Course Syllabus - Fall 2018

POLS 2306 D20 - TEXAS GOVERNMENT

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Course Syllabus and Policy Requirement Statement

By accessing course lesson materials you are indicating the following:

- You have read, understood, and will comply with the policies and procedures listed in the class syllabus, and that you have acquired the required textbook.
- You have read, understood, and will comply with class policies and procedures as specified in the Student Handbook.
- You have read, understood, and will comply with computer and software requirements as specified with Browser Test.
- You have familiarized yourself with how to access course content in Blackboard using the Student Quick Reference Guide or Blackboard Help for Students Course.

Course Description/Overview

The State of Texas has determined that, in order to receive their degrees, many undergraduate students must complete a course in the organizational structure and function of Texas government, as well as learn about the players and forces which impact it. The result is that the majority of students required to take this course are not political science majors and so some of you may be asking "Why?" The "why" is that this course prepares you for life as responsible citizens in our state, individuals who understand how the government is designed to work, what can enhance or impede its operation and effectiveness, and how individual citizens have roles and responsibilities within that system that they must actively engage in for the system, the state and the nation to succeed.

POLS 2306 addresses the principles and values which led to the formation of the Texas state governmental system, the campaign and election process, the players within this system, and how all of these interact and impact each other and the governmental systems as a whole. We will study the Texas Constitution and the structure of state government. We will also study the political process including types of elections, political party structure and activities, and the impact of interest groups on the policy making process. Finally, we will study local and regional governmental bodies operating in Texas.

This is an introductory course. No prior knowledge of politics is expected. However familiarity with American and Texas history and a basic interest in current events related to Texas government will be very helpful.
Required Text:

*Texas Politics*, The Texas Politics Project, SOOMO Learning, 2017 - this is an online text and can be accessed and purchased by taking the following steps:

1. Go to [webtexts.com/signin](http://webtexts.com/signin) and register as a new student.
2. Select your state, school and course (POLS 2306 Sec D10) from the list.
3. Provide payment via credit card or debit card.

Additional Readings & Resources/Non-Text:

Additional readings will be assigned and when they are, they will be made accessible via Blackboard.

It is also suggested that throughout the semester, students stay current on Texas state and local governmental activities. This can be accomplished by accessing online news websites, State of Texas and local government websites, reading newspapers, and watching local television stations. Some suggested resources include:

- Texas Legislature Online (online only)
- Office of the Texas Governor (online only)
- The Texas Tribune (online only)
- Jonathan Tilove, Austin American Statesman Chief Political Writer (Twitter - @JTiloveTX)
- Dallas Morning News (print & online)
- El Paso Times (print & online)
- San Angelo Standard-Times (print & online)
- KLST or KSAN (local TV & online)
- City of San Angelo (online)
- Tom Green County, TX (online)
- Concho Valley Council of Governments (online)

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to

- Summarize the functions of and relationships between levels of state government
- Describe and evaluate the history and primary principles behind the development of the Texas Constitution and its role in contemporary political life.
- Explain the basic structure of each of the levels of government within the State of Texas
- Describe the various types of elections held within the State of Texas as well the related election processes impacting those elections
- Compare the influence of political parties and interest groups in public policy decisions.
- Explain the many factors which impact the overall political culture in Texas
Course Organization:

Student success in this course is dependent upon successfully completing all assignments including:

1) Discussion Board Posting and Responding:

Each student is expected to post his/her thoughts on the weekly discussion board topic(s) assigned by the instructor. This post should be at least 150 words, well written, spell checked, and speak directly to the topic.

Each student is also expected to respond to at least two posts from other students. Each response should be at least 75 words, well thought out, and go beyond "I agree with Sally," or "I disagree with Tom" giving reasons for your position. Each post should also reflect independent thinking. Copying and pasting the same response, or merely changing a few words for two different student posts will not meet the requirement.

All Discussion Board posts and responses are due by 11:59 PM on Thursday of the week they are assigned. Points are deducted for not meeting length requirements, not providing complete responses to the posts of others, punctuation, grammar, etc. No points will be awarded for late posts or late responses.

Posts and responses should be made on Blackboard in the Discussion Board section.

2) Papers:

Six papers will be assigned and posted as the semester progresses. The topic for each will relate to at least one of the areas of study which the class has been considering. Due dates for papers are listed in the week by week summary of assignments. Each paper should include the following:

- Be 3-4 pages in length, not including the reference page.
- Have a maximum of 1” margins, double spaced, and presented in type no larger than 12 pt.
- Include two to three in-text references which support your thinking/opinions and prior knowledge; or support facts presented. These should be cited within the paper in APA format.
- In-text references cited in the assignment must also be included in an APA-formatted reference list and no reference should be more than ten years old.
- Formatted according to APA Requirements.
- Uploaded on Blackboard in either Word or PDF format

