

COURSE SYLLABUS
Texas Government HONORS
PSCI 2306.04H (80932)
FALL 2026
AUGUST 20 through DECEMBER 10, 2026
Tuesday/Thursday 12:30pm-1:45pm
Location: Ferguson Social Science Building, Room 312

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Dr. Robert G. Rodríguez
Professor, Political Science
Interim Associate Department Head, Department of Social Sciences
Coordinator, Sports Media Studies Major

Office Location: **Ferguson Social Science Building, Room 149**

Office Hours:

Tu/Th 11:45am-12:30pm and 3:15pm-5:00pm (please send me an email in advance if you would like to meet at a specific time/date); **or by appointment** (in-person or zoom).
The BEST way to contact me is via email.

Office Phone: **903-468-3094**, however, the best way to contact me is by email.

University Email Address: **robert.rodriguez@etamu.edu**

Check this Syllabus to see if your question is answered FIRST.

Preferred Form of Communication: Please send me an email if you would like to contact me.

****CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS DAILY****

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at any time at the professor's discretion.

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Book

There is **ONE** required book for this course. You may purchase the e-book, loose leaf or paperback version of the book—this is completely up to you. (The e-book will avoid potentially lengthy delivery times and is also the least expensive option.) However, make sure to purchase the CORRECT EDITION of the book (**7th edition**):

GOVERNING TEXAS

Authors: CHAMPAGNE, HARPHAM, CASELLAS

Edition: 7TH

Published Date: 2025

ISBN (for digital version of book): 978-1-324-08571-3

Publisher: NORTON

Course Description:

This Honors 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.

Note: You will NOT be told what to think in this course. Rather, you will be provided with the tools to make your own assessments about political issues.

Honors Format

PowerPoint Lectures: Video Lectures and PowerPoint slides will be available online in our course shell. You will be expected to read the assigned chapters of the textbook, watch the video lectures and view the relevant PowerPoint slides OUTSIDE OF SCHEDULED CLASS TIME.

Classroom Discussions: Each class session will feature a discussion of selected editorials and articles, mostly -but not exclusively- from *The Dallas Morning News* focusing on current events in Texas politics. The selected reading materials will be provided to students just prior to each discussion, and the content cannot be determined in advance, as the editorials/articles will be published in the days leading up to each class discussion. We may occasionally discuss significant national and international events as they occur during the course of the semester, and discuss how these events may impact Texas. We may also host guest speakers, either in-person or via zoom. There will be assigned videos on Texas politics to watch on D2L during specified dates.

Your **attendance and participation** in class discussions are mandatory and essential to your success in this course. Attendance will be taken during each class session and **will count toward your grade, as will your participation**. These discussions will NOT be recorded nor streaming online. **ALL EXAMS AND WRITING ASSIGNMENTS will take place in-person** in the classroom.

Please be aware that in order to attend class discussions, you MUST adhere to ALL of the following rules:

1. **Electronic devices** (such as cell phones, laptops, ipads, earbuds, smartwatches, etc.) of any kind are **NEVER** permitted during class, unless specified for a specific purpose by your professor. You will be directed to stop using these items and/or leave the classroom immediately if you have an electronic device visible.
2. **Disruptions of any kind** (as determined by your professor, such as side-conversations and ANY display of disrespect to anyone) are absolutely prohibited in a university classroom. You will be directed to cease this type of activity and/or leave the classroom immediately if you disrupt class in any way. Persistent disruptions will be reported to the Dean of Students office for further action and you will be prohibited from attending class until the Dean of Students has authorized your return.
3. **Be on time**. The class door will be closed and locked 5 minutes after class begins, and will not be opened for anyone until class is dismissed. If you know you will be arriving late or need to leave class early for any reason, you must inform your professor before class begins.
4. **Follow the 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 direct students who exhibit inappropriate behavior to leave the classroom 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 dropped from the class, and/or a review by an appropriate university disciplinary agency. The Code of Student Conduct is described in detail in the Student Guidebook: http://www.tamuc.edu/student_guidebook/Student_Guidebook.pdf

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

This course is divided into TWO units. There will be ONE **short quiz**, TWO **in-class writing assignments**, a **mid-term** covering Unit 1 and a **second exam** given during finals week that only covers Unit 2. In addition, you will produce a **poster presentation** that will be displayed at a symposium at the end of the semester. The following assignments are required by the Honors College: TWO Reflection assignments; ONE NACE Competency Artifact Submission. Note: There is not a comprehensive final exam in this course.

