POLS 2306: Texas Government: Fall 2021 (MWF 1-1:50 p.m., A 233)

Professor: Watts  Email: dwatts2 @ angelo.edu  Phone: 942-2262  Office: RAS216
Office Hours: MW: 2-6 p.m.; T: 2-4 p.m.; all others by 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 state government’s actions and decisions on public policy. The study of the Texas 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, 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. Cell phones and computers must be turned off, and all belongings must be placed under your seat. If you miss an exam due to a university-recognized accommodation or illness, it is your responsibility to speak with me and schedule a makeup exam. The makeup exam must be taken within two weeks of the original exam date. Failure to do so within this time frame will result in an automatic “F” for that exam. If an emergency or event prevents you from completing course exams or 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: The chapters covered on Exams 1 and 2 are noted in the Course Outline section of the syllabus.
- Final Exam: 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.

(2) State Government Research Assignments (75 points each): These assignments are designed to familiarize students with official, online sources for information about Texas government and state public policy actions. Worksheets with detailed instructions for each assignment will be provided in class.
- Texas Governors (TG): This assignment is due at the beginning of class on (F), October 22.
- State Legislature (SL): This assignment is due at the beginning of class on (W), December 1.
  Emailed submissions will not be accepted. Late assignments will have 10 points deducted for each day for one week. Worksheets submitted one week past the assignment's designated due date will not be accepted.

Texas Pop Quizzes (TXQ) (25 points each): Seven pop quizzes will be given throughout the semester and based on the assigned reading. Quizzes can only be taken during class. Makeup quizzes will be permitted for absences related to participation in a university sanctioned event or accommodation.
- 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 designated 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.

Extra Credit: An optional pop quiz that reviews course material will be given prior to the final exam, will follow the same format as 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 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 IT department to identify the problem, not your professors, unless instructed otherwise.
Course Outline: It is your responsibility to read assigned material prior to class. You are also expected to bring your textbook to every class.

Every class will begin with a discussion of current news events. Students are expected to be prepared to discuss news topics, especially those related to the course.

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Part I (Chapters 1-4)

Week 1: August 23, 25 & 27
(M) First day of class, review of e syllabus.
(WF) Chapter 1, The Struggle for Texas

Week 2: August 30 & September 1 & 3 (MWF) Chapter 2, The Texas Constitution

Week 3: September 6, 8 & 10
(M) No Class-Holiday
(WF) Chapter 3, Federalism

Week 4: September 13, 15 & 17, (MWF) Chapter 4, Voting and Elections

Week 5: September 20, 22 & 24
(MW) Lecture wrap-up and review
(F) Exam 1, covers Chapters 1-4

Part II (Chapters 7-10)

Week 6: September 27, 29 & October 1 (MWF) Chapter 7, The Legislature

Week 7: October 4, 6 & 8, (MWF) Chapter 8, Governors of Texas
(F) Texas Governors research assignment: worksheet distribution and review.

Week 8: October 11, 13 & 15, (MWF) Chapter 8, The Plural Executive and the Bureaucracy

Week 9: October 18, 20 & 22, (MWF) Chapter 10, The Texas Judiciary
(F) Texas Governors research assignment is due.

Week 10: October 25, 27 & 29
(MW) Lecture wrap-up and review
(F) Exam 2, covers Chapters 7-10

Part III (Chapters 5, 6, and 14)

Week 11: November 1, 3 & 5, (MWF) Chapter 5, Political Parties

Week 12: November 8, 10 & 12, (MWF) Chapter 6, Interest Groups

Week 13: November 15, 17 & 19 (MWF) Chapter 14, Public Policy in Texas
(F) State Legislature research assignment: worksheet distribution and review.

(M) November 22: Last day to drop classes.

Week 14: November 22, 24 & 26
(M) Library day-work on State Legislature assignment.
(WF) No Class-Thanksgiving break

Week 15: November 29 & December 1, 3 (MWF) Lecture wrap-up and final exam review; Extra credit quiz
(W) State Legislature research assignment is due.

FINAL EXAM: Content from Exams 1 and 2; Chapters covered in Part III of the course outline.
POLS 2306-030: (W) December 8th: 10:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m. (A 135)
POLS 2306-050: (W) December 8th: 1-3 p.m. (A233)