

POLS 2305: Introduction to Texas Politics

Fall 2026

Nickolas Rios-Professor

Email: nrrios@uttyler

Office Phone: (903) 510-2985

Course Time: TuTh 2:00PM - 3:20PM

Office Hours: MW 8:25-9:55 or via  
Zoom & By Appointment

Classroom: CAS 104

Office: @ TJC in J127; no on campus office

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**Course Overview**

The genius of the Constitution often gets overlooked due to a political system that is characterized by its constant gridlock and partisan fighting. Through constitutional design, America's governing document defines (limits) the powers and responsibilities of government, while simultaneously enshrining the rights and liberties of the American people. Consequently, this distribution of power is not only the foundation of American politics, but also the source of our political differences.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

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.

**Required Book is a Free Open-Source Text**

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

With Additional Free Excerpts uploaded on Canvas:

Hernandez, E. (2022, March 30). *What is Operation Lone Star? Gov. Greg Abbott's controversial border mission, explained*. The Texas Tribune.

Prager, J. (2021). *The Family Roe: An American story*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Computer with internet and Word processing capability.

### **Artificial Intelligence**

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.

For this course, work submitted by students on this course will be generated by themselves. This includes all process work, drafts, brainstorming artifacts, editing, and final products. I expect all work students submitting 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. This extends to group assignments where students must collaboratively create the project. Any instance of the following constitutes a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code: a student has another person/entity do any portion of a graded assignment, which includes purchasing work from a company, hiring a person or company to complete an assignment or exam, using a previously submitted assignment and/or using AI tools/models (such as, but not limited to ChatGPT). Any violation of my personal policy on AI, will result with a 0 on the assignment and appropriate action with the university.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

The student is responsible for providing work produced wholly by themselves. The use of collusion, plagiarism, or A.I., such as, but not limited to, ChatGPT, is strictly prohibited. Any incidence of cheating, or suspicion of, will result in an automatic 0 on the assignment where the incident occurred. This will also result in notification of the incident to the college.

Students who are found to be, or suspected to be, academically dishonest are required to have a conference with the professor. **This meeting must be scheduled within 48 hours of notification.**

Conflicts with a student's personal, academic, or work schedule will not be accepted as valid reasons for failing to comply with course requirements, deadlines, or academic integrity procedures. Students are expected to plan accordingly (with the exception of school events).

## **Assignment Groups**

### ***Reflections, Quizzes, and Online Simulations:*** 100 points

To have an engaging conversation, we have to start with a common understanding about a topic each week. This will start by answering questions from the reading and your existing knowledge or quiz questions to recall specific details. Each of these assignments will be worth 10 points (excellent, sufficient, lacking detail, incorrect, poor, incomplete) or percentage of quiz questions correct. The top ten will count towards your overall grade.

Additionally, students should be prepared for a quiz MINIMUM once a week sporadically provided in the first half of a random day of class. This does not necessarily grant there to be no quiz for the remainder of the week. Additionally, reflections or quizzes can take a variety of forms outside of the traditional question format. This can include a self-reflection essay of the reading, group work, or other format and/or styles.

### ***Participation:*** 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.

Additionally, attendance is not wholly the source of points; however, it is impossible to participate, if one is not in class. Furthermore, attending class but choosing not to participate or be engaged does not necessitate a good grade in participation. This includes being off task.

### ***Interest Group Presentation:*** 100 points

The United States has several organizations, companies, and concern citizens lobbying with the various levels of bureaucracy and bodies of government. To provide a thorough understanding of the relationship between ideas and laws students will meet in groups to study individual interest groups from a non-bias viewpoint and educate their peers about their influence on our current political system.

### ***Three-Unit Exams:*** 200 points

Three exams are each worth 100 points. Each exam will offer different types of questions: short-answer, true/false, definition, importance/significance, and multiple-choice questions. Each question will hold different point values. Missing an exam will result in an automatic 0. There will be a no make-up policy; however, only the top two exams will be counted towards a student's final grade.

### ***Final Exam:*** 100 points

The final exam, worth 100 points will be cumulative in that you are asked to draw connections across topics covered throughout the class. The final exam will follow a similar structure to that of prior exams with added questions to account for the additional time.

### ***Extra Credit:*** To Be Determined

At minimum students may expect an opportunity to receive an additional 5 points added to a Unit Exam and Final Exam. Extra credit assignments must be completed by the week prior to the exam week. This meaning Friday for assignments involving discussion with the professor and Saturday for online submitted assignments. There will be no late submissions for partial credit for extra credit. Additionally, there may be other opportunities; however, only the 5 points are guaranteed to be offered. Lastly, any student who receives a 0 for academic dishonesty will be ineligible and/or forfeit any potential extra credit points as well.

