

The University of Texas at Tyler

Honors Introduction to Texas Government & Politics

POLS 2306.003 | Fall 2026

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 PM–3:20 PM | HPR 135

Instructor Information

Professor	Dr. Robert Sterken
Contact Information	Office: Arts & Sciences 116 Email: rsterken@uttyler.edu X/Twitter: @rsterken Office Hours: T/Th 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m., by appointment, and via Zoom

Check Canvas regularly for announcements, assignments, schedules, and course updates.

Welcome

Welcome to Honors Introduction to Texas Government & Politics. This course explores Texas political institutions, public policy, political culture, elections, leadership, and civic responsibility through readings, discussion, written work, and applied analysis.

Course Objectives

- Introduce students to the discipline of political science.
- Develop understanding of Texas governmental institutions and processes.
- Examine the historical roots of Texas political culture and regions.
- Analyze trends in Texas political history.
- Trace the transition from one-party Democratic dominance to modern Republican strength.
- Evaluate demographic change, ethnic diversity, and population growth in Texas.

Required Reading Materials

Uncovering Texas Politics (UT Tyler Press digital edition).

Bill Ratliff: A Profile of Courage and Leadership in American Politics by Robert Sterken (available through UT Tyler Library as an e-text).

Additional online videos and resources will be assigned through Canvas.

Method of Instruction

This is a face-to-face Honors course emphasizing lecture, discussion, critical thinking, and peer-to-peer dialogue. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings and participate actively in class discussions.

Assignments and Grading

Assessment	Weight
Ethics & State Policy Presentation	10%
Examination #1	8%
Examination #2	8%
Ratliff Book Worksheet Assignments	20%
Textbook and Video Assignments	20%
Notetaking, Attendance, and Participation	10%
Final Examination	9%

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Student learning will be assessed through examinations, presentations, reading assignments, participation, and handwritten notes. These activities are designed to measure both content mastery and critical thinking.

Handwritten Notes: Students will take handwritten notes during class and upload clear images or PDFs through Canvas. Notes should be complete, organized, and submitted on time.

Ethics Survey and Reflection Activities: Students will complete beginning- and end-of-semester ethics reflection exercises according to Canvas instructions.

Ethics & State Government Presentation: Students will create a 4–7 minute video presentation connecting ethical principles to a public policy issue or course topic.

Ratliff Assignment: Students must complete assigned work related to the Bill Ratliff text. Late submissions may incur a grade penalty.

Examinations: Exams cover readings, lectures, discussions, and assigned media.

Artificial Intelligence Policy

AI tools such as Copilot and ChatGPT may only be used when specifically authorized. Any permitted AI use must be acknowledged and documented in accordance with course instructions and UT Tyler academic integrity requirements.

University Resources and Policies

UT Tyler student support services, accessibility accommodations, academic integrity standards, FERPA protections, military-affiliated student resources, Title IX reporting procedures, withdrawal policies, and related university policies apply to this course. Students should consult Canvas and current university documentation for complete policy language.