

Course Syllabus - POLS 2306.100

Fall 2019

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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(s).
- 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 living life as responsible citizens in our state, as 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 in 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, ISBN: 978-0-9911355-9-2. This is a webtext. A “passkey” can be purchased through the bookstore and then redeemed via the website - or the text can be purchased directly from the website. In both cases, to obtain your copy of the text, take the following steps:

1. Go to **webtexts.com/signin** and register as a new student.
2. Select your state, university and specific course from the list (POLS 2306 Bloomquist).
3. Provide payment via credit card, debit card or passkey purchased from the bookstore.

Additional Readings & Resources/Non-Text:

Additional readings may be assigned and if/when they are, they will be made accessible via Blackboard. I will use Power Point presentations during class, but **these will NOT be posted to Blackboard**.

It is also suggested that throughout the semester, students stay current on Texas state and local governmental activities, since a portion of some classes may be dedicated to discussing current events related to course topics. 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)
Jonathan Tilove, Austin American Statesman Chief Political Writer (Twitter - @JTiloveTX)
Dallas Morning News (print & online)
San Angelo Standard-Times (print & online)
The Texas Tribune (online only)
KLST/KSAN (local TV & online)
City of San Angelo (online)
Tom Green County (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

Grading

Angelo State University employs a letter grade system. Grades in this course are determined on a percentage scale. Based on the course as currently projected, the point totals for each grade would be:

- A = 90-100% (720-800 points)
- B = 80-89% (640-719 points)
- C = 70-79% (560-639 points)
- D = 60-69% (480-559 points)
- F = 59% and below (479 points or below)

Exams:

Four exams will be given across the semester. The course is divided into units with an exam related to the material covered in each unit conducted at the end of that unit. Exams will be multiple choice and available via Blackboard. **Dates for exams, and the time allotted to complete each one, once a student begins an exam, will be announced in class.** Dates for exams are dependent on the rate by which we progress through the material. Each exam is worth 100 points. **Failure to complete an exam will result in a score of ZERO for that exam.**

An optional comprehensive final exam will also be offered. Students who are satisfied with their first four test scores may opt out of the final exam. Students wishing to improve their exam scores may complete the final exam to replace one previous lower test score. Students who fail to complete one of the four required exams, **must** take the comprehensive final exam. **Students may not** substitute a score on the final for any other type of grade (Presentation, Outside Assignment, Text Questions, etc.).

Presentation:

Each student will be required to make a 5 minute in-class presentation in the format outlined by the instructor. Dates for presentations are September 26th, October 3rd, October 24th, and November 14th. Students will choose in class, by random draw, which date one's presentation will be given. The presentation is worth 100 points. **Failure to complete a presentation on the date chosen by the student during the draw will result in a score of ZERO for this assignment.**

Outside Assignment(s):

Outside assignments require students to complete a designed activity or research a specific current event and then write a 3-4 page paper related to that activity/topic. One or two Outside Assignments will be included in the course this semester. Each outside assignment will be announced in class and posted to Blackboard. Students will complete the outside assignment instead of coming to the classroom on a specified day. Students will have at least one week to complete the written portion of the assignment and completed assignments should be submitted via Blackboard in either Word or PDF format. Each outside assignment is worth 100 points. **Failure to complete an outside assignment by the due date will result in a score of ZERO for the assignment.**

Webtext Questions:

Each assigned chapter from the webtext contains questions embedded in the reading material. Students should complete these questions as they complete the reading assignments. The number of completions and the results are tracked by SOOMO Learning and reported back to the professor. Successfully completing all of the questions across the semester is worth 100 points. **Students not completing all of the questions will be scored based on the percentage of questions completed versus the number of questions left blank.**

Course Outline & Reading List

Additional topics not listed here may be included in lectures even if there is no corresponding reading assignment in the text. **This additional material may be included on exams.** A basic course outline is listed below.

