Nov 8-10**

Week 13 TX Constitutional Convention Workshop, **Nov 15-17**

Week 14 **Holiday Break, Nov 22-24**

Week 15 TX Constitutional Convention, **Nov 29-Dec 1**

Final Exam Scheduled between December 6 through December 10

Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism, cheating, and dishonesty. The University of Texas at Tyler Policies and Procedures for Student Affairs will be strictly followed and can be found here at: <http://www.uttyler.edu/mopp/documents/8Student%20Conduct%20and%20Discipline.pdf>. Tests and assignments are designed to assess your understanding of the material—do not reference another student's answers.

Violations of academic integrity are serious and will have a negative consequence on your classroom performance. In each instance a violation occurs, a failing grade will be assigned for the assignment or the course, require work to be redone, and have you identify what the cause of the violation was. The matter will be referred to the Dean of Students if institutional action is necessary. Reference the rights and responsibilities of students: <http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/rightsresponsibilities.php>.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct:

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any

act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:

- copying from another student's test paper;
- using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
- failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
- possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
- using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
- collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
- discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
- divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
- substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
- paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
- falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
- taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
- misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.

ii. "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit.

iii. "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.

iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION THAT MUST APPEAR IN EACH COURSE SYLLABUS

UT Tyler Honor Code

Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

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>

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.

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 of which students need to be aware. 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/Accessibility Services

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the ADA Amendments Act (ADAAA) the University of Texas at Tyler offers accommodations to students with learning, physical and/or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability, including a non-visible diagnosis such as a learning disorder, chronic illness, TBI, PTSD, ADHD, or you have a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit <https://hood.accessiblelearning.com/UTTyler> and fill out the New Student application. The Student Accessibility and Resources (SAR) office will contact you when your application has been submitted and an appointment with Cynthia Lowery, Assistant Director of Student Services/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit the SAR webpage at <http://www.uttyler.edu/disabilityservices>, the SAR office located in the University Center, # 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 re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.

Student Standards of Academic Conduct

Disciplinary proceedings may be initiated against any student who engages in scholastic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.

- i. "Cheating" includes, but is not limited to:
 - copying from another student's test paper;
 - using, during a test, materials not authorized by the person giving the test;
 - failure to comply with instructions given by the person administering the test;
 - possession during a test of materials which are not authorized by the person giving the test, such as class notes or specifically designed "crib notes". The presence of textbooks constitutes a violation if they have been specifically prohibited by the person administering the test;
 - using, buying, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or part the contents of an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program;
 - collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test or other assignment without authority;
 - discussing the contents of an examination with another student who will take the examination;
 - divulging the contents of an examination, for the purpose of preserving questions for use by another, when the instructors has designated that the examination is not to be removed from the examination room or not to be returned or to be kept by the student;
 - substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for oneself to take a course, a test, or any course-related assignment;
 - paying or offering money or other valuable thing to, or coercing another person to obtain an unadministered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program or information about an unadministered test, test key, home solution or computer program;
 - falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other academic work offered for credit;
 - taking, keeping, misplacing, or damaging the property of The University of Texas at Tyler, or of another, if the student knows or reasonably should know that an unfair academic advantage would be gained by such conduct; and
 - misrepresenting facts, including providing false grades or resumes, for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit or injuring another student academically or financially.
- ii. "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the appropriation, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the submission of it as one's own academic work offered for credit.
- iii. "Collusion" includes, but is not limited to, the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any section of the rules on scholastic dishonesty.
- iv. All written work that is submitted will be subject to review by plagiarism software.

UT Tyler Resources for Students

- [UT Tyler Writing Center](mailto:writingcenter@uttyler.edu) (903.565.5995), writingcenter@uttyler.edu
- [UT Tyler Tutoring Center](mailto:tutoring@uttyler.edu) (903.565.5964), tutoring@uttyler.edu
- The Mathematics Learning Center, RBN 4021, this is the open access computer lab for math students, with tutors on duty to assist students who are enrolled in early-career courses.
- [UT Tyler Counseling Center](tel:903.566.7254) (903.566.7254)