### **Make-Up Assignments:**

As this class is classified as a face-to-face course, the expectation is students will attend all classes; however, it is understood that emergencies and situations will inevitably arise. It is for this very reason students will be offered a reasonable amount of make-up or alternative assignments. Students are expected to communicate absences with efficient evidence to receive a replacement assignment.

### **Grading:**

|                             |                                          |                          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Reflections & Quizzes       | Weekly                                   | 100 points               |
| Participation               | In-Class                                 | 50 points                |
| Unit Exam I                 | Sep. 17 <sup>th</sup>                    | [Totalled to 200 points] |
| Unit Exam II                | Oct. 15 <sup>th</sup>                    | [Totalled to 200 points] |
| Unit Exam III <sup>1</sup>  | Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup>                    | [Totalled to 200 points] |
| Interest Group Presentation | Nov. 17 <sup>th</sup> & 12 <sup>th</sup> | 50 points                |
| Final Exam                  | TBA                                      | 100 points               |
| Total                       |                                          | 500 points               |

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<sup>1</sup> Only the highest two “Unit Exams” will go towards your final grade.

**Class Calendar:**

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|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Week 1                                                  | United States Constitution                                         |
| August 24 <sup>th</sup> – August 28 <sup>th</sup>       | Reading:<br>-Chapter 1                                             |
| Week 2                                                  | Federalism                                                         |
| August 31 <sup>st</sup> – September 4 <sup>th</sup>     | Reading:<br>-Excerpt: Hernandez (2022), <i>Operation Lone Star</i> |
| Week 3                                                  | Civil Liberties and Civil Rights                                   |
| September 7 <sup>th</sup> – September 11 <sup>th</sup>  | Readings:<br>- Excerpt: Prager (2021), <i>The Family Roe</i>       |
| Week 4                                                  | Exam Week                                                          |
| September 14 <sup>th</sup> – September 18 <sup>th</sup> | Review Day - Tuesday<br><b>Unit Exam I – Thursday</b>              |
| Week 5                                                  | Congress                                                           |
| September 21 <sup>st</sup> – September 25 <sup>th</sup> | Readings:<br>-Chapter 3                                            |
| Week 6                                                  | The Presidency & The History of Bureaucratic Principals            |
| September 28 <sup>th</sup> – October 2 <sup>nd</sup>    | Reading:<br>-Chapter 4<br>-Chapter 5                               |
| Week 7                                                  | The Federal Judiciary                                              |
| October 5 <sup>th</sup> – October 9 <sup>th</sup>       | Reading:<br>-Chapter 6                                             |
| Week 8                                                  | Exam Week                                                          |
| October 12 <sup>th</sup> – October 16 <sup>th</sup>     | Review Day - Tuesday<br><b>Unit Exam II – Thursday</b>             |
| Week 9                                                  | Public Opinion & The Media                                         |

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|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| October 19 <sup>th</sup> – October 23 <sup>rd</sup>       | Readings:<br>-Chapter 2<br>-Chapter 9                                              |
| Week 10                                                   | Technology & Campaigns and Elections in America                                    |
| October 26 <sup>th</sup> – October 30 <sup>th</sup>       | Reading:<br>-Chapter 11                                                            |
| Week 11                                                   | Political Parties in America & Interest Groups                                     |
| November 2 <sup>nd</sup> – November 6 <sup>th</sup>       | Reading:<br>-Chapter 7<br>-Chapter 10<br><b>Assigning Groups for IG Assignment</b> |
| Week 12                                                   | Exam Week                                                                          |
| November 9 <sup>th</sup> – November 13 <sup>th</sup>      | Review Day - Tuesday<br><b>Unit Exam III – Thursday</b>                            |
| Week 13                                                   | <b>Interest Group Assignment Presentations</b>                                     |
| November 16 <sup>th</sup> – November 20 <sup>th</sup>     | <b>Presentations in Class</b>                                                      |
| Thanksgiving Break                                        |                                                                                    |
| November 24 <sup>th</sup> – November 28 <sup>th</sup>     | No Classes                                                                         |
| Week 14                                                   | Final Review Week                                                                  |
| December 2 <sup>nd</sup> – December 6 <sup>th</sup>       | Review Day - Tuesday<br>Flex Day -Thursday                                         |
| Week 15                                                   | Final Exam Week                                                                    |
| <b>December 9<sup>th</sup> – December 13<sup>th</sup></b> | <b>Final Exam - TBA</b>                                                            |