

Political Science 2306
Texas Government
Fall 2021
MWF 1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Instructor Information:

Megan Todd
Email: Megan.Todd@tamuc.edu
Office Hours: Mondays 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Office Location: Ferguson Social Sciences Building 135A

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 Objectives:

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.

Required Text:

ISBN: 9781071808900
Collier, Ken, Steven Galatas, and Julie Harrelson-Stephens. Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas, **7th Ed.** Washington, DC: Sage, 2021.

Assignments and Grades:

1. Examinations: There will be three examinations for a total of 300 points.

Each exam will be available for three days on D2L Brightspace. **If you miss an exam, you will receive a 0 for that exam.** If you are on a school related activity that requires you to be away for a significant period, you must contact me **prior to the exam** to reschedule. If you have a legitimate reason for not being able to complete the exam within those three days (illness, family emergency, etc), you may request a make-up exam upon providing supporting documentation. You are **not** guaranteed a make-up exam. Make-up exams are permitted at the sole discretion of the instructor. You should email me as soon as you know an exam may be missed.

Each exam will consist of 40 multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank questions. You will be given 55 minutes to complete the exam in D2L Brightspace. If you experience technical issues, contact me immediately with as much information and any documentation, such as screenshots, as possible. Please refer to the *Technology Support* section for information on how to contact D2L Brightspace.

2. Discussions: 120 points.

For each chapter, discussion topics will be available on D2L Brightspace beginning at **7:00 AM CT on Monday** through **11:45 PM CT on Sunday**. **There will be no make-up opportunities for any missed discussion posts.** The deadline will be strictly enforced. Students will not receive any credit for posts submitted after the deadline. Students who consistently wait until the end of each time frame for posting their discussions will receive a grade deduction. There cannot be a true discussion if you do not provide your classmates time to respond.

Some topics may be controversial in nature. Polite discourse can be quite enlightening. Remember to be respectful. If you believe that someone has violated the Code of Student Conduct, contact me immediately. Do not respond to that person in anger or frustration. "If you can't say something nice, don't say nothing at all." (Bambi)

- o Minimum Requirements:

- One original post each chapter – There is a minimum of two hundred words. If you fail to meet this minimum, you will receive a substantial deduction in your grade.
 - **Original posts are due by 11:45 PM CT on Thursdays**
- Two response posts to other students – There is a minimum of four sentences. A simple "I agree." or "Great job!" does not constitute enough effort to warrant credit. Critiquing your classmates on the technical aspects of their post, such as "Your post was too short." or "You did not answer the question." is not appropriate. Your responses need to be meaningful and contribute to the conversation.

If the topics ask you to explain the material covered in the chapter, you must explain the material covered in the chapter. If you do not cover the material appropriately, you may see a deduction in your grade. If the topics request an opinion, there is no wrong answer. You must support your opinion based true information. These do not have to strictly cover what was in the book. Please add your insights, incorporate relevant current events, etc.

Bonus: if you successfully post discussions every chapter of the semester that meet the minimum criteria, 10 points will be added to your grade.

3. Project: 80 points.

This is NOT a group project. Harold Lasswell defined politics as “Who Gets What, When, How.” At the heart of politics is policy. You will be provided a list of policy issues on D2L Brightspace. In a PowerPoint presentation, you will offer the following regarding one of those key issues: why that issue was chosen, why that issue is important to the state, and how that issue is viewed from both the conservative and liberal perspective. More information regarding the assignment will be made available during the semester.

4. Attendance: 25 points.

As we are scheduled to meet in person, students are required to attend class and attendance will be taken during each class session via a sign-in sheet. You may miss up to three class sessions on non-exam days without penalty. **More than three absences will result in a reduction in your grade.** If you are quarantined, you must log into D2L Brightspace at least two times per week to maintain your attendance grade. Failure to log in will count as an absence for purposes of attendance. The only absences that will not be counted against you are those directly related to school activities when someone from the department notifies the instructor of the student’s activities. Documentation is not needed for any other absence as any absence that is not related to school activities is not “excused.” **If you have another student sign in for you, there will be serious repercussions. Please refer to the academic dishonesty section.**

If you arrive 10 minutes after class begins or leave before the class is over, you forfeit your attendance points for the day.

Attendance Grade Scale

- 0 absences = add 10 points to your grade
- 1-3 absences = no penalty
- 4-6 absences = deduct 7.5 points from your grade
- 7-9 absences = deduct 12.5 points from your grade
- 10+ absences = deduct 25 points from your grade

The scale used in calculating final grades is as follows:

A: 470-525 points	D: 313-364 points
B: 418-469 points	F: 000-312 points
C: 365-417 points	

Extra Credit Policy: There will not be any individual opportunities for extra credit. All potential extra credit will be available only upon a class-wide basis. I do not “give” students a grade. Students **earn** their grade.

Syllabus Change Policy: As your instructor, I reserve the right to amend, modify, or adjust this syllabus as needed. Circumstances and events may make it necessary to alter the indicated schedule. Any adjustment(s) will be announced in class, on D2L Brightspace, and/or via email.

Email Policy: The **first** place to check for answers to any questions regarding class is this syllabus. Class policies and the calendar are clearly outlined. If you email me a question and the answer can be found in this syllabus, you will not receive a response. I attempt to respond to emails Monday through Friday within one business day. If I do not respond to you within two business days, please send a follow-up email as I may not have received your initial contact or speak with me before or after the next class period.

