Texas Government

The end of the 85th Texas legislative session with threats of violence over the passage of a bill banning sanctuary cities in Texas; the success of the Texas legislature with the passage of 217 billion biennium budget and several billings including a bill that provides for a statewide ban on texting while driving; the vetoing of 50 bills by Gov. Greg Abbott after the conclusion of the Texas legislature in May of 2017; the call for a special session of the Texas legislature by the governor to deal with several issues including a bill to reauthorize several state agencies, a bill to restrict bathroom access for transgender Texans, and a bill to limit local property tax growth; and the legal challenge of several Texas cities against the state over immigration and sanctuary cities – what do these events have in common? They are all part of the landscape of American politics, encompassing both national and state dimensions, covered in the introductory political science courses on American and Texas governments.

This course is the second half of a two-sequence course program with Political Science 2305 being the first course which combined with Political Science 2306 will satisfy the 6 SCH ASU Core Curriculum requirements in Political Science. Political Science 2306 is designed to introduce the student to the political system of the state of Texas. This introductory survey course covers the origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and inter-governmental relations, political participation, linkage institutions, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas. Overall, it provides an introduction to the Texas state system of government.

Course/Core Objectives:

1. Critical Thinking (CT): to gather, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.
2. Communication (CS): to develop, interpret and express ideas through effective written communication.
4. Personal Responsibility (PR): to demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making.

Note: Don’t accept any assertion of fact on its face. Try to step back from ideology, opinion & argument; listen carefully to different sides in a debate being prepared to see the logic in what people of different viewpoints have to say.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Student will demonstrate knowledge about Texas government and politics.
2. Student will explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution.
3. Student will explain the origins and evolution of the Texas political system, with a focus on growth of political institutions, the key components of the Texas political system, and federalism.
4. Student will describe the ways in which different political systems divide and share power between the state and local governments.
5. Student will demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.
6. Students will evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, political parties, campaigns and elections in the Texas political system.
7. Students will describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens and be able to comment on the role of civic engagement in Texas politics.
8. Student will analyze political issues, demonstrate critical thinking skills, and develop a critical approach to the study of policies and political culture of Texas.

Core Curriculum – Learning Outcomes, Assignments/Activities, and Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Level Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Core Assignments/General Learning Activities for the Core Objectives</th>
<th>Core Assessments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POLS 2306</strong></td>
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<td>CT: Students will develop critical thinking skills and the ability to critically understand Texas politics and government.</td>
<td>CT: Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student can think critically about Texas politics and government.</td>
<td>Value Rubrics for Critical Thinking, Communication, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility</td>
</tr>
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<td>CS: Students will gain and be able to demonstrate a basic knowledge of Texas political system, federalism and workings of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas government.</td>
<td>CS: Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student can effectively communicate a basic knowledge of the development of the Texas state political system and governmental institutions involved in the policymaking system, and federalism using a written artifact.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SR: Students will evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas as well as describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens.</td>
<td>SR: Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student can demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and political institutions for civic engagement in the Texas political system.</td>
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<td>PR: Students will describe one’s own participation in civic life by demonstrating an understanding of the political issues, policies, political culture of Texas.</td>
<td>PR: Reflective writing samples based on lectures, class discussion, required class readings, and assigned movies that assess if the student understands ethical decision making by demonstrating knowledge of civic engagement, Texas political culture, and means of political participation using a written artifact.</td>
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Method of Assessing Learning Outcomes:

- Learning outcomes will be assessed via examinations and a public policy project assignment.

Class Organization

A combination format of lecture and discussion has been adopted for teaching this course. Students are strongly encouraged to be prepared for class and to actively participate in class through comments, questions, and responses to questions. For each lesson chapter I will post materials in the course website on Blackboard under the “Lessons” divider. They will consist of lecture Powerpoint presentations, review questions, and chapter outline. You are expected to do the required readings and are urged to consult other sources of information for in-depth coverage of political events (newspapers, magazines, and/or major news network). It is strongly recommended that you consult on a regular basis a local newspaper or Internet source for political information on local, state, and national political events.