Grading

You may be wondering how weekly work is graded in this class. In a nutshell, work should address the question that is being asked, using appropriate arguments and evidence to support the positions that you are seeking to justify - and be very well-written.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent (90 to 100%)</th>
<th>Good (80-89%)</th>
<th>Fair (70 to 79%)</th>
<th>Poor (&lt;70%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content (70%)</td>
<td>Response fully addresses the question setting out the students’ reasoning and when possible using many examples to illustrate points. Student shows a superior understanding of the question. Additional research and reflection is noted.</td>
<td>Response fully addresses the question setting out the students’ arguments using some examples to illustrate points. Student shows a clear understanding of the question.</td>
<td>Response addresses the question, using one example to illustrate points. Students show a sufficient understanding of the question.</td>
<td>Lack of justification and/or examples make it difficult to learn if student understands the issue that is being considered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Quality (30%)</td>
<td>Writing quality is excellent. Essays are written with clear theses, appropriate organization in paragraph form. Citations are provided when necessary.</td>
<td>Writing quality is good. Essays clearly communicate theses.</td>
<td>Writing quality is fair. With better organization and editing, essay would be greatly improved</td>
<td>Writing quality hinders communication of the message to the reader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Point totals for each assignment will be given according to the following schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th>Due Dates &amp; Point Valuations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Board</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>Discussion Board Posts and Responses are due by <strong>11:59 PM on Thursdays</strong> each week. Failure to post and provide at least 2 responses to other student's posts in any week, by the due date, will result in a score of ZERO for that week.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15 Total - 25 points per week

**NOTE:** All weeks begin on **Mondays**.
All papers are due by **11:59 PM on the Sunday** of the week each is assigned. The one exception is **the final paper which will be due at 11:59 PM on Wednesday, December 12th**. Failure to submit a paper by the deadline will result in a score of ZERO for that paper.

6 Total - 100 points per paper

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Angelo State University employs a letter grade system. Grades in this course are determined on a percentage scale:

- **A** = 90-100% (878-975 points)
- **B** = 80-89% (780-877 points)
- **C** = 70-79% (683-779 points)
- **D** = 60-69% (585-682 points)
- **F** = 59% and below (584 points or below)

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**Office Hours:**

As an Adjunct Professor, I do not have an "official" office at ASU, but I am always open to meeting with a student when the need arises. If you need to meet with me in person, contact me by email at denise.bloomquist@angelo.edu to arrange a specific meeting time & place.

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**Communications:**

For all questions or concerns email me at denise.bloomquist@angelo.edu. I will check my email periodically on weekdays, and occasionally on the weekends. Please allow one to two days for a response. When emailing me, be sure to **include POLS 2306 in the subject line. At the end of the email please include your first and last name.**

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**Professionalism:**

In this course we will be discussing political issues that may garner as many different reactions as there are students in the class. As we live during a dynamic and volatile period in political history, I encourage full student participation and expect some disagreement - specifically participation and disagreement related to the reading and topics for the class. However, it is also imperative that during all class work, you must treat your peers and your instructor with civility and respect, no matter the similarities and/or differences in the opinions you may encounter.
Course Outline & Reading List:

Additional topics which do not have corresponding textbook reading assignments will be included across the semester. Links to additional material will be provided on Blackboard with the other information for the designated week.

**INTRODUCTION**

Week 1 - 8/27 Read Syllabus & Discussion Board

**UNIT I: TEXAS CONSTITUTION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE: AN OVERVIEW**

Week 2 - 9/3 Chapter 1 Political Culture
Week 3 - 9/10 Chapter 13 Federalism
Week 4 - 9/17 Chapter 2 The Texas Constitution - Paper #1

**UNIT II: POLITICAL PROCESS**

Week 5 – 9/24 Chapter 8 Elections, Voting and Campaigns
Week 6 – 10/1 Chapter 9 Political Parties
Week 7 – 10/8 Chapter 10 Interest Groups – Paper #2

**UNIT III: LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE**

Week 8 – 10/15 Chapter 3 The Legislature
Week 9 -- 10/22 Chapter 4 The Legislative Process - Paper #3
Week 10 – 10/29 Chapter 11 Public Policy

**UNIT IV: EXECUTIVE & JUDICIAL STRUCTURES**

Week 11 – 11/5 Chapter 5 The Executive Branch – Paper #4
Week 12 - 11/12 Chapter 6 The Governor
Week 13 - 11/19 Chapter 7 The Justice System

**UNIT V: LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURE**

Week 14 - 11/26 Chapter 12 Local Government - Paper #5

**REVIEW WEEK**

Week 15 – 12/3 No Reading Assignment – Discussion Board Only

**FINALS WEEK**

Week 16 - 12/10 Paper #6 - Due Wednesday, December 12th
University Policies

Academic Integrity:

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 and the ASU Student Handbook.

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.

Student Affairs is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability, and it is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by emailing studentservices@angelo.edu, or by contacting:

Office of Student Affairs
University Center, Suite 112
325-942-2047 Office
325-942-2211 FAX

Student absence for religious holidays:

A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. A student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence.