ANGELO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES
POLITICAL SCIENCE 2306 TEXAS GOVERNMENT
Spring 2018
Section 10: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8-8:50 am in Rassman 239
Section 30: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 10-10:50 am in Rassman 110
Section 50: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 12-12:50 pm in Academic 135

Instructor: Brenda J. Norton, J.D., PhD.
Email: Brenda.Norton@Angelo.edu
Office: Rassman 222 Office Telephone: 325-468-6106
Office Hours: M, W: 1-4 pm; TR: 11-12, 2-4; Other hours available by appointment

TABLE OF CONTENTS: This syllabus has four parts. All parts are included here in one document. The syllabus is separated into its component parts in the course information folder on Blackboard.
   Part 1: This course and its requirements
   Part 2: Course Schedule
   Part 3: ASU policies and assistance
   Part 4: FAQs for this course

PART 1: THIS COURSE

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Political Science 2306 is designed to introduce the student to the Texas state system of government. 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, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.

CORE OBJECTIVES:
   Critical Thinking: gather, analyze, evaluate and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.
   Communication: develop, interpret and express ideas through effective written communication
   Social Responsibility: demonstrate knowledge of civic responsibility
   Personal Responsibility: demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making

COURSE 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.

**LEARNING RESOURCES:**


You will also be required to read the web news site Texas Tribune [https://www.texastribune.org/](https://www.texastribune.org/) There may be other required readings noted in the course schedule. These will be available via the web or class BlackBoard page.

Optional supplemental material which I think may assist you with the required material may also be posted to BlackBoard this material will be marked optional supplemental.

**CLASS REQUIREMENTS:**

**Attendance:** You are expected to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken for every class, and the student is cautioned that excessive absences will jeopardize their final grade for the course. A portion of your final grade is based on your attendance and participation in general class sessions.

- Sleeping during class will be counted as an absence.
- Arriving late or leaving early without prior permission will be counted as an absence.
- Violating the surfing/texting policy will be counted as an absence.
- Students who have five or more unexcused absences will not receive credit for attendance.
- To receive an excused absence, you must comply with my policy outlined in the FAQ below. Excused absences entitle you to make-up missed work on a limited basis.

**Classroom etiquette:** A proper learning environment is one in which all points of view, all questions asked, and all questions answered are treated with tolerance and respect. The overall goal of classroom decorum is for all of us to treat each other with respect and dignity. Any behavior that disrupts this leaning environment such as late arrivals or early departures is unacceptable and inappropriate behavior will be subject to appropriate sanction.

**Surfing the web and texting:** If it distracts another student or indicates to me that you are not paying attention you will be given one warning and one unexcused absence. *If it continues, you will be marked down one full grade on your final grade.* Any student may anonymously alert me to a concern over a distraction and I will then determine if there is a problem.
Grading: Grades will be allocated as follows:

This course uses an accumulated points system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grading scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On line Tests</td>
<td>877-975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>780-876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>682-779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Proposal</td>
<td>585-681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Paper</td>
<td>Below 585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points</td>
<td>975</td>
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What do I look for in BlackBoard to determine my grade in this class?

This class uses a total point system so you look ONLY at the total points earned column to determine your grade. I cannot turn off the percentage column but it has no bearing on your grade in this class so please ignore it.

Why is there a dash (---) for my grade on an assignment?

A dash in a grade column means either I have not yet graded the assignment or you did not complete the assignment. If the dash is for a BlackBoard quiz you think you submitted, your submission failed and you need to see Tech Assistance. Remember BlackBoard quiz grades should appear on your grade page immediately after you submit the quiz. For papers, and the midterm and final exam, I will announce when I have posted and released all grades. If you have a dash after this time, contact me immediately.

Can I earn extra credit/bonus points?

Extra credit/bonus points are available by completing the Legislative Assignment posted under Assignments. You may receive up to 25 extra credit points for this assignment. Other extra credit opportunities may arise but are not guaranteed. **Extra credit will not be awarded individually to assist you to bring up a bad grade.**

Assignments: All deadlines are firm. Extensions due to excused absences are granted only as noted below in the FAQ.

