

GOVT-2306-203: Texas Government
Spring 2020
South Plains College
Department of Social Sciences

Course Time & Location: Monday and Wednesday, 5:30-6:45 PM, Reese Center – Reese Center, Building 3, Room 325

Instructor Information

Instructor: Tyson Meredith, M.A.

Office Location: By Appointment

Office Phone: (806) 716-2453

Office Hours: By Appointment

E-Mail: tmeredith@southplainscollege.edu

Course Descriptions and Objectives

This course is a study of the functions performed in the American system of state governments, with special reference to the development of governance in Texas and its Constitutions. This course satisfies the Legislative requirements for teacher certification.

Credits: 3 Lecture Hours

Prerequisites: TSI compliance in Reading

Course Objective

Government 2306, as taught at South Plains College, is a reading intensive course designed to acquaint the learner with the origin and development of the Texas Constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and intergovernmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas. This course meets the statutory requirements as set forth by the State of Texas. Approval Number: 45.1002.5125

Course Learning Outcomes and Assessments

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who have completed this course will be expected to:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas Constitution
2. Demonstrate an understanding of state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government
3. Describe separation of powers and checks and balances in both theory and practice in Texas
4. Demonstrate knowledge of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of Texas Government
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups and political parties in Texas
6. Analyze state and local elections processes
7. Describe the rights and responsibilities of citizens
8. Analyze issues, policies and political culture in Texas

Fundamental Component Areas (FCAs)

Students will be expected to perform satisfactorily in four FCAs.

1. Critical Thinking Skills – to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information by:
 - a. Generating and communicating ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information,
 - b. Gathering and assessing information relevant to a question,
 - c. Analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing information.
2. Communication – to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral or visual communication by: developing, interpreting, and expressing ideas through written, oral, or visual communication.

3. Social Responsibility Skills – to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively I regional, national, and global communities by:
 - a. Demonstrating intercultural competence,
 - b. Identifying civic responsibility,
 - c. Engaging in regional, national, and global communities.
4. Personal Responsibility –to include the ability to connect choices, action, and consequences to ethical decision-making by:
 - a. Reading, understanding and affirming agreement and acceptance of principles, guidelines and requirements set forth in the “Statement of Personal Responsibility of Students” (Attached)
 - b. Evaluating choices and actions and relating consequences to personal decision-making
 - c. Accepting personal responsibility for decisions and actions taken or not taken

There are some important things to know about this class. Besides learning the basics of Texas Government, students will be encouraged to think critically. To succeed in this class, then, you must be actively engaged and participate in discussion concerning the material of the course. It is also important to note that in order to help prepare you for the professional environment that many of you will enter upon graduating from college; we will conduct class in a professional manner. By enrolling in this course, you are committing to attending class and being punctual, being prepared and participating, and communicating with each other and myself in a professional and respectful manner.

Textbooks and Other Materials

This course does not have a required text. However, for supplemental reading, the following texts are optional (...but strongly recommended):

1. *Governing Texas. Anthony Champagne, Edward J. Harpham, and Jason Casellas. 4th Edition. New York and London: W. W. Norton & Company. ISBN: 9780393680119*
Textbook Website: <https://wnorton.com/books/9780393680119>
2. *Lone Star Politics: Tradition and Transformation in Texas, 5th Edition by Ken Collier, Steven Galatas and Julie Harrelson-Stephens (Jan 17, 2017) ISBN: 978-1506373621*
Textbook Website: <https://edge.sagepub.com/collier5e>
3. Blackboard
 - a. **Website:** <https://southplainscollege.blackboard.com/>
 - b. From drop-down select on “SPC Single Sign On” and sign in using your user credentials.

Grading

1. 3 Midterm Exams (50 points each): 75% or 150 total points
2. 2 Writing Assignments (25 points each): 25% or 50 total points

Maximum final score is 100% with grades earned as follows:

A: 180 – 200 B: 160 – 179 C: 140 - 159 D: 120 – 139 F: 119 & below

(All grades will be recorded in the Blackboard grade book for your easy reference.)

Grading Guidelines:

Midterm Exams (75% or 150 total points: three at 25% or 50 points each)

Exams are the primary means by which I track your progress throughout the class. There will be three exams, each worth 25% or 50 points towards of the final grade. The ***three exams are not cumulative.*** However, anything covered in class lecture or discussion is fair game for exams, as are any potential assigned readings. Make-up exams will only be permitted with an official excused absence document

from South Plains College, a physician's office, or likewise. Any make-up exams must be taken on the reserved make-up exam date determined by the instructor. The third exam will take place during the SPC scheduled final exam period. The Spring 2020 Final Exam Schedule is viewable online at the link provided below. No early exams will be permitted without documentation from South Plains College.

