

POLS 2306.004: Introduction to Texas Politics
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30am to 10:50am
ARC 112

Instructor: Dr. Joseph Clarkson

Office: CAS 131A

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:00pm-5:00pm (and by appt.)

Email: jclarkson@uttyler.edu

- I only reply to emails from official UT Tyler email accounts
- In your email, please note your enrollment in POLS 2306.004
- Expect a reply within 12 hours M-F (longer on weekends)

GTA: Melissa Singleton

GTA Email: msingleton4@patriots.uttyler.edu

Course Description & Goals

What role do states play in the American political system? How do state and federal governments differ from one another? Why did the Founding Fathers establish a federal system in the first place? How does Texas fit into it? What are the primary institutions and offices of government in Texas? What role do parties and interest groups play in determining policy? This course explores these and other questions to introduce students to the study of Texas politics. More specifically, it traces the creation and evolution of the Texas Constitution, as well as the foundations and workings of the three branches of the Texas government, through a comparison with three branches of government outlined in the US Constitution. It also examines the demographics, political culture, political parties, interest groups, and electoral process in the state of Texas.

This course offers a broad overview of Texas politics and fulfills the statutory requirements for a baccalaureate degree. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Analyze the philosophical foundations of the state's political system and its political culture
- Compare and contrast the function and design of the three branches of government in the US and Texas constitutions
- Identify the major institutions, offices, and interest groups in Texas politics
- Characterize broad trends in Texas's political history, including the transition from a one-party Democratic state to a strongly Republican state
- Engage civilly in discussions of political issues with those of differing viewpoints and backgrounds

Books & Other Materials

Primary Textbook

- Sterken, Jr., Robert, Marcus Stadelmann, and Eric Lopez. 2019. *Uncovering Texas Politics in the 21st Century*. UT Tyler Press.
- The textbook this course is provided to students at no cost via the link below: <https://www.uttyler.edu/press/files/uncovering-texas-politics-in-the-21st-century.pdf>
- If you prefer a hardcopy, the textbook is also available for purchase on Amazon. However, a hardcopy is not required for this course.

Additional Readings

- All other readings will be made available through the course website on Canvas.

Other Materials

- Notebook
- Pens/Pencils

Requirements & Grading

Assignments will be weighed as follows:

Assignment	Percentage
Reading Quizzes (6)	15%
Lecture Quizzes (6)	15%
Non-Cumulative Exams (3)	45%
Final Exam	25%
Total	100%

The following grading scale will be used:

A=100%-90%, B=89%-80%, C=79%-70%, D=69%-60%, and F=59% and below.

Assignment Descriptions

Reading Quizzes 15%

Throughout the semester, there will be six unannounced reading quizzes. Reading quizzes will take place at the beginning of the day's lecture and will test your comprehension of the reading for that day. You must be physically present to take the quiz, and no make-up quizzes will be allowed. There may be multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, or short answer response questions on the quizzes. Only four reading quizzes will count towards your final grade (i.e., your two lowest reading quiz scores will be dropped).

Lecture Quizzes 15%

In addition to the reading quizzes, there will be six unannounced lecture quizzes over the course of the semester. Lecture quizzes will take place at the end of the day's lecture and will test your comprehension of the material covered in that day's lecture. You must be physically present to take the quiz, and no make-up quizzes will be allowed. There may be multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, or short answer response questions on the quizzes. Only four lecture quizzes will count towards your final grade (i.e., your two lowest lecture quiz scores will be dropped).

Non-Cumulative Exams 45%

There will be three non-cumulative exams throughout the semester. Each exam will individually comprise 15% of your grade for the course, so collectively the three exams will count for 45% of your course grade.

- Exam One will test your knowledge of material from August 25-September 29.
- Exam Two will test your knowledge of material from October 1-October 22.
- Exam Three will test your knowledge of material from October 27-November 19.

Final Exam 25%

In addition to the three non-cumulative exams, there will be a cumulative final exam on December 10th from 9:30 am to 11:30 am. As a cumulative exam, any material covered during the semester is fair game on the final. Question types may include multiple choice, true/false, fill-in-the-blank, short answer response, or short essay questions. Some questions may be repeated from prior exams or quizzes, so it will be important to review the correct answers throughout the semester.

Course Policies

Participation

While there is no attendance grade for this course, regular attendance and active participation are crucial for your success in it. Not only is it important to be present for the twelve unannounced quizzes throughout the semester, but it is also important to be present and actively engaged because borderline grades will be determined by the quality of your overall contribution to the course. Additionally, the exams will cover material from both the readings and the lectures, so it will be difficult to succeed in this course if you fail to do the readings or skip the lectures.

Electronics Policy

You will need to bring a pen (or pencil) and paper to class to take notes. No personal electronic devices will be permitted in the classroom during class times, unless explicitly required by the instructor for an in-class activity. This means **no cellphones or laptops** will be allowed at any time unless the professor explicitly tells you otherwise. If the professor has to ask a student to put away his or her electronic devices repeatedly (i.e. two or more times), a ten-point penalty will be applied on that student's next quiz grade.