Readings: Readings are listed by the class in which they will be discussed. You are expected to have read the material before that class period. Reading assignments are not a substitute for attending class. We will discuss additional material in class which will be included in graded assignments.

Online Reading Tests in BlackBoard (BB tests): During the semester there will be thirteen (13) online tests in BlackBoard over the reading. The deadlines for these tests are on BlackBoard and in the course schedule. BlackBoard uses Respondus Lockdown Browser. It is your responsibility to install the program and to know how to use it. You may access installation and tutorials for Respondus Lockdown Browser via the technology tab on the opening page of
Blackboard. You will NOT use Respondus webcam. If you have any problems consult ASU Tech Services.

**Extensions for BB Tests:** It is very rare that an extension for not completing a test before the deadline will result in an extension of time. See the FAQs for further information on excuses and extensions.

**Participation:** Your participation grade will depend on your group activities.

**Group Discussion:** Group Discussion dates are noted in the syllabus and discussion topics posted to BlackBoard well before the discussion date. Your grade will be based on peer and professor review of participation in the group discussion. I will choose the groups. Attendance will be taken each class period by sign-in sheet. **Unexcused absence from any class group discussion period will result in loss of 5 points from your participation grade. An excused absence from group discussion will have to be made up by writing a two-page paper of the student’s thoughts on one of the scheduled topics for the missed discussion which must be turned in not later than seven days after the missed discussion period.**

**Discussion Board:** If for some reason a particular group discussion is moved to posting to Blackboard Discussion Board your grade for this discussion will be based on your postings. The date listed in the course schedule for the group discussion is the deadline for discussion board postings. You must post a discussion thread for one topic, and at least one reply to a different topic in each discussion period posted. The quality and quantity of postings will be used to determine your grade. I alone determine the quality of your postings.

**Policy Paper:** Everyone can improve their writing thus I strongly encourage you to review your papers with the Writing Center before turning in the final copy.

**TurnItIn:** This course will use TurnItIn for written assignments. You will submit your paper through the assignment listed on Blackboard. TurnItIn will automatically review your paper. TurnItIn only accepts Word or pdf format. If you do not know how to use TurnItIn see the tutorials on Blackboard. DO NOT submit your paper through TurnItIn.com.

**Policy Paper format:** You are to use footnote OR endnote reference style. Parenthetical citation format is NOT acceptable. You are to use Chicago style citations. The Chicago style manual is available for free on the web at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html) The Writing Center webpage has tutorials on citation formatting.

The paper is to be in 12 pt Times New Roman font, double spaced with 1 inch margins. It is to be 8-10 pages. Neither a title page nor a Works Cited or Bibliography page count toward the page requirement. A Works Cited or Bibliography must be included with the final paper submission.

The policy paper requires extensive outside research on a current controversy involving the State of Texas, or the US Constitution/federal law and States in general. Suggested topics are listed in the Policy Paper tab on Blackboard. You may write on another topic but must have approval for it by the deadline listed in the course schedule. **Writing on an unapproved topic will result in an automatic failing grade on the paper.**

**Policy Paper Topic:** You must submit a two sentence topic before the deadline. There are no positive points for this but you will receive a deduction from your proposal grade if you do not properly and timely complete the topic submission. See the Policy Paper tab on Blackboard for more details and course schedule for the deadline.
**Policy Paper Proposal:** You must submit a 1-2 page policy proposal before the scheduled deadline. More detail is contained in the Policy Paper tab on Blackboard.

**Extensions for Papers:** Rarely do I allow extensions of paper deadlines. Only extraordinary unforeseeable events will receive extensions.

FYI: Computers crash—it is your responsibility to save a back-up copy of your paper off your hard drive thus this is not an excuse for a late paper. Also, the clock on your computer may not align with the one on Blackboard or TurnItIn. The Blackboard and TurnItIn clocks control submission deadlines. Further, it takes time for uploads to be completed. If they are not completed before the Blackboard or TurnItIn clocks reach the deadline you submission will be blocked and you will not receive an extension of time.

