

The University of Texas at Tyler

Honors Introduction to Texas Government & Politics

POLS 2306.H029 | Fall 2026

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

Instructor Information

Professor	Dr. Robert Sterken
Contact	Office: CAS 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, and schedule updates.

Course Description

This Honors course examines the institutions, processes, political culture, public policy, and historical development of Texas government and politics. Students will engage critically with contemporary and historical issues affecting Texas while developing analytical, communication, and civic engagement skills.

Course Learning Outcomes

- Understand the foundations of political science and Texas government.
- Analyze Texas political institutions, processes, and public policy.
- Explain the historical and cultural influences shaping Texas politics.
- Trace major political realignments and partisan developments in Texas.
- Evaluate demographic change, diversity, and population growth in Texas.
- Communicate political analysis effectively through writing, discussion, and presentations.

Required Course Materials

1. Uncovering Texas Politics in the 21st Century (UT Tyler Press, PDF edition).
2. Bill Ratliff: A Profile of Courage and Leadership in American Politics, Robert Sterken (available through the UT Tyler Library e-book collection).
3. Assigned videos, articles, and supplemental materials posted in Canvas.

Instructional Format

This is a face-to-face Honors seminar that combines lecture, discussion, collaborative learning, and applied analysis. Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class and contribute thoughtfully to discussion.

Assignments and Grading

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

Major Assignments

Handwritten Notes: Students will take handwritten notes for each class meeting and upload scans/photos to Canvas. Notes must be legible, complete, and submitted on time.

Ethics Survey and Reflection Activities: Students will complete beginning-of-semester and end-of-semester ethics reflection exercises as directed in Canvas and class instructions.

Ethics and State Government Presentation: Students will create a 4–7 minute video presentation connecting ethical principles discussed in class to a Texas public policy issue or course prompt.

Ratliff Assignment: Students will complete written assignments associated with the Bill Ratliff text. Late submissions may be penalized.

Examinations: Exams assess material from readings, lectures, discussions, and assigned media.

Attendance and Participation

Because this is an Honors seminar, consistent attendance and meaningful participation are expected. Students should arrive prepared, contribute respectfully, and engage actively in classroom discussion.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

AI tools such as Copilot and ChatGPT may be used only when expressly permitted in an assignment. Any authorized AI use must be acknowledged and documented according to course instructions and UT Tyler academic integrity expectations.

University Resources and Policies

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