Make-Up Policy

Make-up exams will only be offered to those students that have a University-approved absence, a doctor's note detailing your inability to take the exam on the date provided on this syllabus, or a sudden emergency (e.g., a death in your family, a sudden illness) that prohibits your attendance for an exam. Anyone who has not satisfied any of these requirements and does not take the exam will be given a grade of "0." If you have conflicts (other tests, travel plans, etc.) with any of the exams, notify me by **September 18th**.

For quizzes distributed during class time, no make-ups are allowed for any reason, though the two lowest quiz scores of each type will be dropped.

Artificial Intelligence Statement

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 is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.

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.

University Policies

FERPA

UT Tyler follows the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as noted in [UT Tyler's Policy 7.01: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#). The course instructor will follow all requirements to protect your confidential information.

Honor Code and Academic Misconduct

The UT Tyler community comes together to pledge the following: "I embrace honor and integrity. Therefore, I choose not to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do." Accordingly, we enforce the [Student Conduct and Discipline](#) policy in the Student Manual of Operating Procedures (Section 8).

Absences for Official University Events and Activities

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for University Events or Activities](#) as noted in the Catalog.

Absences for Religious Holidays

This course follows the practices related to [Excused Absences for Religious Holy Days](#) as noted in the Catalog.

Absences for Pregnant Students

This course follows the requirements of Texas Laws SB 412, SB 459, SB 597/HB 1361 to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students. Part of the supports afforded pregnant students includes excused absences. Faculty who are informed by a student of needing this support should make a referral to the Parenting Student Liaison.

NOTE: Students must work with the Parenting Student Liaison in order to receive these supports. Students should reach out to the Parenting Student Liaison at parents@uttyler.edu and also complete the [Pregnant and Parenting Self-Reporting Form](#).

Withdrawing from Class

Students may [withdraw](#) (drop) from this course using the [Withdrawal Portal](#). Withdrawing (dropping) this course can impact your Financial Aid, Scholarships, Veteran Benefits, Exemptions, Waivers, International Student Status, housing, and degree progress. Please speak with your instructors, consider your options, speak with your advisor, and visit the One-Stop Service Center (STE 230) or email enroll@uttyler.edu to get a complete review of your student account and the

possible impacts to withdrawing. We want you to make an informed decision. UT Tyler faculty and staff are here for you and often can provide additional support options or assistance. Make sure to carefully read [the implications for withdrawing from a course](#) and the instructions on using the [Withdrawal portal](#).

Texas law prohibits students from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career*. The six courses dropped includes those from other 2-year or 4-year Texas public colleges and universities. Consider the impact withdrawing from this class has on your academic progress and other areas, such as financial implications. We encourage you to consult your advisor(s) and Enrollment Services for additional guidance. CAUTION #1: Withdrawing before census day does not mean you get a full refund. Please see the [Tuition and Fee Refund Schedule](#). CAUTION #2: All international students must check with the [Office of International Programs](#) before withdrawing. All international students are required to enroll full-time for fall and spring terms. CAUTION #3: All UT Tyler Athletes must check with the Athletic Academic Coordinator before withdrawing from a course. CAUTION #4: All veterans or military-affiliated students should consult with [Military and Veterans Affairs](#).

* Students who began college for the first time before 2007 are exempt from this law.

Final Exam Policy

Final examinations are administered as scheduled. If unusual circumstances require that special arrangements be made for an individual student or class, the Dean of the appropriate college, after consultation with the faculty member involved, may authorize an exception to the schedule. Faculty members must maintain student final examination papers for a minimum of three months following the examination date. The final exam schedule for Fall 2026 can be found here: <https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/academic-calendar-26-27/final-exam-schedule.php>

Incomplete Grade Policy

If a student, because of extenuating circumstances, is unable to complete all of the requirements for a course by the end of the semester, then the instructor may recommend an Incomplete (I) for the course. The "I" may be assigned in place of a grade only when all of the following conditions are met: (a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all coursework or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor, and (c) the student presents these reasons before the time that the final grade roster is due. The semester credit hours for an Incomplete will not be used to calculate the grade point average.

The student and the instructor must submit an Incomplete Form detailing the work required and the time by which the work must be completed to their respective department chair or college dean for approval. The time limit established must not exceed one year. Should the student fail to meet all of the work for the course within the time limit, then the instructor may assign zeros to the unfinished work, compute the course average for the student, and assign the appropriate grade. If a grade has yet to be assigned within one year, then the Incomplete will be changed to an F, or NC. If the course was initially taken under the CR/NC grading basis, this may adversely affect the student's academic standing.