**FAQs**

A FAQ page which further explains the course is attached and incorporated.
Dr. Norton’s Spring 2018 POLS 2306-10 (MWF 8-8:50), 2306-30 (MWF 10-10:50), 2306-50 (MWF 12-12:50) Course Schedule:

**Reading Note for all assignments:** Required Reading is found in *Inside Texas Politics* by Brandon Rottinghaus (Oxford University Press, 2018) ISBN9780190299514. (hereafter textbook) You will also be required to read the web news site Texas Tribune [https://www.texastribune.org/](https://www.texastribune.org/) There may be other required readings noted in the course schedule. These will be available via the web or class BlackBoard page.

Optional supplemental material which I think may assist you with the required material may also be posted to BlackBoard this material will be marked optional supplemental.

January 17: Introduction; Exams for chapter 1, 2, and 3 are open. All parts of Policy paper are open; Extra credit is open; Practice exam and submission are open.

January 19: Web research, plagiarism, and other general topics

January 22: Textbook: Chapter 1

January 24: Textbook: Chapter 2; Texas Constitution; Junnell-Ratliff Proposed Texas Constitution; Exams for chapters 4 and 5 open

January 26: Chapter 2 continued;

January 29: Textbook: Chapter 3; US Constitution

January 31: Textbook: Chapter 3 continued;

February 2: Textbook: Chapter 3 continued;

February 5: Group Discussion #1; **Exams for chapters 1, 2, and 3 close at 10 pm.**

February 7: Textbook: Chapter 4

February 9: Textbook: Chapter 5; Exams for chapters 6 and 7 open

February 12: Textbook: Chapter 5;

February 14: Group Discussion # 2; **Exams for chapters 4 and 5 close at 10 pm.**

February 16: Textbook: Chapter 6

February 19: Textbook: Chapter 6;

February 21: Textbook: Chapter 7

February 23: **Policy paper topic due through Blackboard by 10 pm.** Textbook: Chapter 7;
February 26: Textbook: Chapter 7;

February 28: Group Discussion # 3; **Exams and Assignments for chapters 6 and 7 close at 10 pm.**

March 2: Work on Policy Proposal

March 5: Work on Policy Proposal

March 7: Work on Policy Proposal

March 9: No class; **Policy Proposal due through Blackboard by 10 pm.**

March 12-16: Spring Break; March 12: Exams for chapters 8 and 9 open

March 19: Textbook: Chapter 8

March 21: Textbook: Chapter 8 and begin 9

March 23: Textbook: Chapter 9; Exams for chapters 10 and 11 open

March 26: Textbook: Chapter 9;

March 28: Group Discussion # 4; **Exams for chapters 8 and 9 close at 10 pm.**

March 30: No class

April 2: Textbook: Chapter 10

April 4: Textbook: Chapter 10

April 6: Textbook: Chapter 10;

April 9: Textbook: Chapter 11

April 11: Textbook: Chapter 11; Exams for chapters 12 and 13 open

April 13: Textbook: Chapter 11

April 16: Group Discussion # 5; **Exams for chapters 10 and 11 close at 10 pm.**

April 18: Textbook: Chapter 12

April 20: Textbook: Chapter 12;
April 23: Textbook: Chapter 13

April 25: Textbook: Chapter 13;

April 27: Group Discussion # 6; **Exams for chapters 12 and 13 close at 10 pm**; Last day to submit extra credit Legislative assignment

April 30: No class

May 2: No class; **Policy Paper due through Blackboard by 10 pm.**

May 4: No class
PART 3: ASU POLICIES AND ASSISTANCE

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.

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/current-student/) 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.

Religious Observances: Every effort will be made to accommodate all forms of religious observance in compliance with ASU OP 10.19. Students who require additional arrangements should make these known in good time in order that arrangements can be made prior to the date of the observance.

Assistance at ASU

If you need immediate help: Contact the University Police Department at 325-942-2047.