August/September

Unit I: TEXAS CONSTITUTION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE: OVERVIEW

Chapter 1	Political Culture
Chapter 2	Texas Constitution
Chapter 3	Federalism

Unit I Exam - Completed on Blackboard

September/October

Unit II: POLITICAL PROCESS

Chapter 11	Elections, Voting and Campaigns
Chapter 12	Political Parties
Chapter 13	Interest Groups

Unit II Exam – Completed on Blackboard

October/November

Unit III: LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE

Chapter 4	The Legislature
Chapter 5	The Legislative Process
Chapter 6	Public Policy

Unit III Exam - Completed on Blackboard

November/December

Unit IV: EXECUTIVE, JUDICIAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL STRUCTURES

Chapter 7	The Executive Branch
Chapter 8	The Governor
Chapter 9	The Judicial Branch
Chapter 10	Criminal Justice System
Chapter 14	Local Government

Unit IV Exam - Completed on Blackboard

December 5th

Review For Final

Finals Week, December 9th – 13th

Final Exam - Completed on Blackboard

Attendance:

Attendance will be taken at every class meeting via sign-in sheet. Students who do not sign the sheet will be marked absent. I do use PowerPoint Presentations in class, but **I do not post these to Blackboard.** Students who are absent from class will need to work with other students to determine what material was missed.

At the end of the semester, each student's attendance level will be used for giving consideration for a "bump" in grade if that student falls one point below a higher grade level. Students with no more than 2 absences across the semester will be given positive consideration for receiving the higher grade. Students with more than 2 absences will not be considered for a higher grade. There is no deduction of points for multiple absences.

Office Hours/Communication:

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, talk to me either before or after class or contact me by email ahead of time to arrange a specific meeting time & place.

If you have questions or concerns email me at denise.bloomquist@angelo.edu. I will check my email periodically during the day on weekdays, and occasionally on the weekends. Please do not expect an immediate response, but I will try to answer emails within 24 hours of receiving them. 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.**

Recording Devices, Computers, iPods, Tablets and the Indispensable Cell Phone:

The use of recording devices is not allowed in class (except in cases of ADA accommodation).

The use of tablets, iPods or similar entertainment devices is not allowed in class.

The use of computers, tablets and cell phones solely for note taking purposes is allowed in class.

And while I am as big a fan as anyone of hearing "Old Town Road" or "Never Really Over" as a ringtone, the fact is that cell phones are a distraction. As a courtesy to me and your classmates, please turn your phone to silent before entering class. If you don't, the rule is this: If your phone rings in class, I get to answer it and talk to whomever is on the line. I don't care if it's your mother, your brother, your doctor, your lawyer, your significant other or that "special someone" you met at the party last night, as I'm experienced and comfortable talking with strangers. **So if you choose to leave your phone on, know you have been forewarned, and you do so at your own peril.**

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.

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

Title IX at Angelo State University:

Angelo State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. Sex discrimination, sexual misconduct, public indecency, interpersonal violence, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and stalking are not tolerated at ASU. As a faculty member, I am a Responsible Employee meaning that I will report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance in order to connect students with resources and options in addressing the allegations reported. You are encouraged to report any incidents to ASU's Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator. You may do so by contacting:

Michelle Boone, J.D.
Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator
Mayer Administration Building, Room 200
325-942-2022
michelle.boone@angelo.edu

You may also file a report online 24/7 at www.angelo.edu/incident-form.

If you are wishing to speak to someone about an incident in confidence you may contact the University Health Clinic and Counseling Center at 325-942-2173 or the ASU Crisis Helpline at 325-486-6345.

The Office of Title IX Compliance also provides accommodations related to pregnancy (such as communicating with your professors regarding medically necessary absences, modifications required because of pregnancy, etc.). If you are pregnant and need assistance or accommodations, please contact the Office of Title IX Compliance utilizing the information above.

For more information about Title IX in general you may visit www.angelo.edu/title-ix.