



PSCI. 2306 08E

Location: BA 244

Time: TR 12:30p – 1:45p

Political Science 2306: Texas Government

Fall 2021

“Few will have the greatness to bend history itself, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” – Robert F. Kennedy

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Ayal K. Feinberg

Office Location: 148 Ferguson Social Sciences

Office Hours: TR 10:45a – 12:15p, W 10:45a – 12:15p, & By Appointment

University Email Address: Ayal.Feinberg@tamuc.edu

Communication Response Time: 48 Hours Maximum

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Texts:

Jason P. Casellas, Anthony Champagne, Edward J. Harpham. 2019. Governing Texas, 4th Edition. W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN: 978-0393680119

<https://wnorton.com/books/9780393680119>

***Any version or edition of the textbook is fine. PDF copies of the textbook and e-books are available for very little cost through multiple sources on the Internet.

Optional Texts:

Brandon J. Rottinghaus. 2018. Current Debates in the Lonestar State. 1st Edition. Oxford university Press. ISBN: 978-0190855086

<https://www.directtextbook.com/isbn/9780190855086>

Any additional course material and documents will be posted to D2L. All announcements related to the course, including changes to the due dates of assignments or exams, will be posted on D2L.

Course Description:

This course is a survey of the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in Texas. Topics considered include political culture, ideology, parties, institutions, and demography.

Student Learning Outcomes

By completing this course, you will be able to:

- 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.

Instructional Methods

This is a web-based university class that requires you engage with all assigned online materials. For this class, you will be required listen to lectures, participate in interactive simulations, and engage in lively discussions on the course website accessible through MyLeo. It is vitally important you complete all assigned reading for classes, and submit all assignments in a timely manner.

Student Responsibilities and Succeeding in this Course

First, define what success means to you. If you want to get an A, focus on doing well on every assignment and course component. If you want a B or a C for the course, there are some assignments that you may want to put more effort into than others.

Second, take good notes. Taking good notes starts when you begin your assigned reading. Don't wait to see what topics I cover during a chapter's lecture, as they will not necessarily be exhaustive. Review each chapter for key terms and concepts, and make sure you are familiar with them. Test yourself on defining these terms and concepts with a focus on being able to explain their importance to Texas government.

Third, get together with your peers to prepare for your exams through Zoom or another online meeting website. Form study groups and review reading quizzes with each other. This will not only help you to fill in possible gaps in your course notes, but discussing class topics with peers often leads to new insights on the materials. It can also lead to lifelong friendships.

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, engage with the course material. Engagement is strongly correlated with better performance on assignments and assessments as well as higher overall course grades. Simply put, do your best to participate in and complete every assignment this course. After all, you paid for it!

Grading and Assessment:

You are required to read the chapter(s) in your textbook associated with each topic being reviewed in the scheduled lecture. Course grading and assessment expectations will be discussed in greater detail below.

Major Course Assignments and Examinations:

Reading Quizzes:	15%
Chapter Discussions:	10%
Class Debates:	10%
Representative Letter:	15%
Exam 1:	25%
Exam 2:	25%

Reading Quizzes (15%):

During the semester, we will discuss at fourteen distinct topics, each associated with a specific chapter in the textbook. To gauge whether you are completing the assigned readings as well as comprehending the concepts and ideas within them, I will assign a reading quiz for you to complete after we finish exploring each topic in class. Reading quizzes for the chapters in each exam will be due before the associated exam takes place.

Each quiz will have no more than ten total multiple choice, true/false or short answer questions. There will be at least fourteen reading quizzes given during the semester, located on the course website. If you successfully complete all fourteen reading quizzes, you will earn two points on your final grade (essentially serving to drop at least your lowest quiz grade or use as extra credit). Consequently, under no circumstances will students be awarded a make-up reading quiz for failing to complete it before it is due. In total, your reading quizzes will make up 15% of your final grade. Be sure to notify me if you have any issues accessing the reading quizzes, which will be located in the “Reading Quizzes” tab on the course’s D2L page.

Chapter Discussion (10%):

After the completion of each lecture and associated chapter textbook reading, students will be asked to write a short response to a prompt related to the chapter’s concepts, share a question with the class that came about as a consequence of exploring the chapter’s concepts,

and/or respond to another student's discussion contribution. These discussion posts are designed to ensure that students can apply course reading to current issues.

Each contribution must be at least four sentences. Discussion posts will be graded as satisfactory or unsatisfactory. A satisfactory contribution meets the length requirements and engages with the appropriate concepts for the chapter and topic. An unsatisfactory contribution is one that does not meet the length requirement or does not engage with the relevant concepts for the chapter. Failing to submit a discussion contribution prior to the due date will also result in an unsatisfactory score.

Again, all required chapter discussions must be completed by their assigned due date in order for credit to be earned. It is best practice for students to engage in the chapter discussion assignments immediately following the completion of the corresponding textbook reading.

