



PSCI-2306-80E, PSCI-2306-83E, Texas Government

COURSE SYLLABUS: Spring 2025

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Mr. Jacob Pouttu
Office Location: Dallas Campus 2054
Office Hours: 12:30-1:00 pm
University Email Address: jacob.pouttu@tamuc.edu
Preferred Form of Communication: **Email**
Communication Response Time: 48 hours or less

COURSE INFORMATION

Textbook Information

Required Book Seago, Kris. 2020. Texas Government 2.0. Creative Commons. Free and available online as an electronic resource: <https://www.oercommons.org/courseware/8453>.

Course Description

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
- Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
- Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in state governments.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of state government.
- Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in state politics.
- Analyze the state and local election process and the state's role in federal elections.
- Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of local governments.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Critical Thinking: Students will be able to differentiate between fact and opinion.
- Communication: Student communication will be clear, purposeful, and make appropriate use of

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- evidence, data and technology as applicable. In written, oral, and/or visual communication
- East Texas A&M students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion,
- with an evident message and organizational structure.
- Personal Responsibility: Students will understand and practice academic honesty.
- Social Responsibility: Students will demonstrate an understanding of societal and/or civic issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

- Students will need to be familiar with the University learning management system,
- (myLeo Online or D2L), know how to use a personal computer, navigate the World Wide
- Web/Internet, and use basic word processing software such as Microsoft Word and
- Power Point. Students will also be introduced to the Adobe Acrobat Suite for the
- purposes of completing the Public Policy Assignment.

Instructional Methods

The following methods of instruction will be utilized for this course.

- Assigned readings from the required textbook.
- Lectures and discussions during assigned meeting times.
- Weekly course work on myLeo Online.
- Periodic outside readings

Student Responsibilities or Tips for Success in the Course

- All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.
- All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.
- Students are expected to regularly check the course site for announcements and updates.
- Students are expected to complete all course readings for each section of the course.
- During class, students are expected to turn off and put away all electronic devices such as laptops, cell phones, tablets, iPods/iPads, audio and video recording devices, etc. The only exception is for students who have accommodation letters allowing them to use such devices.
- Students are expected to review any supplementary materials that the instructor provides, such as web links, news stories, etc.
- Students are expected to attend class regularly. Consistent with University policies and procedures, students who miss five class meetings or more will be administratively dropped from the class. Excused absences will only be granted for documented official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.
- Students are expected to complete all course assessments.

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- Students are expected to exhibit respect toward their fellow classmates and the instructor. This includes treating everyone with courtesy and esteem in all correspondence for the course. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.
- Students are expected to avoid committing academic dishonesty, consistent with East Texas A&M rules and policies. 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 or taking exams), and abuse (destruction, defacing, or removal) of resource material. For this course, academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, collusion and/or falsifying academic work. In particular, any student who passes off work as their own that was actually written by someone or something (artificial intelligence) else, will be deemed to have committed plagiarism. This holds true whether material comes from the textbook, another publication, an Internet source, or another student. Any act of academic dishonesty on any assessment will result in a zero for that assignment and the offending students may be referred to the proper campus office for potential disciplinary actions.
- Students are expected to comply with all myLeo Online/D2L technical requirements in terms of training, computer access, & Internet access.

GRADING

Final grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

- A = 90%-100%
- B = 80%-89%
- C = 70%-79%
- D = 60%-69%
- F = 59% or Below

Weights of the assessments in the calculation of the final letter grade.

Attendance	5%
Content Quizzes	5%
Media Analyses	15%
Midterm Exam	25%
Advocacy Project	25%
Final Exam	25%
TOTAL	100%

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Assessments

Attendance:

I will take attendance in this course. Students are expected to attend class regularly. Consistent with University policies and procedures, students who miss five class meetings or more will be administratively dropped from the class. Excused absences will only be granted for documented official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.

Content Quizzes:

Students will complete content quizzes every couple of weeks to assess understanding of course material. These assessments are in two parts: a pre-quiz and a post-quiz. The pre-quiz will be assigned before that section's content is taught to set a baseline of knowledge. These pre-quizzes will always be completion grade only, meaning the student will score a 100 for completion, regardless of how well they perform on the questions. The post-quiz will be assigned after going through the content and will be a normal grade, but the student may take the quiz up to 2 times with their best score being recorded.

See course schedule for list of due dates.

