

Texas A&M University – Commerce

PSCI 2306.09W Texas Government

FALL 2020 - ONLINE

Instructor Information

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Course Description:

This course is a survey of the principles and practice of the political system in Texas. In addition to examining the state constitution and the institutions that it empowers, a wider look is taken to consider local governments, the political system, and the actors in the political system.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture of Texas.

Additionally, students will develop the following skills and responsibilities:

1. Critical Thinking—Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
2. Communications—Student Communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of evidence, data and technology as applicable.
3. Personal Responsibility—Students will be able to understand their role in their own education.
4. Social Responsibility—Students will demonstrate awareness of societal and/or civic issues.

Required Textbooks and Materials

The required text for this course is: *Governing Texas Fourth Edition (2019)* by Harpham, Champagne, Casellas. ISBN: 978-0-393-68012-6. While there are earlier editions of these texts available, this is the officially required edition. If you would like an alternative option to purchasing a hardcopy of the textbook, online ebooks can be purchased from the publisher's website. The ebooks can be purchased at www.wwnorton.com/nortonebooks . The ISBN for the ebook is:

Governing Texas Fourth Edition (2019) by Harpham, Champagne, Casellas. ISBN: 978-0-393-69610-3

Course Requirements

All students are required to meet the following expectations:

1. Students are expected to complete all course readings as assigned for each section of the class. The assigned reading schedule is attached below and will be posted in the weekly schedule found on the course homepage through D2L.
2. Students are expected to access the course on a regular basis. You are responsible for checking the course for any announcements, updates, and changes that may be made throughout the semester.
3. Students are expected to complete all of the elements listed under **Grading and Evaluation** including Midterm Exams, Discussions, and Assignments.
4. Students are expected to be active on discussion boards and are required to participate.
5. Students are to be respectful in any and all correspondence for the course. Please use courtesy and respect when posting in any areas of the course such as the Discussion Boards and Student Lounge. Please refer to the Student Guidebook for more information on this subject.
6. Students are expected to use academic honesty and maintain the highest level of personal responsibility. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated! Please see the **Student Conduct & Discipline section** below for a detailed description on this subject and what is considered as academic dishonesty in this class. ***Any acts of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for that assignment and cannot be made up.

Grading and Evaluation

Examinations: 300 points. There will be three required midterm exams. All exams may include material from the textbook and other resources provided within the course. The scheduled dates for the exams will be posted within the course. Each exam will be worth 100 points. Details of each exam will be provided to you prior to taking the exam.

Discussion Assignments: 100 points. Students will be required to participate in discussion threads on a weekly basis. The instructor will post the topics for weekly discussions which will focus on that week's assigned reading. Each student will be required to post one response and respond to three of their fellow classmate's responses. More information regarding discussion assignments is listed below.

Writing Assignments: 100 points. There will be one writing assignment that students will be required to complete. This assignment will be assigned within the course and will have a specific due date which will be made available to you in advance. Writing assignments must be submitted via the course Dropbox and must be submitted in a word compatible document. All writing submissions will be submitted to Turnitin to check for plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to make certain the document is word compatible, if the instructor is unable to open the assignment, or if Turnitin cannot generate an originality score, the paper will not be graded and will result in a zero. Late assignments will only be accepted under extreme, verifiable circumstances and may be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor. The assignments will be posted, and instructions will be provided to you. Please do not ask for the assignments in advance.

Quizzes: 100 Points. Students will be required to take weekly quizzes. The quizzes will cover material from the chapter assigned for each week and may only be taken in the week for which the chapter is assigned. If you miss a quiz, it cannot be made up. The quiz may only be taken once and must be completed at the time it is started, it may not be saved and resumed later.

Journals: 300 Points. This is a reading intensive course and you are expected to read each of the assigned chapters. In addition to reading, you will be required to submit three Journals, which will consist of ten journal entries each. You are encouraged to research material outside of the textbook to develop a deeper understanding of your topic. You will be allowed to choose the topic for each of your journal entries. Specific instructions regarding instructions and submission requirements will be provided within the course. The Journals will be assigned within the course and will have a specific due date which will be made available to you in advance. All journals must be submitted via the course Dropbox and must be submitted in a word compatible document. All journals will be submitted to Turnitin to check for plagiarism. It is the student's responsibility to make certain the document is word compatible, if the instructor is unable to open the assignment, or if Turnitin cannot generate an originality score, the paper will not be graded and will result in a zero. Late assignments will only be accepted under extreme, verifiable circumstances and may be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor. The assignments will be posted, and instructions will be provided to you. Please do not ask for the assignments in advance.

