Texas Government

PSCI 2306
81E, 8AE, & 8WE
Spring 2026
Room #: 848 & 849

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Office: by appointment
Office hours: by appointment

Course Information

Textbook(s):

Open Education Resources: [Texas Government 2.0 | OER Commons](#)

Texas Government (2025) by Teas, Jeffries, Shomaker, Watson, & Gilmar: (uploaded to D2L)

Additional readings may be supplied on the web or in class.

Course Description
This course is a survey of the underlying ideas, principles, and participatory practices of constitutional government in the United States and Texas. Topics considered include civil liberties and civil rights, constitutionalism, federalism, institutions, ideology, pluralism, political culture and socialization, political parties and interest groups, public opinion, republicanism, and voting and electoral politics.

The specific purpose of this course is to provide you with a working knowledge of the important components and processes of both the United States and Texas governments. My goals for this course are twofold. First, I seek to provide you with a strong factual background on important political institutions and processes at both the national and state level of government. A basic working knowledge of government is important for instrumental reasons (your academic achievement) as well as for intrinsic reasons (being a good citizen). My second goal is to introduce you to the "scientific" side of political science. Notably, I want you to understand how political scientists seek to develop and test theories of the principles of American political system and political behavior and events. Your textbook does a wonderful job of developing a theoretical frame with which we can use to think about politics in a focused manner. Ultimately, I seek to provide you with the tools to use as both citizens and scholars.

Student Learning Outcomes
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.

The following content oriented learning objectives will also be achieved:
1. Explain the origin and development of constitutional democracy in the United States.

2. Demonstrate knowledge of the federal system.
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in the political system.
6. Analyze the election process.
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues and policies in U.S. politics.

Course Policies and Procedures

All students are expected to comply with the following requirements.

Classroom Civility
Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment which is conducive to learning. In order to assure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from using electronic devices, challenging instructor's authority, eating or drinking in class, coming in late or leaving early, making offensive remarks, reading newspapers, sleeping or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class. No student will be allowed to "dominate" any class period.

Electronic Devices
No personal electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones, smartphones, iPads, iPods, mp3 players, and any kind) should not be present during class. Also tape recorders, camera and video phones, and all other visual and auditory recording or retention devices, are strictly prohibited in this class. Please do not bring or use those devices.

Plagiarism
Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism occurs when a student purposefully or unintentionally takes information directly from a source without proper citation. For example, forgetting to cite an author and page number with a quote is plagiarism, as is direct copying and pasting from a website. Plagiarism will result in an F for the course and notification to the university. If a student needs additional assistance, please consult me during my office hours.

AI (ChatGPT) Use in Course

The use of generative AI (Artificial intelligence) or ChatGPT is prohibited in this course, resulting in the lowest grades.

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.

Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).

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

Technology Requirements

LMS
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

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

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

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

System Maintenance
Please note that on the 4th Sunday of each month there will be System Maintenance which means the system will not be available 12 pm-6 am CST.

It is very important to go to this online course 4-5 times each week to:

1. Read new announcements
2. Check your university email

3. Review activities and assignments
4. Check the schedule of activities and assignments
5. Communicate as needed with your instructor and class members.

Submitting Assignments
You are responsible for attaching the correct assignment to the correct submission folder. When you submit your assignment, you should always click on the submitted file(s) to make sure the assignment is there. You can tell if it is attached by clicking on the submitted file(s) and actually open and view the document. Submitting an incorrect document, a blank document, or no document is counted as failure to complete the assignment on time.

Each assignment or work should be done in MS-Word, including your name in the content. Also make your computer file name, when adding your file(s) in the submission folder, using your last name and a specific assignment (i.e., Choi Activity1.docx).

Announcements
Announcements are posted often in the course. When you go to the course, you should first read any announcements that have been posted since you were last in the class.

Email Correspondence
Email from me is sent to your University email account. It is important to go to MyLeo mail regularly to check for messages.

If you need to contact me, email is the best way to reach me. Please send your message with your first and last name so I know who you are. Unless otherwise announced, I will do my best to respond within 48 hours except weekends.

University Procedures/Policies

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. *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. For more information on this subject, please see the Student Guidebook.

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

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/undergraduates/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateAcademicDishonesty.pdf

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/13students/graduate/13.99.99.R0.10GraduateStudentAcademicDishonesty.pdf

ADA Statement

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
Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

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.

The 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.

University's Pandemic Response
A&M-Commerce recommends the use of face-coverings in all instructional and research classrooms/laboratories.

"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."

Grading and Evaluation

Grading
The final grade will be determined on the following basis:

Requirement	Percentage
Attendance	10%
Current Event Assignments	30%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%
Exam 3	20%

Grading Scale

Standard	Grade	Points
Excellent	A	100-90
Good	B	89.9-80
Average	C	79.9-70
Below Average	D	69.9-60
Unacceptable	F	59.9-0

Late Work
No late work accepted and work cannot be made up. Technical difficulties of the student's equipment or internet provider are not excused. When such difficulties occur, students are expected to locate an alternative source for submitting assignments, e.g., neighbor, workplace, public library, etc. Technical difficulties caused by the University or D2L can be excused provided the student obtains documentation from technical support. Students should always have a back-up in mind for unexpected glitches in technology.