Media Analyses:

Many political ideas are communicated in everyday life through language and media. Accordingly, you will analyze a piece of media content (e.g. video, text, pictures, memes) based on (3) criteria: (1) what is the main argument expressed in the content? (2) What evidence was used to make the case? And (3) Do you agree with this argument? (Explain why or why not). I will provide a playlist that includes videos the students may watch, or they may select their own if they can make the case that it includes a political argument!

There will be two media analyses total. The due dates are listed in the class schedule and will be submitted online via D2L.

- *Media Analysis #1 Due 2/21 at 11:59pm*
- *Media Analysis #2 Due 4/18 at 11:59pm*

Midterm Exam:

There will be a midterm exam in this course, which will assess the student's understanding of all material leading up to that point.

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Test review: I do not believe exams should be overly stressful, so I have devised a system that will ensure you learn the material and do not have to have unneeded test anxiety. The system is as follows:

I will open up a shorter version of the exam that selects questions randomly from a test bank. What you should do is take the shortened exam multiple times to allow the law of averages to feed you all the questions that may show up. For example, if you take the review exam 4 times and you score a 66, 72, 78, and 80, you could reasonably expect to make a B on the exam. You may do the review an unlimited number of times before the exam formally opens, but completion of the review (even once) will earn you 5 extra points on the exam. Please take advantage of this! I will post the review in the week leading up to the exam week.

Midterm Exam due 3/7 at 11:59pm.

Advocacy Project:

Part 1. Pick an issue you care about that aligns with your own personal interests/ambitions/goals.

- e.g. “I want to be a nurse and an issue that we have to deal with in our profession is burn-out/depression/or even self-harm that results from Doctors and nurses being worked too hard, especially post-COVID”.
- “I am interested in teaching, and I worry about future pay given the amount of work and stress required”.
- “I am not sure I want to go to college, but I do not have any options for a career without a degree”.

Part 2. Determine how your interests, passions, or talents can be used to help those who are dealing with the issue defined in question #1.

- This is a key step that only you can define because it is what YOU bring to the table that will make you effective. But a helpful tip to consider is how you could lend a hand in a voluntary capacity).

Part 3. Reach out to at least (3) people for “advice” on how to learn more about the issue given your interests and experiences.

- This is a tactic — People are much more willing to give you advice than give you a job or some big favor, especially when they don’t know who you are!
- I’ll go over how to write a good email — don’t just shoot one off without thinking.
- If you don’t get a response, follow up. If still no reply, send another email to a different person.

Part 4. Come up with a course of action to launch an effort to solve this problem.

- This will be a mini-policy proposal from the perspective of a concerned citizen or interest group trying to effect change. This includes, but is not limited to, media campaigns, social events, fundraisers, etc.
- Structure this portion of the project in the following way:
 - What is the problem you are trying to solve?
 - What are ways you as an individual could help solve this problem?

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- What is your course of action to make this happen?

Part 5. After doing all this, tell me how you can take this experience and apply it towards your own professional goals

- Did you make any contacts?
- What did you learn from them?
- How does this put you “ahead” of those in your peer group that would not have this experience?

Simply answer these questions/steps. The text will write itself if you are deliberate and care about what you’re doing. It is much more important that you complete the tasks than how much you write. AKA there is no word count.

These (5) Steps make up a total of 25% of your final grade (5% per step). This is a HUGE assignment. You must complete all steps for full credit, and I will not be lenient on this requirement. Having said that, I will allow partial credit for partial completion. e.g. If you do not send that email (step 3) and do not go to an event (step 4), you will not earn credit for questions (3) and (4), but you could still answer the others and get credit for those.

For your own benefit, these questions/steps will be spaced out throughout the entire semester, with due dates along the way for each one (scroll down for due dates).

Final Exam:

There will be a final exam in this course, which will be cumulative. The students will have one week to complete the exam online via D2L. Exams will open on that Monday at 12am and will close the following Friday at 11:59pm.

Test review: I do not believe exams should be overly stressful, so I have devised a system that will ensure you learn the material and do not have to have unneeded test anxiety. The system is as follows:

I will open up a shorter version of the exam that selects questions randomly from a test bank. What you should do is take the shortened exam multiple times to allow the law of averages to feed you all the questions that may show up. For example, if you take the review exam 4 times and you score a 66, 72, 78, and 80, you could reasonably expect to make a B on the exam. You may do the review an unlimited number of times before the exam formally opens, but completion of the review (even once) will earn you 5 extra points on the exam. Please take advantage of this! I will post the review in the week leading up to the exam week.

The Final Exam date is TBA.