- **Unit 1: The Political Culture, People and Economy of Texas; The Texas Constitution; Texas in the Federal System; Political Parties (AUGUST 20-OCTOBER 6)**
 - *Student Statement of Personal Responsibility DUE on D2L ONLY by **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 (*ONLINE*)***
 - *Quiz, **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10 (in-person)***
 - *In-Class Writing Assignment #1, **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17 (in-person)***
 - *EXAM covering Unit 1, **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6 (in-person)***
 - *Submit Honors College Reflection Assignments #1 and #2, **DUE DATE TBA (*ONLINE*)***
- **FALL BREAK: No Class (THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8)**
- **Unit 2: Campaigns and Elections; The Legislature; The Judiciary (OCTOBER 13-DECEMBER 3)**
 - *Writing Assignment #2 **THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29 (in-person)***
 - *POSTER PRESENTATION Symposium **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3 (in-person)***
 - *Submit Honors College NACE Artifact on D2L, **DUE DATE TBA (*ONLINE*)***
- **Finals Week-Exam 2 (DECEMBER 10)**
 - *Exam 2, covering ONLY Unit 2, **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 at 10:30am (Note Time, In-Person)***

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade will be comprised of:

- A) TWO in-class Writing Assignments (worth 10% each, 20% total)**
- B) One in-person Quiz (worth 3%)**
- C) Two in-person Exams (worth 18% each, 36% total)**
- D) Poster Presentation (worth 24%)**
- E) Attendance (worth 10%)**
- F) Participation (worth 3%)**
- G) Honors College Assignments (Reflection Assignment #1 1%; Reflection Assignment #2 1%; NACE Artifact Submission on D2L 2%; all pass/fail)**
- H) Your submitted Student Statement of Personal Responsibility (1% Extra Credit-- IF submitted to me by the deadline).**

Each element of your grade is described below.

A) Writing Assignments: You will have **TWO** required writing assignments that are worth **10%** each (or **20%** of your total grade). These writing assignments will address topics in each unit. Detailed instructions on how to complete the writing assignment will be provided to the class. Your responses will be written directly on the assignment sheets (no blue book, nor scantron). **The policies for missing class on the dates of the writing assignment are the same as the missed exam policies detailed in Part C.**

IN-CLASS WRITING ASSIGNMENT DATES:

- **SEPTEMBER 17**
- **OCTOBER 29**

B) Quiz: You will have ONE quiz in class on **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10**. This quiz will be graded and is worth **3%** of your grade in this course. The purpose of this quiz is to prepare you for Exam 1. **Note: If you are absent on the day of this quiz, the same policy for missed exams will apply.** Your responses will be written directly on the quiz (no blue book, nor scantron).

QUIZ DATE:

- **SEPTEMBER 10**

C) Examinations: In this course, **all students are required to take TWO IN-PERSON exams**, each of which will consist of definitions and short essays. You will write your answers directly on the exam (no blue book, nor scantron) and will have the entire class period to complete each exam. Together, these exams will comprise **36%** of your grade (each exam is worth 18%). The exams are NOT comprehensive.

If you do not complete an exam during the designated class session, you will receive 0% for that exam.

If you have a **legitimate reason** for not completing an exam during the designated class session (e.g. severe illness or injury *requiring professional medical care*, emergencies in your *immediate* family, participation in *official* university activities, legal obligations) **AND** you have **supporting documentation** for your inability to take the exam, then you may **request** taking a **make-up exam that will take place during the first Tuesday following the exam date immediately before or after class**. Requests for make-up exams **MUST** be made either in advance of the exam date (for example, if missing class to participate in a university activity) **OR** within 72 hours of missing an exam if the absence was caused by a legitimate unexpected reason.