Grading Schedule

Final grades will be based on a 1000-point scale, using the following conversion.

A: 900-1000 B: 800-899 C: 700-799 D: 600-699 F: Below 0-599

Midterm Exams

Students are required to take three midterm exams. These exams will be taken on-line and will have a 60-minute time limit. Each exam will be open for **48 hours** and can only be accessed once.

- Midterm Exam One –
 - will cover Chapters 1, 2, 7, 8, 9
- Midterm Exam Two –
 - will cover Chapters 3, 10, 4, 5, 6
- Midterm Exam Three –
 - will cover Chapters 11, 12, 13, 14
- Comprehensive Final –The Comprehensive is not required for all students. If you miss an exam, you are required to take the comprehensive final to replace the zero for the missed exam. If a student has taken all three midterms, the student has the option to take the comprehensive final to replace their lowest test grade. If the comprehensive final is taken as option, it will only count if it improves the student's grade.

Technical Issues

Students are required to take three midterm exams, which will be accessed through the course page. Students are responsible for testing the compatibility of their own computers and software prior to starting the exam and must be sure to have a high-speed internet connection to eliminate the chance of technical problems. Exams are timed and can only be accessed once. Exams cannot be paused once it has begun even if there is a sudden disconnection. Students are given the option to "Save Answers" and should do so frequently. Students should not click the "Submit Test" button until the exam has been completed. Once the student clicks the "Submit Test" the exam will be closed and cannot be re-entered. Any technical problems that occur while taking

the exam should be immediately referred to the help desk. Students who encounter technical problems as a result of failing to comply with these guidelines will not be given an opportunity re-take or re-access an exam.

Discussion Assignments

There will be 14 weekly discussions. Each week, the instructor will post a topic for the discussion assignments on Monday at 10:00 a.m. Each discussion thread will be open until Sunday of that week and will close at 11:59 p.m. We will not have a discussion the week of Thanksgiving or the final week of the semester. Students are given ample time to participate in discussion assignments and therefore there will be no make-up opportunities if for any reason the student fails to participate. No credit will be given for posts made after the deadline.

Each student is required to **respond** to the topic and is required to respond to **two** other posts made by other students resulting in the minimum of **three** posts per week. Each post should answer all parts of the topic in a clear and coherent manner. When responding to other members of the course, students should provide thoughtful discussion that will help stimulate conversation. It is not sufficient to simply agree or disagree with the post; the student must provide an educated response. Students should use proper grammar, capitalization, and punctuation when responding. Suggested length for the student's initial response to the discussion question is approximately **150-175** words. Suggested length for student's response to posts made by classmates is approximately **100** words. Word minimums are not required initially but may be imposed based on the quality of responses.

The student will be graded based upon the quality and content of their original response to the topic posted as well as those posted in response to other students. Posts that do not fully answer the questions or respond to other posts will not receive full credit. When posting on the discussion board, you should not expect to post all three responses at the same time. The idea of discussion is to engage with other students and read what others are saying. With that in mind, you should engage in discussion throughout the week. Please be aware that penalties may be given to students who submit all the required postings on the same day or all on the last day of the week. Students who fail to participate will receive a 0 and cannot be made up.

Students must be conscious of the academic dishonesty as discussed in the Student Conduct and Discipline section below when content is submitted for Discussion Assignments. All content that is submitted should be the student's original work. Any material taken from another source, including the textbook, should include a proper citation. **Material that is copied from any source will be considered plagiarism and as a result the student will not receive credit for ALL Discussion Assignments.**

Additional Course & Instructor Policies

Make-up exams: No individual make-up examinations will be given if a student fails to take the exam during the time it is scheduled. If a student misses an exam, that student will receive a grade of 0 for the exam. If a student misses an exam, they would be required to take the Comprehensive Final to make up that grade. Please refer to the Midterm Section on page three. A student may be allowed to take an exam after the date only under extreme, verifiable circumstances and may be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor. Any request for a make-up exam must be submitted via email and must include documentation explaining why the missed exam was legitimate. Such a request must be received within 3 calendar days of the missed exam date, unless the student is physically unable to submit such a request. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in official University activities and legal obligations. *Please*

note, these reasons do not guarantee that a make-up exam will be given.