Title IX Office – If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience of sexual violence including sexual assault, harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking or other type of non-consensual sexual conduct, please contact Michelle Boone at 325-486-6357, or michelle.boone@angelo.edu. The Title IX office understands the sensitive nature of these situations and can provide information about available on- and off-campus resources, such as counseling and psychological services, medical treatment, academic support, university housing and other forms of assistance. Staff members at the office will also explain your rights and the judicial process options, if you choose to file a complaint with the University. You will not be required to share your experience, and the Title IX Office will keep any information private. The Title IX Office exists to support and empower students, while allowing them to remain in control. For further information see, http://www.angelo.edu/services/title-ix/.

Stress Issues: If you are feeling overwhelmed by something, ASU has a Counseling Center: https://webstage.angelo.edu/services/health_clinic_counseling/counseling_services.php

Academic assistance: ASU Tutoring Center information is available at: https://www.angelo.edu/dept/freshman-college/academic-tutoring.php.
**Writing Center:** ASU has a Writing Center to assist students in completing writing assignments. See [http://www.angelo.edu/dept/writing_center/](http://www.angelo.edu/dept/writing_center/).
Dr. Norton’s POLS 2306 classes FAQ
I include lots of information in the syllabus and make many announcements throughout the course. Students sometimes forget to consult the syllabus or the announcement so I have included some of the more frequent questions here.

GENERAL
Where is Dr. Norton’s office?
Rassman Room 222 inside the Political Science Department.

What is Dr. Norton’s office telephone number?
325-468-6106

What book(s) do I need?
It is available at the bookstore and online.

You will also be required to read the web news site Texas Tribune https://www.texastribune.org/ There may be other required readings noted in the course schedule. These will be available via the web or class BlackBoard page.

Optional supplemental material which I think may assist you with the required material may also be posted to BlackBoard this material will be marked optional supplemental.

What tech do I need for this class?
This course will use Blackboard. You will have tests to take through Blackboard that will use Respondus Lockdown Browser. You will submit papers through Blackboard that will include a TurnItIn review. If you are having tech issues of any type you can get assistance from ASU Tech Assistance. There are tutorials on the opening of Blackboard for its use.

Why do I have to take this course if I am not majoring in Political Science?
Texas State law requires you to take a course in Texas government. This course helps you to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to be an informed fully engaged citizen who can form your own opinion about events. To put it in common terms—when you next sit down at that big family dinner I want you to be at the adult table fully participating in the conversation with accurate knowledge and the confidence to express your opinion.

This course is outside of my major so shouldn’t you make it easy?
The goal of a four year liberal arts college is to give you a well-rounded education in all aspects of adult life so that you can fully engage as a citizen and become a leader. The goal is not just to teach you a particular job skill. Your chosen major is to give you extra insight into a particular area so that you can focus your career on it but you need to know other areas so you can engage with the wider world and move your career to one of leadership.

I did not complete the assignment because I do not know how to use Blackboard, Respondus Lockdown Browser, my computer program’s footnote/endnote feature ....
You are an adult it is your responsibility to learn how to use the tools required for completing an assignment. If you are at a job and the boss asks you to run a spreadsheet of last
month’s sales you do not wait until after deadline and when she asks for the material tell her you did not do the work because you did not know how to create a spreadsheet. You find out how to do it before the deadline and you get the work done accurately and on time. ASU has multiple ways for you to learn how to use all of the tech programs available and any formatting style specified by a professor.

What assistance at ASU is available to me?

If you need immediate help: Contact the University Police Department at 325-942-2047.

Title IX Office – If you or someone you know would like help related to an experience of sexual violence including sexual assault, harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, stalking or other type of non-consensual sexual conduct, please contact Michelle Boone at 325-486-6357, or michelle.boone@angelo.edu. The Title IX office understands the sensitive nature of these situations and can provide information about available on- and off-campus resources, such as counseling and psychological services, medical treatment, academic support, university housing and other forms of assistance. Staff members at the office will also explain your rights and the judicial process options, if you choose to file a complaint with the University. You will not be required to share your experience, and the Title IX Office will keep any information private. The Title IX Office exists to support and empower students, while allowing them to remain in control. For further information see, http://www.angelo.edu/services/title-ix/.