<http://www.southplainscollege.edu/academiccalendar/finalexamschedule.php>

Final Exam: Monday, May 4th, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Writing Assignments (25% or 50 points total – 25 points per assignment)

The writing component of the course is worth 25% or 50 points toward your total grade. There will be two short writing assignments, each worth 25 points. Details regarding the writing assignments will be provided in a future handout. If you believe that an error has been made in calculating your final grade, it's your responsibility to provide me with documentation demonstrating that a calculation error has been made.

Late Work

Any potential assignments, potential extra credit exercises, and the course essay must be completed and turned in by the accompanying due date set by the instructor. Due dates will be provided well in advance. Items with due dates must be submitted at the beginning of class for the submission to be considered for full credit. Turning in assignments after the agreed upon due date is circumstantial and may be accepted at the discretion of the instructor...but will be assessed a penalty. For each day a writing assignment is late three points will be deducted from the overall writing assignment grade (of 25 total points). This is equivalent to more than a full letter grade deduction on the assignment!

Extra Credit:

There may be opportunities to receive extra-credit points throughout the semester, therefore no major extra credit opportunities (i.e. additional papers, essays or special assignments...) will be offered to or accepted from students at the end of the semester.

Attendance

It is important that you learn this material, and class attendance is strongly associated with such learning. Attendance is not mandatory in that it is not a recorded component of your grade. Roll, however, will be taken intermittently for SPC purposes (i.e. roster verification). This doesn't imply that attendance should be taken lightly. Repeated absences will be detrimental to your final course grade, in that you will miss important material presented in class that is supplemental to any assigned course materials. Tardiness and leaving class early is also disrespectful to your colleagues and disruptive to lectures. If for any reason you are disruptive to those around you and continually upset the flow of lecture, I reserve the right to ask you to remove yourself from class. Please be respectful to those around you. The only absences that I will excuse are official university events sponsored by official university organizations. You are responsible for all work assigned for any class regardless of your attendance. Ask your classmates for notes and other important information you miss if absent. Any student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known 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 exam or complete an assignment from which the student is excused.

If a student accumulates **FOUR unexcused absences**, it will result in the student being dropped from the course, while receiving a final letter grade of an "F". "Whenever absences become excessive and, in the instructor's opinion, minimum course objectives cannot be met due to [the excessive] absences, the student can be withdrawn [i.e., dropped] from the course..." – South Plains College Attendance Policy

Participation

Active participation is crucial to your success in this class and, more broadly, to the success of any learning experience. By enrolling in this class, you are committing to participating actively in class. Much like attendance, participation will not be a recorded component of your grade, but it still is expected. Please demonstrate common courtesy to your fellow students by avoiding the following during class:

- Engaging in text messaging, Facebooking, and similar activities.
- Watching movies, television shows, and other media.
- Answering cell phone calls.

Please silence all devices prior to class to prevent any interruptions to the flow of class!

Additional Policies

Academic Integrity (see General Academic Catalog for Additional Information)

Cheating and/or plagiarism will not be tolerated and may result in removal from the course (see General Academic Catalog for Additional Information).

http://catalog.southplainscollege.edu/content.php?catoid=48&navoid=1286#areas_misconduct

For the purposes of this class, plagiarism refers to offering the work of another as one's own, without proper acknowledgment. Therefore, any student who fails to give credit for quotations or essentially identical expression of material taken from books, encyclopedias, magazines and other reference works, or from the themes, reports or other writings of fellow student, is guilty of plagiarism.

Moreover, dishonesty of any kind on examinations or on written assignments, illegal possession of examinations, the use of unauthorized notes during an examination, obtaining information during an examination from the textbook or from the examination paper of another student, assisting others to cheat, alteration of grade records, illegal entry or unauthorized presence in an office will be considered cheating.