Office Hours

Office hours are as follows:
- M, W, F 9:30-10:30 AM
- R 11:00-12:00 AM
- M-F 2:00-3:00 PM
- By appointment also

I am here to help. If you have questions, concerns, or need to chat please come during my office hours. If they are not convenient please email me to schedule an appointment. You can reach me on weekdays, Monday through Friday. Please note that I check my emails periodically between 9 AM and 5 PM. Depending upon time of receipt of email I may take up to two days to response.

Expectations of Students

Students are expected to read the course materials scheduled in the syllabus with care. It is important that there is no misunderstanding concerning the readings; consequently, if you have any questions regarding the assignments please do not hesitate to ask. All of the readings listed below are considered required. Class discussions and lectures will add to, rather than merely review, the reading materials. Analyses of current political events will be incorporated into class discussions and assigned reading materials; it is important that you come to class equipped with a prior reading of the assigned materials.

Blackboard

The teaching of this course is integrated with the Blackboard platform. You should familiarize yourself with the organizational components of the course on Blackboard. You will find useful information on Blackboard such as a copy of the course syllabus, information about course policies, grading system, chapter Powerpoints, and grades for exams and assignments.
To access Blackboard you must have an ASU email account and be registered for this course. To login go to https://blackboard.angelo.edu/ and type in your ASU userid and password. Please try to access Blackboard as soon as possible to make sure that you are enrolled in the course and that you understand the various features of Blackboard.

Course Requirements & Grading

Attendance
Attendance is required for all classes. I will take attendance every day. It is important that you show up on time. If you come in late, it is your responsibility to approach me after class and make sure that I check your name on the class roll. Class attendance will be important for determining borderline grades. Excellent class attendance will contribute one point to your sum total of semester points. Excellent class attendance means no more than a specified number of class absences as determined by instructor. Student absence for observance of a religious holy day will be treated in accordance with OP 10.19 of ASU’s Operating Policies and Procedures. According to the University Calendar, the last day for a partial or total withdrawal from the University is **Monday, April 2, 2018**. Withdrawal grades will be indicated by the letter W.

Exams (400 points)
The evaluation of your class performance will be based on four examinations. The class exams will be objective and a combination of multiple-choice, identification, and/or short essay. A study guide will be provided before each exam through Blackboard. The final exam will not be cumulative. All electronic equipment (cell phones, computers, etc.) must be put away and hidden from view during exams. If you have a valid reason for missing an exam (verified illness, accident, or unavoidable absence) you may make-up an exam. **If possible, you should notify me before the exam, if not, within 24 hours after the exam date.** The design of the make-up exam is left solely up to the instructor; the make-up exam may be comprehensive and entirely essay or a combination of multiple-choice and identification; it will be scheduled during the last week of the semester. Please note that you will be allowed to take only one make-up exam for the semester.

Public Policy Assignment/Project (100 points)
The paper and group presentation assignment is the submission of a written essay that meets the Core Curriculum assessment requirements with regards to demonstrating a basic knowledge of the Texas political system, engaging in critical thinking based on synthesis & evaluation, and exhibiting the skills necessary to understand and evaluate political outcomes. You are asked to prepare a public policy issue paper with regards to the Texas political landscape. The paper requires you to select a topic pertaining to Texas politics and to analyze the topic and suggest some policy recommendations. The topic can involve the actions of the Texas legislature, the courts, and or local government. You are to focus on appropriate concepts, discuss the relevant facts of the issue, and suggest some appropriate response(s) to the issue. Suggested topics are posted in the Policy Topics of Blackboard. You may select another topic with approval of the instructor. The topic thus needs to be appropriate and relevant to the scope of the Texas political landscape. There are some suggested newspaper sources that you may consult: *New York Times, Washington Post, Dallas Morning News, The Texas Tribune*, or other well-known
newspaper. *The Texas Tribune* is extremely useful as an online source because there is no requirement for the viewer to become a subscriber before gaining access to the various news articles pertaining to Texas politics.