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dishonesty and misconduct as referenced in Angelo State University's Student Handbook will be referred to the Dean of Students.

*Why is the course set up the way it is?*

I have spent many years in the working world. I have worked with large corporations, small businesses, governments, and individuals. The number one complaint of all is lack of communication skills—aural (listening), oral, and written. Accordingly, I not only want to assist you in developing your knowledge to be a fully engaged citizen but also your general skill level for a successful life. I lecture to assist you in developing your listening skills. It may come as a surprise to you but PowerPoints and other visual devices are NOT used very often in the working world. You are expected to listen when other people are speaking, to remember what they say, and to be able to process the information quickly to respond properly. When possible, I use group exercises so you can practice expressing yourself accurately, listen to other’s opinions, and develop the skill of reasoned conversation. I assign writing exercises so you can move memorized information to useful knowledge, and develop the skill of expressing yourself coherently and accurately.

*What is expected of me in class?*

**Classroom etiquette:** A proper learning environment is one in which all points of view, all questions asked, and all questions answered are treated with tolerance and respect. The overall goal of classroom decorum is for all of us to treat each other with respect and dignity. Any behavior that disrupts this learning environment such as late arrivals or early departures is unacceptable and inappropriate behavior will be subject to appropriate sanction.

**Surfing the web and texting:** If it distracts another student or indicates to me that you are not paying attention you will be given one warning and one unexcused absence. *If it continues, you will be marked down one full grade on your final grade.* Any student may anonymously alert me to a concern over a distraction and I will then determine if there is a problem.

*Why do you talk about things in lectures that are not on the PowerPoints?*

As discussed above, Americans aural skills are atrocious. In the working world your boss or client will rarely use any visual presentation to convey information to you. Think about it—when you are at the doctor’s office explaining your symptoms to the nurse or doctor do you use a Power Point? No, you expect them to listen to what you are saying. The purpose of class lecture is to add to assigned readings and Power Points convey a limited amount of information—listen!

*Can I get a copy of the PowerPoints?*

PowerPoints which were created by the publisher are posted to Blackboard. My PowerPoints used in class may not be the same as the publisher’s PowerPoints. If I include any detailed technical information in PowerPoint which is not in the publisher’s PowerPoint, I will post it to Blackboard otherwise my PowerPoints will not be generally available.

*Why don’t you stop and let me copy everything on the PowerPoint slide before you start talking or move on?*

As I said before, class lecture is to help you work on your aural and discernment skills. If class-time were only to copy everything in the PowerPoint, I could just assign it as additional
reading. If you are someone who just has to have the entire PowerPoint word-for-word in your lecture notes, I STRONGLY suggest downloading or printing a copy of the publisher’s PowerPoint before class.

**STUDY HINT:** PowerPoint has a toggle which lets you switch the view from slide to outline format. Make a copy of this to create a study outline. You can put your reading notes into the outline. You can also add any notes taken during lectures. Now everything is organized and easy for you to use. Doing this each week will help you to see where you have gaps or confusion so you can get it taken care of right away before you are in exam study panic mode.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

**Readings:** Readings are listed by the class in which they will be discussed. You are expected to have read the material before that class period. Reading assignments are not a substitute for attending class. We will discuss additional material in class which will be included in graded assignments.

*Why are there so many assignment in this class?*

I spread out the grading over many assignments to alleviate the stress of not performing well on any one. Also, some people do very well on tests of memorized information while others do better at explaining and using information. You need both skills in the working world, therefore, I give you an opportunity to develop both skills. Additionally, some people are good at self-scheduling while others are not. I give some assignments with frequent deadlines to make you keep up with the work while other assignments have only future deadlines requiring you to self-schedule to get the work done in a timely manner.

*What is an excused absence?*

You must notify me ASAP if you are going to miss a deadline. Extensions to complete the assignment vary with the type of assignment and excuse. Excuses and requests for extension for more than 24 hours require written proof. If you miss class because you are sick, I will take your word for it up to three times. If you will two classes in a row, I need a doctor’s note with a start and end date noted. If you will be absent due to ASU business, I need written notice BEFORE the absence.