****NOTE: Forgetting to take an exam is NOT a legitimate reason for missing an exam and you will not be allowed to make it up.****

Requests for taking the make-up exam must be **submitted in writing VIA EMAIL and include SCANNED documentation** explaining and substantiating why your inability to take the exam during the designated class session was legitimate. An approval to allow you to take a make-up exam **will be based solely upon the professor's evaluation of your request and any supporting documentation.**

EXAM DATES:

- **UNIT 1 Exam OCTOBER 6**
- **UNIT 2 Exam DECEMBER 10**

D) Poster Presentation: You will be assigned to create a poster presentation focusing on a topic of your choice (with professor approval) on Texas Government (politics, policy, history, etc.). This assignment is an **INDIVIDUAL** project, not a group project. You will be provided with detailed instructions after Spring Break, and **MUST** follow the provided instructions and format to successfully complete this assignment. You will present your poster at a research symposium that will be held during our class time on **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3**, Location TBA. The research symposium will be held on-campus and will open to the entire university community. Your poster presentation is worth **24%** of your grade in this course.

POSTER PRESENTATION DUE DATE

- **DECEMBER 3, Location TBA**

E) Attendance: 10% of your grade is based on your class attendance. Students are required to attend class and attendance will be taken at each class session. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they have signed in. Arriving late and/or leaving early will negatively impact your attendance grade. *Attendance is critical, discussions are irreplaceable, and course sessions cannot be "made up."* ***I will not be managing any excuses for absences.*** It is not necessary to provide me with any excuses for absences (unless you are absent during an examination or writing assignment-read previous section.)

You can miss up to TWO class sessions without penalty for any reason. More than three absences will result in a reduction in your grade.

The attendance grade scale appears below:

- 0 absences = you will get a bonus of 2% added to your grade
- 1-2 absences= no penalty
- 3 absences= -2% from your grade
- 4 absences= -3% from your grade
- 5 absences= -4% from your grade
- 6 absences= -5% from your grade
- 7 absences= -6% from your grade
- 8 absences= -7% from your grade
- 9 absences= -8% from your grade
- 10 absences= -9% from your grade
- 11 or more absences= -10% from your grade

F) Participation: 3% Your participation in this class is worth up to **3%** of your grade.

Your contributions to the class discussions are essential for your success and will make class sessions more interesting. Positive participation includes responding to my questions, asking your own questions, and contributing to class discussions. All of these activities will positively impact your participation grade.

Negative participation includes: sleeping in class, side-talk with your neighbors, coming to class late, and any other class disruptions-any of these activities will negatively impact your participation grade, even if you contribute to class discussions. If you use personal electronic devices in class that will result in a pop quiz for the entire class and your removal from the classroom, and it will negatively impact your participation grade. Also, if you misbehave in class or disrupt class in any way you may be directed to leave the classroom and your participation grade will be negatively impacted.

Your participation grade will be calculated as follows:

Almost Always/Always Contributes to Class Discussions:	3%
Often Contributes to Class Discussions:	2%
Rarely/Sometimes Contributes to Class Discussions:	1%
Never Contributes to Class Discussions:	0%

G) HONORS COLLEGE REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS: 4% Students in the Honors College are required to submit the following assignments for a pass/fail grade in this course: Reflection Assignment #1, which is worth 1% of your grade; Reflection Assignment #2 also worth 1% of your grade; and NACE Artifact Submission on D2L (Images of your Poster Presentation), which is worth 2% of your grade. The Honors College Associate Dean will review your submissions. Students who are enrolled in this

course -but are not in the Honors College- are only required to submit images of your poster on D2L and will automatically receive credit for the Reflection Assignments.

Honors College Required Assignments DUE DATES:

- **Reflection Assignments #1 and #2: March 6 ONLINE**
- **NACE Artifact on D2L: May 1 ONLINE**

H) STUDENT STATEMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY:

YOU MUST SUBMIT A STATEMENT ON D2L ACKNOWLEDGING YOU HAVE READ AND AGREE TO THE FOLLOWING *STUDENT STATEMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY* BY **THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3 by 11:59 p.m.** This is a requirement to remain enrolled in this course and **1% extra credit** will be added to your total grade in this course **IF** you submit it to me by the deadline.

*****DO NOT EMAIL YOUR STATEMENT TO ME- IT WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. I WILL PROVIDE INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CLASS ON HOW TO SUBMIT A FILE ON D2L *****

Statement: I have read the syllabus in its entirety, and understand the guidelines and agree to the policies detailed therein as a condition of being enrolled in this course. I understand my obligation to adhere to these guidelines and policies in this course, and that failure to do so may result in serious consequences, including (but not limited to) being dropped from the course, and/or receiving a grade of "F" in the course.