However, if you cannot submit your work on time due to the pandemic, contact the instructor as soon as you can. The acceptance of late work is at the discretion of the instructor and a student must include verifiable justification.

Attendance
"Eighty five percent of success is merely showing up."   — Woody Allen —
Attendance is mandatory. Class attendance is crucial to your understanding of the concepts, issues, processes and not all of them will be covered in the assigned texts. Attendance is part of the course experience the same as lectures, texts, exams, and other course elements. Attending class can only help your grade so I strongly suggest you show up to class on a regular class.

Class attendance counts 10% toward your final grade. Roll will be taken regularly. Repeated absence will be detrimental to your final grade, as will repeated tardiness, which is disruptive to your classmates. Students sleeping, talking, text messaging or otherwise not paying attention in class will be marked absent. Students who arrive late or leave early will be counted as absences. If you are late for two class meetings, it will be counted as one absence.

Consistent with University policies and procedures, **<u>students who are absent from 4 class meetings will be administratively dropped from the class</u>**. There will be no "excused" absences aside for official university activities or documented medical issues. Students are required to provide documentation by the next class meeting to receive an excused absence.

Current Event Assignments
At the end of each session, students will be assigned to write a two-page double-spaced paper regarding a current event that is happening in the session discussed. For example, during a class session in Congress, students are required to write their current events assignment on a current event regarding congress. This can be a paper on a bill congress has passed or something controversial a congressperson has done. The students must address three points about the current event they have chosen. First, what is the current event; second, what are their opinions on the current event; and finally, what questions or solutions would they have regarding the current event. Rather if it is MLA, APA, or APSA format, citations and a reference page are expected! Points will be deducted without this. There will be nine current event assignments that are as follows:

Texas Constitution: Feb. 2
Local Government: Feb. 9
Texas Legislature: Feb. 23
Texas Executive: Mar. 4
Texas Courts: Mar. 23
Political Parties: Apr. 1
Elections: Apr. 8
Interest Groups: Apr. 15
Public Safey: Apr. 29

Exams
Students will take three exams that feature 50 multiple choice questions in each exam. 60 minutes are allotted for exam.

Exam Times and Dates
Exams will be taken online and are scheduled on the dates listed below. The exam will begin at **11:30 PM** and will close 48 hours later at **11:59 PM**.

Exam #1
    Opens Feb. 11
    Due Feb. 13

Covers chs. 1, 3, & 10

Exam #2
Opens Mar. 25
Due Mar. 27
Covers chs. 7, 8, & 9

Exam #3
Opens May 4
Due May 8
Covers chs. 4, 5, 6, 11, & 12

Technical Issues: Students will take exams (exams #1-3) via 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 taken once. Once the exam has begun, the allotted time will begin counting down and students will not be able to "pause" or put the exam time on hold, even if they disconnect from the course site or exam. Students should save their answers frequently by clicking on the "Save" or "Save All Responses" button. Students should not click the "Submit Quiz" button until they have completed the exam as it will not be possible to re-enter the exam once the test has been submitted. Students who encounter technical problems as a result of failing to comply with these guidelines will not be given an opportunity to re-take or re-access an exam. Any technical problems should be immediately referred to the help desk.

Make Up Exams
If a student misses an exam, that student will receive a grade of 0 for the exam. Make-up exams will only be granted at the discretion of the instructor. Any request for a make-up exam must be made in writing and include documentation explaining why the absence 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 during that time period. Legitimate reasons may include illness severe enough to require professional treatment, death in the immediate family, participation in University activities, and/or legal obligations. No makeup exam will be given for the last (final) exam. Technical problems with accessing the course will not be considered a valid excuse for missing an exam unless it can be shown that the problem is the fault of the D2L platform.

Course Schedule

Students are responsible for reading assigned chapters before the class covers them. This is the anticipated course schedule, but it may be subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses.

Jan. 12
Introduction, Overview, and Organizational Meeting

Jan. 14 - 21
The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas
(Texas Government: Chapter 1)

Jan. 19
MLK Day Holiday (no class)

Jan. 26 – Feb. 2
The Texas Constitution

(Texas Government: Chapter 3)
Current Event Due: Feb. 2

Feb. 4 – 9
Local Government
(Texas Government: Chapter 10)
Current Event Due: Feb. 9

Feb. 11
Exam 1

Feb. 16 – 23
Texas State Legislature
(Texas Government: Chapter 7)
Current Event Due: Feb. 23

Feb. 25 – Mar. 4
Texas Executive Branch
(Texas Government: Chapter 8)
Current Event Due: Mar. 4

Mar. 2
Texas Independence Day (we still have class that day!)

Mar 9 – 13
Spring Break (no class)

Mar. 16 – 23
Texas Courts
(Texas Government: Chapter 9)
Current Event Due: Mar. 23

Mar. 25
Exam 2

Mar. 30 – Apr. 1
Political Parties
(Texas Government: Chapter 4)
Current Event Due: Apr. 1

Apr. 4 – 8
Elections
(Texas Government: Chapter 5)
Current Event Due: Apr. 8

Apr. 13 – 15
Interest Groups & Lobbying
(Texas Government: Chapter 6)
Current Event Due: Apr. 15

Apr. 27 – 29
Crime, Corrections, & Public Safety
(Texas Government: Chapters 11 & 12)
Current Event Due: Apr. 29

May 4
Exam 3