The requirements for the public policy assignment will entail a group presentation before the class during the last week of the semester, the submission of the public policy paper through Turnitin in Blackboard, and participation in the class presentations during the last week of the semester. To organize the group presentations, you will be required to submit a 200 word paragraph in the Discussion Forum of Blackboard that briefly describes the policy topic that you will analyze and develop as your public policy paper.

The sum total of 100 points will be earned on the basis of the requirements found below. Please note the due dates in the course syllabus for the individual component items of this project. The due dates are important for the smooth and timely preparation of the group presentations, scheduled for the last week of the semester. **Extensions of the deadlines will generally not be granted; thus please employ due diligence to meet the deadlines posted in the syllabus.**

- Discussion Forum Policy Topic Submission: 10 points
- Group Participation: 20 points
- Group Presentation: 20 points
- Public Policy Essay: 50 points

Additional information will be provided about this public policy assignment in Blackboard in the Policy Project tab.

**Grading**

Your semester grade is based on the sum of semester points earned for each component part of the course requirements – the four examinations and the public policy project. Each exam is worth 100 points and the public policy assignment project is worth 100 points.

The results of the in-class exams will be used to compute your course grade; each exam score will contribute a specified percentage (indicated below) of your total semester points. Each exam score is weighted according to the specified percentage and added up to calculate your total sum of semester points for the course. The total points earned for the public policy assignment will be weighted by the same weight as the semester exams and added to your sum total of semester points.

The class grading system is based on a scoring scale of 100 semester points earned from the exam scores and public policy project. The grading scale adopted for determining your letter grade is listed below. Your course letter grade will be determined by the total sum of semester points that you earn. **In order to be fair to all students the grading scale should be considered fairly rigid.**

**The Grading Scale**

A=90-100  B=80-89  C=70-79  D=58-69  F=57 and below

[Numeric numbers refer to total semester points]
Exam Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam Type</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Percentage of Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Exam</td>
<td>February 9</td>
<td>20% of Final Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Exam</td>
<td>March 9</td>
<td>20% of Final Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Exam</td>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>20% of Final Grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>20% of Final Grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nota Bene: All electronic devices, including portable music players, are not allowed during exam taking.

Academic Honesty

Angelo State University expects its students to maintain complete honesty and integrity in their academic pursuits. Students are responsible for understanding and complying with the university Academic Honor Code, which is contained in both print and web versions of the ASU Student Handbook. See the Current Student page on the ASU homepage (URL address: http://www.angelo.edu/cstudent/) and click on Academic Honor Code. Acts of academic dishonesty and misconduct as referenced in Angelo State University's Student Handbook will be referred to the Dean of Students.

Accommodations for Disability

ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA), and subsequent legislation.

The Student Affairs Office is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting the Student Affairs Office, Suite 112 of the Houston Harte University Center, at 325-942-2047 (phone) or 325-942-2211 (fax) or by e-mail at studentservices@angelo.edu to begin the process. The Student Affairs Office will establish the particular documentation requirements necessary for the various types of disabilities.

Unprofessional Behavior

A certain classroom decorum based upon mutual respect toward others contributes towards a productive environment. Please note that arriving late without a good reason or making distracting noise in the classroom, i.e., whispering or eating, is unprofessional and a sign of disrespect. Please be sure to turn off cell phones, pagers or other electronic devices with audible signals, and also refrain from bringing food and beverages. Laptops are permitted only for note taking.
Reading Materials


You may purchase online access to the textbook at the following site: [https://www.mheducation.com/highered/product/M125954821X.html](https://www.mheducation.com/highered/product/M125954821X.html). Be sure to note the third edition.

Course Schedule

[Note: The course syllabus is a general plan for the semester. The schedule is a tentative and may be updated or changed throughout the semester as necessary.]

**January 17: Introduction**

What are the rules of the game for this course? What will be the basis for evaluating student performance? Questions pertaining to management of the course will be answered by discussing the course syllabus.

**January 19 – January 24: Introduction to Texas History and Politics**

What makes for a political community at the state level? What is the history of Texas politics and what shapes it? What is meant by political culture? What are the current challenges in Texas politics?