Class Debates (10%):

In order to facilitate engaging and substantive conversation around course content, I will host at least five in-class debates. Debates will not be announced in advance, and students will receive all material for the debate at the beginning of the class the debate will take place. To receive full credit for each debate, students will work in groups to cooperatively present their position to their peers. All debate prompts will be assigned randomly, meaning many students will be required to articulate positions they themselves do not hold. Following the debate, students will have to submit a summary recounting their experience and document the most successful arguments discussed in class.

Representative Letter (15%):

As a way to encourage civic engagement, this writing assignment requires you to develop a functional knowledge of a political issue that you care deeply about, analyze it, and then share your thoughts with an appropriate political representative or policymaker. Your assignment can be summarized as a 2-page single-spaced formal letter to a political representative or policymaker.

Details regarding this assignment, specifically a grading rubric, will be provided in an additional handout later in the semester. This rubric can also be found through the appropriate link in the course website on MyLeo.

In general, there are five-major steps you need to follow to successfully complete the assignment:

1. Find a subject you are very interested in learning about and where your contribution will matter. You must be motivated to learn more about this subject because you are going to write your representative letter on it.
2. Based on your chosen interest, find at least three scholarly sources discussing the politics or policy of your subject. These sources should come from academic publications such as journal articles or policy briefs from reputable think tanks (in general, not newspapers, cable media, or blogs).
3. Determine what state-level politician or policymaker is most appropriate to address in your representative letter. Write your letter to them.

4. Use some of your new knowledge and develop them into arguments. Insert these positions into your formal representative letter. Make sure your letter is unsealed, appropriately addressed, and stamped.
5. Turn in your letter to the instructor before the due date. Your letter will ultimately be mailed to the addressed government official after it is graded by your instructor.

Exams 1 & 2 (50%, 25% each):

Throughout the course, you will be given two exams. Each exam will consist of 50 multiple-choice, true-false, and/or short answer questions covering the material in your textbook readings as well as information from class presentations and discussions. Your reading quizzes should serve as an essential study guide for these tests. You will have the entire class on exam day to complete all 50 questions. These exams will be closed notes unless otherwise noted.

I will not offer any make-up exams in this course. If you are having trouble earning the exam scores you desire for the course, please take the time to meet with me during scheduled office hours to discuss approaches that will help you achieve the grade you wish to earn. Do not wait until the end of the course to address exam grade concerns. Students that meet with me through office hours regularly score higher than those students that do not.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by Texas A&M University-Commerce have a corresponding course shell in the D2L 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>

Access and Navigation

You will need your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course. 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 needs to have a backup method to deal with these inevitable problems. These methods might include the availability of a backup PC at home or work, the temporary use of a computer at a friend's home, the local library, office service companies, Starbucks, a TAMUC campus open computer lab, etc.

Technical Support

If you are having technical difficulty 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>

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events, such as student progress, may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced in advance.

Student Conduct

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the [Student Guidebook](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx>

Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette>

TAMUC Attendance

For more information about the attendance policy please visit the [Attendance](#) webpage and [Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01](#).

<http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx>

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/academic/13.99.99.R0.01.pdf>

Academic Integrity

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work. For more details and the definition of academic dishonesty see the following procedures:

[Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03](#)

Students with Disabilities – ADA Statement

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

Website: [Office of Student Disability Resources and Services](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/>

Campus Counseling Center

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

Nondiscrimination Notice

Texas A&M University-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.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

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 the [Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus](#) document and/or consult your event organizer.

Web url:

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf>

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

Reminder for Political Science Majors & Double Majors

All political science majors must complete and submit a graduating senior portfolio made up of course work. You should keep copies of your work from this class for potential submission. For more information, including the forms, guidelines and an instructional video on how to compile the portfolio, please see the "INFORMATION FOR SENIORS" link on the Department of Political Science webpage."

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

DATE	TOPIC	READING
Aug. 31 & Sep. 2	Course Introduction	None
Sep. 7 & Sep. 9	The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas	Chapter 1
Sep. 14 & Sep. 16	The Texas Constitution	Chapter 2
Sep. 21 & Sep. 23	Texas in the Federal System	Chapter 3
Sep. 28 & Sep. 30	Political Parties	Chapter 4
Oct. 5	Campaigns and Elections	Chapter 5
Oct. 7	Interest Groups and Lobbying	Chapter 6
Oct. 12 & Oct. 14	The Legislature	Chapter 7
Oct. 19	Exam 1	Review
Oct. 21 & Oct. 26	The Executive Branch	Chapter 8
Oct. 28 & Nov. 2	The Judiciary	Chapter 9
Nov. 4	Local Government	Chapter 10
Nov. 9	Public Finance	Chapter 11
Nov. 11	Public Policy	Chapter 12
Nov. 16 & Nov. 18	Crime, Corrections, and Public Safety	Chapters 13
Nov. 23	Building the Future: Public Policies for a Changing Texas	Chapters 14
Dec. 2	Exam 2	Review

***Representative Letter due December 3rd, 2021