STUDENT STATEMENT OF PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY DUE DATE:

- **SEPTEMBER 3, by 11:59pm ONLINE**

Grading

Your grade in this course will be determined by the following scale and criteria:

Writing Assignment 1:	<u>10%</u>
Writing Assignment 2:	<u>10%</u>
Quiz:	3%
Exam 1:	18%
Exam 2:	18%
Attendance:	10%
Participation:	3%
Poster Presentation:	24%
Honors College Assn. :	<u>4%</u>
TOTAL:	100%

Submit Statement of Personal Responsibility on D2L: 1% extra credit if submitted on or before Thursday, September 3 by 11:59pm.

A 90-100%; B 80-89.9%; C 70-79.9%; D 60-69.9%; F Below 60%

COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

AUGUST 20-OCTOBER 6

Unit 1: The Political Culture, People and Economy of Texas; The Texas Constitution; Texas in the Federal System; Political Parties

Required Reading:

Governing Texas, CHAPTER 1
Governing Texas, CHAPTER 2
Governing Texas, CHAPTER 3
Governing Texas, CHAPTER 5

Required Activities:

- **Purchase** your required book
 - *Student Statement of Personal Responsibility DUE on D2L ONLY by Thursday, SEPTEMBER 3 (*ONLINE*)*
 - *Quiz, Thursday, SEPTEMBER 10 (in-person)*
 - *In-Class Writing Assignment #1, Thursday, SEPTEMBER 17 (in-person)*
 - *EXAM covering Unit 1, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6 (in-person)*
 - *Submit Honors College Reflection Assignments #1 and #2, DUE DATE TBA (*ONLINE*)*

OCTOBER 8

FALL BREAK

OCTOBER 13-DECEMBER 3

Unit 2: Campaigns and Elections; The Legislature; The Judiciary

Required Reading:

Governing Texas, CHAPTER 6
Governing Texas, CHAPTER 8
Governing Texas, CHAPTER 10

Required Activities:

- *Writing Assignment #2 Thursday, OCTOBER 29 (in-person)*
- *Watch film online (Nov 24); Thanksgiving (Nov 26)*
- *POSTER PRESENTATION Symposium Thursday, DECEMBER 3 (in-person)*
- *Submit Honors College NACE Artifact on D2L, DUE DATE TBA (*ONLINE*)*

Finals Week: DECEMBER 10 Exam 2

Required Activities:

- *Exam 2 will take place on **THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 at 10:30am** (the designated date for the final exam in this course)*

THCB Required Learning Outcomes: Students will master 8 THCB Required Learning Outcomes

- 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.**

Student Learning Outcomes for the Core Curriculum:

- 1. Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to analyze, evaluate, or solve problems when given a set of circumstances, data, texts, or art.
- 2. Communication:** In written, oral, and/or visual communication, A&M-Commerce students will communicate in a manner appropriate to audience and occasion, with an evident message and organizational structure.
- 3. Personal Responsibility:** Students will understand and practice academic honesty.

4. **Social Responsibility:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of societal and/or civic issues.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS AND NOTIFICATIONS

Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus is a guide. Circumstances and events may make it necessary for the instructor to modify the syllabus during the semester. Any changes made to the syllabus will be announced.

Email

Before you ask me a question in an email, check to see if the syllabus answers your question FIRST. I generally reply to emails within 24 hours, Monday-Friday. Emails sent to me over weekends will be replied to on Mondays. I do not reply to emails that ask questions about items covered in the syllabus, such as what chapters are covered on an exam or what the assigned readings are for a given class session.

ETAMU Attendance

For more information about the University 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>

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University 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 Integrity

Students at East Texas A&M University 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>

If you have any doubt as to what may constitute academic dishonesty, please consult with me prior to submitting any assignments.

ETAMU Counseling Center Statement

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.

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 University

Velma K. Waters Library- Room 162

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

Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@tamuc.edu

<https://www.tamuc.edu/campuslife/campuservices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/default.aspx>

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.

Some activities in this course will require the use of accessing D2L Brightspace

TECHNOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

Minimal Technology Required

USE CHROME OR FIREFOX BROWSERS WITH D2L—DO NOT USE Microsoft EDGE as this tends to have bugs when using this learning platform

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Using the learning management system, using Microsoft Word and uploading digital images.

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

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.

COMMUNICATION AND 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>