Electronics Policy: Cellular telephones, tablets, laptops, and any other gadgets must be turned off and put away during class. Man lived without electronic devices for thousands of years. You will survive one class period. If you are caught using any electronic device, including earbuds, you will receive a warning. A second occurrence will result in a reduction in your grade. If there are any additional instances, you will be asked to leave class and lose your attendance credit for the day.

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.

Academic Dishonesty: Any student who is caught committing any kind of academic dishonesty will receive an “F” in this course and will be reported to the University administration. “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), signing the attendance sheet for a student who is absent (or asking another student to sign you in when you are absent), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material” (Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedures A13.12). If you have any doubt as to what may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me *prior* to submitting any assignments.

The immediate consequence for any form of academic dishonesty in this class is an immediate 0 on assignment. In the event that I choose to drop the lowest grade(s) for assignments such as quizzes, the 0 recorded due to academic dishonesty will **not** be dropped. Additionally, in accordance with university procedure [13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty](#), you will be reported to the academic dean of the college in which your major department is housed and the department head in your major department so that a record of your offense may be maintained for purposes of future disciplinary action should it be required. Repeated occurrences of academic dishonesty may result in your expulsion from the university.

Campus Carry: 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.

Code of Student Conduct: “All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” (See Student’s Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct) Faculty have the authority to request students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the class and may refer serious offenses to the University Police Department and/or the Dean of Students for disciplinary action. Failure to comply with the Code of Student Conduct and commonsensical directions listed above may result in a verbal request to cease inappropriate behavior, your immediate removal from the class, being immediately dropped from the class, and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency.

COVID-19 Statement: A&M-Commerce recommends the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories.

The Counseling Center at A&M-Commerce, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students. Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center’s crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145. For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, please visit www.tamuc.edu/counsel.

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

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Student Statement of Understanding:

I have read the syllabus and understand the guidelines and policies therein. I recognize that this contract is a condition of the course. I understand that if I do not sign and return this contract to Ms. Todd by the due date that I will be dropped from the class or receive an "F" as my final grade. Furthermore, I am aware of my obligation to adhere to the guidelines and policies contained in the syllabus and that failure to do so could result in my being dropped from the course or receiving a final grade of an "F" in the course.

You must acknowledge that you have read the syllabus and agree to the Student Statement of Understanding by 11:45 PM CT on Sunday, September 12 on D2L or you may be dropped from this course.

Bonus: Complete the quiz over the syllabus for up to 5 additional points.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Student Responsibilities

- Students are expected to regularly check the course site for announcements and updates.
- Students are expected to complete the assigned readings and to engage in class discussions.
- Students are expected to complete all assignments including exams and discussions in a timely fashion.
- Students are expected to respect their fellow classmates and instructor.
- Students will comply with any and all D2L Brightspace technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, and internet access.

Access and Navigation

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course via MyLeo. If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903-468-6000 or helpdesk@tamuc.edu.

Note: **Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner.** Each student should have a backup plan to deal with any potential problems. This may include using an alternate computer at home, at the university, or borrowing a friend's lap.

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Students will need to be familiar with the University learning management system (eCollege), know how to use a personal computer, navigate the internet, and use basic word processing software such as Microsoft Word and PowerPoint.

Technology Requirements

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>

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulties with any part of Brightspace, please contact Brightspace technical support at 1-877-325-7778. Other support options can be found here:

<https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport>

Browser Information

Google Chrome or Firefox are the best browsers to use for D2L Brightspace. There have been noted issues when using this platform on Microsoft Explorer or Edge.

Course Calendar

(All dates and content are subject to change.)

- MODULE ONE:
 - Chapter 1: Introduction
 - August 30 – September 8
 - **September 6: Labor Day Holiday – No Class**
 - Chapter 2: Texas Constitution
 - September 9 – September 19
 - Chapter 11: Local Government in Texas
 - September 20 – September 26
 - Chapter 3: Texas Legislature
 - September 27 – October 3
 - **Exam One will be available from 7:00 AM CT October 4 through 11:45 PM CT October 6.**
- MODULE TWO:
 - Chapter 4: Texas Governors
 - October 4 – October 10
 - Chapter 5: The Plural Executive & Bureaucracy in Texas
 - October 11 – October 17
 - Chapter 6: Texas Judicial System
 - October 18 – October 24
 - Chapter 7: Texas-Sized Justice
 - October 25 – October 31
 - **Exam Two will be available from 7:00 AM CT November 1 through 11:45 PM CT November 3.**
- MODULE THREE:
 - Chapter 8: Campaigns and Elections, Texas Style
 - November 1 – November 7
 - Chapter 9: Political Parties
 - November 8 – November 14
 - Chapter 10: Organized Interests
 - November 8 – November 21
 - **November 19: No Class**
 - **November 22 – November 28: Thanksgiving Holiday**
 - Chapter 13: Energy, Environment, Transportation, & Trade Policies: Transforming Texas
 - November 29 – December 5
 - Chapter 14: Social Policy: Education, Health, & Immigration
 - December 6 – December 12
 - **Exam Three will be available from 7:00 AM CT December 15 through 11:45 PM CT December 17.**
 - **Finals Week: Research Project due by 11:45 PM on December 14.**