POLS 2306: Texas Government: Summer I, 2021

Professor: Watts  Email: dwatts2 @ angelo.edu  Phone: 942-2262
Ras 223, Office Hours: TH: Noon-3 p.m.; all other office meetings by confirmed appointment only.

Please note, I do not have internet access at home due to continuing online “harassment” activities, according to the FBI, so responses to emails will be delayed.

Course Description: This is a survey course on Texas state and local government. As part of ASU’s core Curriculum, it is designed to provide students with the basic knowledge and understanding of fundamental concepts related to the roles of state-level governmental and non-governmental political institutions.

Student learning objectives (SLOs):
Critical Thinking (CT1): Promote students’ ability to think critically about politics, the roles and authority of government institutions and officials, and the dynamic nature of the Texas political system. Thinking critically means more than simply memorizing information, it is the ability to gather, analyze, and synthesize information that is factual and relevant to a question, issue, or event.
Communication (CS1 & CS2): Students will develop the ability to express their knowledge and understanding of concepts through effective written and oral communication.
Social Responsibility (SR2 & SR3): Gain an understanding of the contexts that shape and influence the national government’s actions and decisions on public policy. The study of the U.S. political system allows for a greater appreciation of civic responsibility and ability to engage others in civil discourse.
Personal Responsibility (PR1): Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to understand and evaluate political choices and outcomes.


Angelo State policies: As outlined in ASU’s student handbook, students are responsible for regular and punctual attendance at all scheduled classes. The university reserves the right to deal with individual cases of non-attendance. The handbook also outlines the university’s Academic Honor Code, the parameters of academic integrity, and students’ responsibilities. Decisions on Incompletes will be made after consulting with the Office of Student Affairs.

Blackboard: This course has a Blackboard site where you can obtain a copy of the syllabus, lecture slides, course assignments, and your grades. When necessary, the course instructional designer or I will post announcements or send emails about any changes to the course schedule.

Policies on examinations: Anyone caught cheating will immediately forfeit their exam and receive an automatic “F” for the assignment.
-It is your responsibility to contact me if you miss an exam due to a university-recognized accommodation or illness to request an online exam be reopened. The makeup exam must be taken before the next exam is made available online. Failure to do so within this time frame will result in an automatic “F” for that exam.
-In the case of an emergency or events that prevents you from completing course assignments within their given timeframes, a formal notification from the Office of Student Affairs will be required.
Accommodations: Any student who needs accommodations due to a disability, participation in university-related activities, religious observances, family matters, or a difficult life event should contact the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible so they can assist you with making arrangements and notifying your professors. The office is located in the Houston Harte University Center, Room 112, and additional information can be found on ASU’s website.

Title IX: The University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, and other types of sexual misconduct. Faculty members are obligated by law and university policy to report any allegations I am notified of to the Office of Title IX Compliance. Students are encouraged to report any incidents of sexual misconduct directly to Michelle Boone (michelle.boone@angelo.edu; 325-942-2173), Director of Title IX Compliance, Mayer Administration Building, Room 210.
Assignments and Exams

-Exams (100 points each): All three exams will follow the fill-in-the-blank, or “matching,” format.

  Exams 1 and 2: Chapters covered are noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus.

  Final Exam: The Final Exam is comprehensive and will consist of new material from the chapters listed in Part III of the course outline and select terms from the first and second exams.

-The times and dates each exam must be completed are listed in the course outline section of the syllabus.

-Texas Quizzes (25 points each): Seven quizzes will be given throughout the semester and based on the assigned reading. Quizzes must be completed by the time and date designated on the course Blackboard site and the Course Outline section of this syllabus.

  -The lowest quiz grade will be dropped at the end of the semester but all quiz columns and scores will still remain visible on Blackboard. A column labelled as the quiz total column will show the points earned with the lowest quiz score dropped and will be the point total calculated into your final grade.

-Texas Legislature Research (100 points): This assignment is designed to familiarize students with official, state government sources for information on Texas lawmakers and public policy. A worksheet with detailed instructions will be provided on Blackboard. Five points will be deducted for each day past the designated deadline listed in the course outline (June 24th, 5 p.m.).

  -Complete the assignment using the worksheet on the course site, or drop off a completed, print copy of the worksheet in the main office of the Political Science and Philosophy Department or during my listed office hours. Emailed submissions will not be accepted.

-Extra Credit Quiz: An optional quiz that reviews course material will be posted prior to the final exam. It will follow the same format as the previous quizzes and is also worth 25 points. Points earned will be added under the Extra Credit column. This is the one and only extra credit opportunity for the course.

Final grades will follow the University's grading scale:
A: 100-90%; B: 89-80%; C: 79-70%; D: 69-60%; F: 59% or below

Additional Notes: Class Etiquette and Student Conduct: Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating on an assignment will receive an F for that assignment.

  The Department of Political Science and Philosophy is committed to support the learning of all students. As part of maintaining the decorum of the online classroom, students are expected to behave appropriately and in a responsible manner.

Missed deadlines: Decisions regarding missed deadlines will be made at the discretion of the instructor.

If you have technical difficulties accessing course material, quizzes, or exams on Blackboard contact the university’s e-Learning or IT departments to identify the problem, not your professors, unless instructed otherwise.
Course Outline: It is your responsibility to read the assigned material, including the examples and case studies in each chapter.

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Part I: Texas Political System
- June 7-14
  Chapter 1, Struggle for Texas
  Chapter 2, Texas Constitution
  Chapter 3, Federalism

  Texas Quizzes (1-2) for Part I will close on June 11th at 5 p.m.

  Exam 1, Chapters 1-3; Opens: June 12th at 8 a.m. - Closes: June 14th at 5 p.m.

Part II: Texas Government (starting with this section, the assigned chapters do not follow the order in which they are listed in the textbook)
- June 15-28 (Note: Monday, June 28th, last day to drop Summer I classes)
  Chapter 7, The Legislature
  Chapter 8, Governors of Texas

  Texas Legislature Research (worksheet, due June 24 by 5 p.m.):
  Opens: June 15th at 8 a.m. - Closes: June 24th at 5 p.m.

  Chapter 9, Plural Executive and the Bureaucracy
  Chapter 10, Texas Judiciary

  Texas Quizzes (3-5) for Part II will close on June 24th at 5 p.m.

  Exam 2, Chapters 7-10; Opens: June 25th at 8 a.m. - Closes: June 28th at 5 p.m.

Part III: Texas Elections and Political Organizations
- June 29-July 9 (last day, Summer I)
  Chapter 4, Voting and Elections
  Chapter 5, Political Parties
  Chapter 6, Interest Groups

  Texas Quizzes (6-7) for Part III will close on July 5th at 5 p.m.

  Extra credit quiz; Opens: July 2nd, at 8 a.m. - Closes: July 9th, at 5 p.m.

FINAL EXAM: Covers-select content from Exams 1 and 2, and (new content) Chapters 4, 5, and 6 (Opens) July 2nd, at 8 a.m. - (Closes) July 9th, at 5 p.m.