SPC Policy regarding "Academic English"

South Plains College requires all students to become proficient in "academic English," a form of English that is typically used in academic, professional, and business contexts. While slang, regional idioms, and informal kinds of self-expression are appropriate in some contexts, they are out of place in academic writing. Students in this course are expected to demonstrate proficiency in using the conventions of academic English in all written work. Therefore, I reserve the right to take off points on all written assignments do to use of bad grammar, and general negligence of one's duties to pursue proper written scholarship.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities, including but not limited to physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities, who wish to request accommodations in this class should notify the Disability Services Office early in the semester so that the appropriate arrangements may be made. An official SPC Letter of Accommodation must be provided prior to accommodations being granted. In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodations must provide acceptable documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Services Office. For more information, call or visit the Disability Services Office at Levelland (Student Health & Wellness Office) 806-716-2577, Reese Center (Building 8) 806-716- 4675, or Plainview Center (Main Office) 806-716-4302 or 806-296-9611.

Title IX Pregnancy Accommodations Statement

If you are pregnant, or have given birth within six months, Under Title IX you have a right to reasonable accommodations to help continue your education. To activate accommodations you must submit a Title

IX pregnancy accommodations request, along with specific medical documentation, to the Director of Health and Wellness. Once approved, notification will be sent to the student and instructors. It is the student's responsibility to work with the instructor to arrange accommodations. Contact Chris Straface, Director of Health and Wellness at 806-716-2362 or email cstraface@southplainscollege.edu for assistance.

Nondiscrimination Policy

South Plains College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability or age in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Vice President for Student Affairs, South Plains College, 1401 College Avenue, Box 5, Levelland, TX 79336. Phone number 806-716-2360

Diversity Statement

In this class, the teacher will establish and support an environment that values and nurtures individual and group differences and encourages engagement and interaction. Understanding and respecting multiple experiences and perspectives will serve to challenge and stimulate all of us to learn about others, about the larger world and about ourselves. By promoting diversity and intellectual exchange, we will not only mirror society as it is, but also model society as it should and can be.

Recording Devices: The use of recording devices is prohibited.

Reading and Topic Schedule

Part I

Week 1: Introduction and Thinking like a Political Scientist (Jan. 13-15)

Week 2: The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas (Jan. 20-22)

*****NO CLASS on Monday, Jan. 20th - Martin Luther King Jr. Day*****

Week 3: The Texas Constitution (Jan. 27-29)

Week 4: Texas in the Federal System (Feb. 3-5)

Week 5: The Legislature (Feb. 10-12)

Week 6: The Legislature Cont. (Feb.17-19)

*****EXAM 1*****

Part II

Week 7: The Executive Branch (Feb. 24-26)

Week 8: The Executive Branch Cont. (Mar. 2-4)

*****Mar. 5th - Writing Assignment #1 Due*****

Week 9: Local Government (Mar. 9-11)

Week 10: Political Parties (Mar. 16-18)

*****NO CLASSES Mar. 17-19 - Spring Break*****

Week 11: Campaigns and Elections (Mar. 23-25)

*****EXAM 2*****

Part III

Week 12: Public Policy (Mar. 30-Apr. 1)

Week 13: Public Policy Cont. (Apr. 6-8)

Week 14: The Judiciary (Apr. 13-15)

*****No Class on Monday, Apr. 13th – Easter Break*****

Week 15: Crime, Corrections, and Public Safety (Apr. 20-22)

*****Apr. 22nd - Writing Assignment #2 Due*****

Week 16: Public Policies for a Changing Texas (Apr. 27-29)

*****MAKE-UP EXAM DAY: Wednesday, Apr. 29th** If needed...***

*****EXAM 3 (Final Exam): Monday, May 4th, 5:30-7:30 p.m. *****

IMPORTANT DATES

<http://www.southplainscollege.edu/academiccalendar/index.php>

Exam Dates

EXAM 1 TBD

EXAM 2 TBD

Make-up Exam Day: Apr. 29th (If needed)

EXAM 3 Monday, May 4th, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Writing Assignment Due Dates

Writing Assignment #1: Mar. 5th

Writing Assignment #2: Apr. 22nd

Holidays and Vacation Days

Martin Luther King Jr. Day: Jan. 20th

SPC Spring Break: Mar. 16-20th

Easter Break: Apr. 13th

Other Important Dates

May 4-7th: Finals Week

May 7th: Semester Ends

May 11th (10am): Final Grades Due

**See Academic Catalog for official deadlines and drop dates*

*****This syllabus is a conditional guide for the course. I reserve the right to change course material and requirements as seen necessary and beneficial to course progress and student learning. All dates for covering material and dates of exams are subject to change depending on the progress of the course.***