Grade Appeal Policy

Disputes regarding grades must be initiated within sixty (60) days from the date of receiving the final course grade by filing a Grade Appeal Form with the instructor who assigned the grade. A grade appeal should be used when the student thinks the final course grade awarded does not reflect the grades earned on assessments or follow the grading scale as documented in the syllabus. The student should provide the rationale for the grade appeal and attach supporting document about the grades earned. The form should be sent via email to the faculty member who assigned the grade. The faculty member reviews the rationale and supporting documentation and completes the instruction section of the form. The instructor should return the form to the student, even if a grade change is made at this level. If the student is not satisfied with the decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Chairperson of the department from which the grade was issued. In situations where there is an allegation of capricious grading, discrimination, or unlawful actions, appeals may go beyond the Chairperson to the Dean or the Dean's designee of the college from which the grade was issued, with that decision being final. The Grade Appeal form is found in the [Registrar's Form Library](#).

NOTE: The Grade Appeal Form is different from the Application for Appeal form submitted to the Student Appeals Committee, which does not rule on grade disputes as described in this policy.

Grade Replacement 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 this syllabus, 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.

The Census Date for this semester is Tuesday, September 8th.

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 a history of modifications or accommodations in a previous educational environment, you are encouraged to visit [UT Tyler accessible learning](#) 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 the Assistant Director Student Accessibility and Resources/ADA Coordinator. For more information, including filling out an application for services, please visit [the SAR webpage](#), the SAR office located in the Robert Muntz Library, LIB 460, email saroffice@uttyler.edu, or call 903.566.7079.

Military and Veterans

UT Tyler honors the service and sacrifices of our military-affiliated and veterans students. If you are a student who is a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves or National Guard, or a military spouse or dependent, please stay in contact with your faculty member if any aspect of your present or prior service or family situation makes it difficult for you to fulfill the requirements of a course or creates disruption in your academic progress. It is important to make your faculty member aware of any complications as far in advance as possible. Your faculty member is willing to work with you and, if needed, put you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. [The Military and Veterans Affairs](#) has campus resources for military-affiliated students. The MVSC can be reached at MVSC@uttyler.edu or via phone at 903.565.5972.

Students on an F-1 Visa

To remain in compliance with Federal Regulations requirements you must do the following:

- Traditional face-to-face classes: Attend classes on the regular meeting days/times.
- Hybrid Classes: Attend all face-to-face classes convened by the instructor according to the schedule set for your specific course.
- Online course: Only one online course can count toward your full-time enrollment. Students are expected to be fully engaged and meet all requirements for the online course.

Campus Carry

We respect the right and privacy of students 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 [UT Tyler Campus Concealed Carry Policy webpage](#).

Course Schedule

Week One:

Aug. 25: Course Introduction

- Read the syllabus

Aug. 27: Federalism I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 2, pp. 23-29
- Declaration of Independence

Week Two

Sep. 1: Federalism II

- The Constitution of the United States

Sep. 3: No Class

- Professor Clarkson will be presenting at APSA in Boston.

Week Three

Sep. 8: Federalism III

- Centinel (Samuel Bryan), *Letter* no. 1
- Publius (Alexander Hamilton), *Federalist* nos. 23-24

Sep. 10: Federalism IV

- George Mason, *Objections to the Constitution* (entire)
- Publius (James Madison), *Federalist* nos. 45-46, 51

Week Four

Sep. 15: Texas: From Independence to Statehood I

- Randolph Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, Ch. 6

Sep. 17: Texas: From Independence to Statehood II

- Randolph Campbell, *Gone to Texas*, Ch. 7

Week Five

Sep. 22: Texas Constitution I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 2, pp. 29-51

Sep. 24: Texas Constitution II

- No reading

Week Six

Sep. 29: Exam One

Oct. 1: Texas Legislature I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 6 (entire)

Week Seven

Oct. 6: Texas Legislature II

- Publius (James Madison), *Federalist* nos. 53, 62-63

Oct. 8: Texas Executive I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 7 (entire)

Week Eight

Oct. 13: Texas Executive II

- Publius (Alexander Hamilton), *Federalist* nos. 67-69

Oct. 15: Texas Judiciary I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 8 (entire)

Week Nine

Oct. 20: Texas Judiciary II

- Publius (Alexander Hamilton), *Federalist* no. 78

Oct. 22: Exam Two

Week Ten

Oct. 27: Texas Demographics and Political Culture

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 1 (entire)

Oct. 29: Voting and Elections I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 3, pp. 53-62

Week Eleven

Nov. 3: Voting and Elections II

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 3, pp. 62-71

Nov. 5: Political Parties I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 4, pp. 73-81

Week Twelve

Nov. 10: Political Parties II

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 4, pp. 81-94

Nov. 12: Interest Groups I

- *Uncovering Texas Politics*, Ch. 5, pp. 97-115

Week Thirteen

Nov. 17: Interest Groups II

- Publius (James Madison), *Federalist* no. 10

Nov. 19: Exam Three

Week Fourteen

- No Classes—Thanksgiving Break!

Week Fifteen

Dec. 1: Final Exam Review I

Dec. 3: Final Exam Review II

Finals Week

Dec. 10: Final Exam (9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.)