You will have the number of days equal to your excuse to do any make-up work. For example, if you are traveling on ASU business for three days, you have three days to make-up work. All other excused absences are at my discretion. All make-ups on material studied before the midterm must be taken before the midterm and all make-ups for material in the second half of the class must be taken before the last day of classes for the semester.

**Tech problems:** Rarely do I allow extensions due to tech issues. I need verification that there is a sudden tech issue. This can come from ITS, your ISP, or computer repair facility. You must notify me IMMEDIATELY of the tech issue. See specific assignments below to see whether I will allow extensions.
GRADES

What is the grading scale for this course?
This course uses an accumulated points system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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What is expected from me in each of these assignment categories?
Assignments: All deadlines are firm. Extensions due to excused absences are granted only as noted below.

Online Reading Tests in BlackBoard (BB tests): During the semester there will be thirteen (13) online tests in BlackBoard over the reading. The deadlines for these tests are on BlackBoard and in the course schedule. BlackBoard uses Respondus Lockdown Browser. It is your responsibility to install the program and to know how to use it. You may access installation and tutorials for Respondus Lockdown Browser via the technology tab on the opening page of Blackboard. You will NOT use Respondus webcam. If you have any problems consult ASU Tech Services. Extensions for BB Tests: It is very rare that an extension for not completing a test before the deadline will result in an extension of time.
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- Violating the surfing/texting policy will be counted as an absence.
- Students who have five or more unexcused absences will not receive credit for attendance.
- To receive an excused absence, you must comply with my policy outlined in the FAQ below. Excused absences entitle you to make-up missed work on a limited basis.

**Religious Observances:** Every effort will be made to accommodate all forms of religious observance in compliance with ASU OP 10.19. Students who require additional arrangements to be made should make these known in good time in order that arrangements can be made.

**Participation:** Your participation grade will depend on your group activities.

**Group Discussion:** Group Discussion dates are noted in the syllabus and discussion topics posted to BlackBoard well before the discussion date. Your grade will be based on peer and professor review of participation in the group discussion. I will choose the groups. Attendance will be taken each class period by sign-in sheet. *Unexcused absence from any class group discussion period will result in loss of 5 points from your participation grade. An excused absence from group discussion will have to be made up by writing a two-page paper of the student’s thoughts on one of the scheduled topics for the missed discussion which must be turned in not later than seven days after the missed discussion period.*

**Discussion Board:** If for some reason a particular group discussion is moved to posting to Blackboard Discussion Board your grade for this discussion will be based on your postings. The date listed in the course schedule for group discussion is the deadline for discussion board postings. You must post a discussion thread for one topic, and at least one reply to a different topic in each discussion period posted. The quality and quantity of postings will be used to determine your grade. I alone determine the quality of your postings.

**Policy Paper:** Everyone can improve their writing thus I strongly encourage you to review your papers with the Writing Center before turning in the final copy.

**TurnItIn:** This course will use TurnItIn for written assignments. You will submit your paper through the assignment listed on Blackboard. TurnItIn will automatically review your paper. TurnItIn only accepts Word or pdf format. If you do not know how to use TurnItIn see the tutorials on Blackboard. DO NOT submit your paper through TurnItIn.com.

**Policy Paper format:** You are to use footnote OR endnote reference style. *Parenthetical citation format is NOT acceptable.* You are to use Chicago style citations. The Chicago style manual is available for free on the web at [http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html) The Writing Center webpage has tutorials on citation formatting.
The paper is to be in 12 pt Times New Roman font, double spaced with 1 inch margins. It is to be 8-10 pages. Neither a title page nor a Works Cited or Bibliography page count toward the page requirement. A Works Cited or Bibliography must be included with the final paper submission.

The policy paper requires extensive outside research on a current controversy involving the State of Texas, or the US Constitution/federal law and States in general. Suggested topics are listed in the Policy Paper tab on Blackboard. You may write on another topic but must have approval for it be the deadline listed in the course schedule. Writing on an unapproved topic will result in an automatic failing grade on the paper.