Extra Credit:

The following extra credit assignments will be offered throughout the semester, with others offered at my discretion. Each extra credit assignment will count for one additional point on your

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final grade! These assignments have no due date (before the last day of the regular semester) and will be posted on D2L.

1. “Political Compass” Assignment
2. “Democracy Pros and Cons” Assignment
3. “Is the Constitution Outdated?”
4. “The Storm” Essay
5. “Open Secrets” Assignment

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

LMS

All course sections offered by East Texas A&M 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

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universalmenu

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.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

If you have any questions or are having difficulties with the course material, please contact your Instructor.

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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>

Interaction with Instructor Statement

COURSE AND UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

Course Specific 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.

University Specific Procedures

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.

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/documents/studentGuidebook.pdf>.

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 Procedures 13.99.99.R0.01](#)

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

Academic Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M 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](#)

[Undergraduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf>

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Graduate Students Academic Integrity Policy and Form

[Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty Form](#)

<https://inside.tamuc.edu/aboutus/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10.pdf>

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

East Texas A&M

Velma K. Waters Library Rm 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

Website: [Student Disability Services](#)

<https://www.tamuc.edu/student-disability-services/>

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M 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 East Texas A&M 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 East Texas A&M 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>

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Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses. Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, 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

Mental Health and Well-Being

The university aims to provide students with essential knowledge and tools to understand and support mental health. As part of our commitment to your well-being, we offer access to Telus Health, a service available 24/7/365 via chat, phone, or webinar. Scan the QR code to download the app and explore the resources available to you for guidance and support whenever you need it.



<http://telusproduction.com/app/5108.html>

AI use policy

East Texas A&M acknowledges that there are legitimate uses of Artificial Intelligence, ChatBots, or other software that has the capacity to generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the instructor of the course. Given that, this course will allow the use of generative AI, given the following constraints:

1. **Any use of such software must be documented.** Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).
2. Generative AI is acceptable only to help gather information, the structuring of a writing assignment, and to answer specific questions students may have before or during the completion of an assignment.
3. Generative AI is in no way acceptable if it is used to generate an opinion or subjective conclusion solicited by the instructor in order to complete an assignment. *e.g. "According to ChatGPT, abortion is morally wrong"; "According to ChatGPT, the second amendment does not permit personal possession of automatic weapons"; etc.*
4. I will create specific parameters for writing assignments that require the use of generative AI while prohibiting its use in other ways. This will be clearly defined and explained

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before the assignment is administered and will be reflected in the rubric used for the grading of the assignment.

Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided the student should assume that the use of such software is disallowed.

In any case, students are fully responsible for the content of any assignment they submit, regardless of whether they used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

13.99.99.R0.03 Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty

13.99.99.R0.10 Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty

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COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Week (Date)	Unit	Topic	Important Due Dates
1 (1/13-1/17)	1	Political Culture of Texas	
2 (1/20-1/24)	2	The Texas Constitution	Content Quiz due 1/24 at 11:59 pm via D2L
3 (1/27-1-31)	2	Texas in the Federal System	Advocacy Project Part 1 due 1/31 at 11:59 pm via D2L
4 (2/3-2/7)	9	Political Parties	Content Quiz due 2/7 at 11:59 pm via D2L
5 (2/10-2/14)	8	Campaigns and Elections	Advocacy Project Part 2 due 2/14 at 11:59 pm via D2L
6 (2/17-2/21)	10	Interest Groups	Media Analysis #1 Due 2/21 at 11:59 pm via D2L
7 (2/24-2/28)		Prepare for Midterm Exam	
8 (3/3-3/7)		Midterm Exam	Midterm Exam due 3/7 at 11:59 pm via D2L

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9 (3/10-3/14)		Spring Break!!!	
10 (3/17-3/21)	3	Congress	Content Quiz due 3/21 at 11:59 pm via D2L
11 (3/24-3/28)	4	The Executive Branch	Advocacy Project Part 3 due 3/28 at 11:59 pm via D2L
12 (3/31-4/4)	5	The Courts	Content Quiz due 4/4 at 11:59 pm via D2L
13 (4/7-4/11)	6	Local Government	Advocacy Project Part 4 due 4/11 at 11:59 pm via D2L
14 (4/14-4/18)	11	Public Policy in Texas	Media Analysis #2 due 4/18 at 11:59 pm via D2L
15 (4/21-4/25)		Prepare for Final Exam	
16 (4/28-5/2)		Final Exam	Final Exam time TBA Advocacy Project Part 5 Due 5/2 at 11:59 pm via D2L

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