A. The Texas political community
B. Historical periods in Texas politics
C. Texas political culture
D. **Readings:** Mora & Ruger, Chapter 1

**January 26 – January 31: The Texas State Constitution and the American Federal System**

How did Texans deal with the tasks of creating a viable government? What are the component parts of the Texas constitution? What are the patterns of constitutional change? Do Texans need a new constitution?

A. The case of education policy in Texas
B. Evolution of Texas Constitutions
C. Constitutional government
D. The Constitution of Texas
E. The need for a new constitution in Texas
F. **Readings:** Mora & Ruger, Chapter 2

**February 2 – February 7: The U.S. Constitution and Federalism**

Imagine being faced with the task of laying the constitutional foundations for a brand-new nation. Where would you turn for philosophical guidance? How would you resolve differences in viewpoints regarding structures and powers of government? What are some important events
in the formation of the new U.S. government? What is the American federal system? How does federalism function today?

A. Historical Roots
   1. Articles of Confederation
   2. Declaration of Independence
B. Drafting and ratifying the U.S. Constitution
C. Three types of governmental systems
D. The scope of American federalism
E. Different types of federalism in the U.S.

February 12 – February 19: *The Texas Legislature*

What are the characteristics of the Texas legislature as an institution of government? What is meant by congressional reapportionment? What is the impact of congressional reapportionment upon the Texas legislature? What constitutes the legislative process in the Texas legislature?

A. Characteristics of the Texas legislature
B. Structure of the legislature
C. Legislative redistricting
D. The legislative process
E. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapter 3

February 21 – February 26: *The Executive Department and the Office of the Governor*

What constitutes the executive branch at the state level of government? How does the governor influence the activities of state government and the policymaking process? What are the powers of the Texas governor in a comparative context?

A. Structure of the Texas executive branch
B. Powers of the governor
C. The Texas bureaucracy
D. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapter 4

February 28 – March 7: *The Court System in Texas*

What is the structure of the Texas judicial system? What are some of the problems of the Texas judicial system? Is the Texas system of justice in a state of crisis?

A. State law in Texas
B. Texas court organization
C. Judges and the administration of justice
D. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapter 5

March 19 – March 23: *Local Governments in Texas*

One reason for the federalist system was the framer’s desire to provide the states with a large dose of political autonomy and sovereignty. States are granted exclusive sovereignty with regards to establishing local governments. Local governments are the most pervasive forms of government in Texas. What are the most common forms of local government in Texas?

A. Municipal/city government
B. County government  
C. Special district governments  
D. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapter 6

**March 23 – Due date for Policy Topic submission**

March 26 – April 4: Political Parties in Texas

Political parties exist not only at the national level but also at the state level. They provide a vital link between personal values & aspirations and policy makers. Political parties offer alternative avenues for political participation.
  A. Political parties in Texas  
  B. Texas party machinery – temporary and permanent organizations  
  C. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapter 9

April 6 – April 11: Interest Groups and Lobbying in Texas

Interest groups also exist at the state level. They provide a vital link between personal values & aspirations and policy makers. Interest groups offer alternative avenues for political participation?
  A. Interest groups in Texas  
  B. Most powerful interest groups in Texas  
  C. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapters 10

April 16 – April 20: Voting and Political Participation in Texas

Democracies depend upon political participation. Public policy ultimately responds to participation. How is political participation achieved at the state level? What are other forms of political participation?
  A. Political participation in Texas  
  B. Other forms of political participation  
  C. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapter 7

April 23 – April 27: Elections and Campaigns in Texas

At the heart of the democratic political system is the election of freely chosen representatives by the majority of the people in competitive elections. For democracy to work there must be meaningful campaigns among candidates and meaningful participation among the voters. How are campaigns and elections distinguished at the state level? What is the difference between a primary election and general election in Texas? What concerns are raised today by changes in funding political campaigns?
  A. Campaigns and elections in Texas  
  B. Primary election versus general election  
  C. Different types of elections  
  D. Readings: Mora & Ruger, Chapter 8

**April 25 – Due date for Public Policy essay**
April 30 – May 4: *Group public policy presentations*

Additional information will be provided as the semester progresses.

May 9: *Final Exam: 10:30-12:30 pm*