Policy Paper Topic: You must submit a two sentence topic before the deadline. There are no positive points for this but you will receive a deduction from your proposal grade if you do not properly and timely complete the topic submission. See the Policy Paper tab on Blackboard for more details and course schedule for the deadline.

Policy Paper Proposal: You must submit a 1-2 page policy proposal before the scheduled deadline. More detail is contained in the Policy Paper tab on Blackboard

Extensions for Papers: Rarely do I allow extensions of paper deadlines. Only extraordinary unforeseeable events will receive extensions. FYI: Computers crash—it is your responsibility to save a back-up copy of your paper off your hard drive thus this is not an excuse for a late paper. Also, the clock on your computer may not align with the one on Blackboard or TurnItIn. The Blackboard and TurnItIn clocks control submission deadlines. Further, it takes time for uploads to be completed. If they are not completed before the Blackboard or TurnItIn clocks reach the deadline you submission will be blocked and you will not receive an extension of time.

How do I submit a written document on Blackboard?

It is your responsibility to submit to Blackboard timely and properly. You submit through the assignment on the class Blackboard page. SUBMISSION IS BY WORD DOCUMENT OR PDF ONLY. UPLOAD THE TEXT NOT A FILE FOLDER OR jpg. NO OTHER SUBMISSION FORMAT WILL WORK. It is your responsibility to ensure your submission is complete and accurate.

To check the upload: After you click submit and get a submission completed notice, exit, reenter and open your submission to check that it uploaded correctly. If you cannot immediately see and read the text of your paper, the submission is incorrect. If you can immediately see and read the text of your paper, it is okay. An incorrect submission will not entitle you to extension of the submission deadline.

MAC USER WARNING: If you use a Mac you must convert the document to Word or pdf and sometimes the conversions do not work properly so carefully check your submission.

How do I submit to TurnItIn?

TurnItIn is linked to Blackboard so submission through the Blackboard assignment for the paper will automatically submit the paper to TurnItIn. TurnItIn only accepts Word or pdf format. If you do not know how to use TurnItIn see the tutorials on Blackboard DO NOT SUBMIT THROUGH TURNITIN.COM.

How do I tell if I have a plagiarism problem?
It is your responsibility to know what plagiarism is. There is a plagiarism tutorial on the class Blackboard page and the staff of the Writing Center can help you with any questions about plagiarism. I highly recommend you take the tutorial from Mississippi State University which contains a plagiarism test: [http://lib.usm.edu/plagiarism_tutorial.html](http://lib.usm.edu/plagiarism_tutorial.html)

I will leave writing assignments unmuted after the deadline so you can view your TurnItIn plagiarism score. TurnItIn looks for word string similarities so you have to go into your paper’s report to determine if there is a real problem or if it has merely caught common phrases or citations. It is your responsibility to review your report and remedy any plagiarism issues within 48 hours of the deadline. After the 48 hour period, if I determine you have plagiarized you will be required to meet with me and be given a zero on any short answer, extra credit, or policy proposal assignment which fails the plagiarism check. If your policy paper fails the plagiarism check you will receive at least a 50% grade deduction on the policy paper. Depending on the severity of the problem, you may receive a zero. An egregious first offense or any second offense will result in referral to the Dean of Students.

Why should I use the Writing Center?

Everyone can improve their writing. The Writing Center can assist you with many aspects of your paper. They cannot assist you with the substance of the paper as they may not know the subject matter but they can assist you with all other aspects including, organization, formatting, plagiarism, citations, and coherency. If you have doubts about the substance of your paper, see me. **WARNING:** The Writing Center gets very busy during the last few weeks of the semester so visit early.

I was not sure about something but did not ask...

Too bad. It is your responsibility to ask me or another student about anything you do not understand. At work do you tell your boss sorry I did not do the task you assigned me because I did not understand what you wanted---- no, you ask before the deadline set for completing the work. Answers to most questions for this course are in the syllabus, this FAQ, or by announcement on Blackboard or in class. If you truly cannot find it –ask, ask, ask.