

POLS 2306 – Texas Government

Instructor: Lucas Lothamer

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Mode: Asynchronous Online

Office Hours: By appointment via zoom or teams.

Course Description: Many Americans are only vaguely aware of what it is state governments do. Are they lower-tier entities tasked with carrying out the will of the federal government? Are they separate entities with their own sovereignty? What exactly are state governments, and where do they stand regarding the federal government of the United States? In this class we will explore the concept of the 10th Amendment and its bestowment of power to the state governments, the creation and evolution of the Texas government and Constitution, as well as the foundations and workings of the three branches of the Texas government. Furthermore, we will examine campaigns and elections, public opinion, political parties, interest groups, and the many local governments that exist in and around the Texas government.

Time Management

In order to do well in this course, you **MUST** take responsibility for your work habits and ensure you do all the work. In other words, if you start to neglect your work, put things off, and fall behind, it will be extremely difficult to do well in this course. For that reason, it is imperative you regularly check your email and Canvas account and make a plan on when you will work on your assignments, ensuring they will be completed by the posted deadline. Additionally, you should plan to study and prepare for all posted exams and the final.

Communication

I am always available to chat and happy to meet with students. If you ever need to chat, you can either email me to make an appointment. When emailing, please allow 24 hours for a response (emails over weekends may not be responded to till the next business day).

Be sure to only email using your student email account. Due to FERPA, we may not be able to respond with course information to personal email accounts.

Textbook

All exams and assignments can be completed from the posted lectures. However, there is a free book you can read for your own edification at the link below:

<https://www.uttyler.edu/press/files/uncovering-texas-politics-in-the-21st-century.pdf>

Assignments

Discussion Assignments 30%

Reflective Writing Assignments 40%

Unit Exams 30%

Discussion Assignments: Students will be responsible for answering a question posed to the class and interact with other posts made by their colleagues. These will ask students to reflect on the course lecture and current events by providing a thoughtful response articulating their thoughts on why or what occurs in politics.

Reflective Writing Assignments: These will consist of an essay question where students will write a 1–2-page paper addressing a particular prompt. Full instructions for each will be provided in Canvas.

Unit Exams: Students will only be able to complete unit exams in Respondus LockDown Browser. These will consist of several short answer questions which will come from the lecture materials posted. There will be four units, each consisting of three modules. As such, there will be four unit exams for this course. I will drop the lowest unit exam score.

Letter Grades:

A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 59 and below

I will round up to the nearest decimal point. For example, if you end with an 89.5 I will round that from a B to an A. There will be no exceptions to this grading policy.

Late Work

As a general rule, I will not accept late work. This means all assignments, quizzes, exams, etc. are due by their posted due date. Only in extreme extenuating circumstances, such as a medical emergency, shall late work be considered.

Disability Services

I will abide by all accommodations approved by the university to ensure fair accessibility. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the instructor and inform them of the necessary accommodation on or around the first day of class. Do not wait to do so right before an exam!

To apply for services, please follow the link below:

<https://www.uttyler.edu/academics/success-services/disability-services/>

Title IX Reporting

The University of Texas at Tyler is committed to the principle that the university's learning and working environment be free from inappropriate conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual harassment in any form will not be tolerated, and individuals who engage in such conduct will be subjected to

disciplinary action, whether on or off campus. I will report any and all behavior that fits the definition of sexual harassment to the appropriate office.

On-Campus Food Pantry

The Patriot Pantry is dedicated to helping students, staff, faculty and community members in need. Its mission is to provide food and personal care items to members of the UT Tyler community. Our pantry is completely donor funded, and it is our goal that no student goes to class hungry! For more information please visit <https://www.uttyler.edu/offices/service-learning/food-pantry/>

Student Counseling

UT Tyler provides in-person and online counseling services to students. For more information, please visit <https://www.uttyler.edu/student-life/health-wellness/student-counseling-center/>

Artificial Intelligence Policy

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.

AI is not permitted in this course at all. 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 stage 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.

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>

Course Schedule

The following is the planned schedule for the semester. While I do not foresee any changes to this, I reserve the right to make necessary changes to the syllabus in order to accommodate unforeseen events or due to the pace of the course. All assignments must be submitted no later than 11:59pm CST for the posted due date.

Unit 1

Module 1 (Texas Today) due by 6/03

Module 2 (Federalism) due by 6/05

Module 3 (Texas Constitution) due by 6/07

Unit 1 Exam due by 6/09

Unit 2

Module 4 (Texas Legislature) due by 6/10

Module 5 (Texas Executive) due by 6/12

Module 6 (Texas Judiciary) due by 6/14

Unit 2 Exam due by 6/16

Unit 3

Module 7 (Interest Groups) due by 6/18

Module 8 (Political Parties) due by 6/20

Module 9 (Campaigns and Elections) due by 6/23

Unit 3 Exam due by 6/25

Unit 4

Module 10 (Local Government) due by 6/27

Module 11 (Texas Budget and Finance) due by 6/29

Module 12 (Critical Issues in Texas and the Future) due by 7/01

Unit 4 Exam due by 7/03