Extra Credit: There is no extra credit in this class so please do not ask about it. At times, you may be given the opportunity to receive extra points on exams. These will be given at the instructor's discretion and are not a guarantee.

University Policy Regarding COVID-19

A&M-Commerce requires the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories. Exceptions may be made by faculty where warranted. Faculty have management over their classrooms. Students not using face-coverings can be required to leave class. Repetitive refusal to comply can be reported to the Office of Students' Rights and Responsibilities as a violation of the student Code of Conduct.

Students should not attend class when ill or after exposure to anyone with a communicable illness. Communicate such instances directly with your instructor. Faculty will work to support the student getting access to missed content or completing missed assignments.

Student Conduct & Discipline

The University has rules and regulations for the orderly and efficient conduct of business. It is the responsibility of each student to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations which govern student conduct and activities. General information on student conduct and discipline is contained in the student handbook.

I expect all students to maintain the highest level of personal responsibility and academic honesty which is discussed in Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12 Academic Honesty. "Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, plagiarism (the appropriation or stealing of the ideas or words of another and passing them off as one's own), cheating on exams or other course assignments, collusion (the unauthorized collaboration with others in preparing course assignments), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material."

Academic dishonesty affects all individuals at the University and accordingly will not be tolerated. For this class, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. Any attempts to pass off work as your own that was written by another individual, without proper citation or attribution, on any assignment or exam in this course will be considered an act of plagiarism. Any and all instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the appropriate offices on campus and may result in significant penalties.

All students enrolled at the university shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.

Texas Senate Bill - 11

(Government Code 411.2031, et al.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in Texas A&M University-Commerce buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so. Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and A&M-Commerce Rule 34.06.02.R1,

license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations. For a list of locations, please refer to <http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>) and/or consult your event organizer). Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all A&M-Commerce campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

Students with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University – Commerce

Gee Library - Room 162

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

Non-Discrimination Notice:

A&M-Commerce will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

Technology:

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the myLeo Online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements

LMS Requirements:

<https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements>

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

<https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements>

In addition to reliable web service on a daily basis for your online sessions, you also need access to Microsoft Word or to word processing software that you can save files in “Microsoft Word” compatible style. You also need a reliable place to save and keep copies of your coursework files for storage and reference. You also need the following to use technology successfully in this course.

- Internet access/connection – high speed recommended (not dial-up)
- Internet browser software (Google Chrome and Mozilla Firefox work best)
- Word Processor (MS Word)

ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course uses D2L Brightspace, the Learning Management System used by Texas A&M University-Commerce. To get started with the course, go to:

<https://leoportal.tamuc.edu/uPortal/f/welcome/normal/render.uP> You will need your CWID and password to log in to the course. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact Technology Services at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Email is the very best way to reach me. In every email, please make sure to provide your full name at the end, which course you are enrolled in, and a description of your request. I will communicate with you through the email address you have on file in MyLeo (make sure yours is up to date and working throughout the semester) and D2L announcements. In all forms of class communication including all online forums, students are expected and required to maintain a respectful tone and use semiformal to formal language.

MyLeo Student Technical Support

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides students technical support in the use of MyLeo. The student help desk may be reached by the following means 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Chat Support: Click on *'Live Support'* on the tool bar within your course to chat with a MyLeo Representative.

Phone: 1-866-656-5511 (Toll Free) to speak with MyLeo Technical Support Representative.

Email: helpdesk@online.tamuc.org to initiate a support request with MyLeo Technical Support Representative.

Help: Click on the *'Help'* button on the toolbar for information regarding working with MyLeo

Technological Failure:

If at any time you experience technical problems (e.g., you can't log in to the course, you can't see certain material, etc.) please contact the D2L HelpDesk, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The HelpDesk can be reached by clicking on the HelpDesk link in the Help pages as described above, or by sending an email directly to helpdesk@online.tamuc.org. You may also reach the HelpDesk by calling (toll-free) 1-866-656-5511.” This information is also available through the “Technical Support” tab on the course main menu. Course instructors are not responsible for technical failures and should only be notified in cases of repeated failure or lack of response by the HelpDesk.

NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to change any part of this syllabus as needed over the course of the semester. Any and all changes will be announced.