

GOVT 2306.H1

Texas Government

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Spring 2020

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Office: Social Sciences M

Class Room: Social Sciences 8

Office Hours: MWF 9am-12pm, 1-3pm,

Class Hours: TR 11:00am-12:20pm

TR 9am-11am, 2-3pm,

MTWRF 3-5pm by appointment only

Course Description

The goal of this class is to discover how the State Government affect our everyday lives. We investigate Texas politics through the framework of "interests, interactions, and institutions." We learn that how policies or decisions that are made are impacted by the institutions that they are surrounded by and by the behavioral decisions of key actors.

Throughout the course of the semester, we will identify different actors in Texas politics and investigate why those actors conflict at some times and cooperate at others. Our focus will then turn to political institutions and the origins of these institutions. By the end of the semester, you will understand a variety of political challenges facing the Texas today.

Required Materials

- Jones, Mark P., William Maxwell, Ernest Crain, Morhea Davis, Christopher Wlezein, and Elizabeth Flores. 2018. *Texas Politics Today, 18th Edition*. Boston:Cengage Learning.

Course Objectives

Successful students:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
2. Describe state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.

3. Describe separations 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.
5. Evaluate the role of public opinion, interest groups, and political parties in Texas.
6. Analyze the state and local election process.
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.

Course Structure

The primary method of instruction will be lecture, however participation in discussion is also a required component of this course. As a hybrid course, much of the additional instruction will take place on Moodle where articles and other additional reading material will be posted for you to read for the weekly discussion posts. The professor reserves the right to include other methods of instruction, such as, videos, group activities, and other similar methods that facilitate the learning process.

Course Requirements

Readings

Daily reading assignments are listed in the syllabus. Students are required to complete all reading assignments PRIOR to attending the class for which they are assigned. Keeping up with the reading assignments will be essential for success in this class and will facilitate lecture and discussion. Although the overall theme between daily reading assignments and lecture will be the same, the exact material may not. There will be reading assignments that are not covered in class and class lectures that are not covered in the readings. Students are responsible for all information covered by readings and lectures on the exams.

Quizzes

Each chapter of the Jones et. al (2018) textbook will include a quiz over the whole chapter after you complete the readings. Your two lowest quiz grades will be dropped at the end of the semester. These quizzes will be required to be completed by Sunday at 11:59pm of each week. The exact due dates are listed in the schedule. These quizzes will total 20% of your final grade.

Introduction Paper

During the first week of the course, you will be required to complete a short introduction paper. The topic of this paper will be discussed during the first meeting of the course and is due by Sunday, January 26th, 2019 by 11:59 pm on Moodle. This introduction paper is expected to be between 500-700 words long and will encompass 5% of your final grade.

Discussion Posts

During the course of the semester, there will be 5 discussion posts that you will have to participate in. These boards will be given prompts from the required readings that are not included in the textbook. All of these required readings will be posted on Moodle and will not require additional purchases. Each discussion post is expected to answer the addressed question and provide some degree of analysis. These readings will be based on different policies and issues effecting politics of the day and will have a variety of opinions included. You are expected to do a reasonable job of comparing and contrasting these stances in the realm of the question that is asked. Along with posting your own discussion post, you are expected to also reply to 2 different classmates' posts. I am expected to see reasonable and respectful discussion on these forums and if I determine that any language is profane or offensive you will receive an automatic 0 for the week's discussion grade. Your discussion post should range between 350-400 words, and your response to your classmates should range from 150-200 words. The exact due dates are listed in the schedule. These combined will equal 15% of your final grade.

Policy Paper

On our second meeting, Tuesday, January 28th, 2020, we will hold a draft in which students get to pick their topic for their policy paper. This policy will need to be more detailed than just saying you will do a paper over health care, but not too small such as bump stock regulation. This paper must cover multiple opinions and come from a variety of respected sources. If you have a question over a source, please speak to me. This paper may take the form of a compare and contrast of the different policies or another form if you decide upon it. During the draft, there will be a list of possible topics listed on the board. Two students can not write over the same topic, therefore, you will want to have multiple options prepared. Draft order will also be presentation order. The paper is expected to be 2500 words minimum and will have to include a bibliography, which is not included in the final word count. During the last 3 meetings of this class, individuals will present presentations over their paper. This presentation will be 10 minutes. There is no set format for presentation style. Powerpoint, LaTeX, prezzi are all acceptable forms. This paper and presentation are 15% of your final grade.

Midterm Exam

There will be one in-class midterm exam that will encompass 15% of your final grade. This exam will consist of multiple choice questions and at least one short answer essay. The date of this exam is listed in the schedule, but is subject to change.

Final Exam

There will be a final exam that will total 20% of your final grade. This exam will be similar to the midterm exams, by consisting of multiple choice questions and at least two short answer essays. One of these essays will be cumulative, but the remainder of the exam will not be cumulative.

Front Row Extra Credit, Participation, and Attendance

Students sitting in the front row, center section of the class are eligible for extra credit. At the beginning of a period featuring a normal class (thus barring the first meeting and meetings with exams, etc), front row students will sign a sheet of paper passed out by the Instructor. Students coming in tardy after the sheet is signed receive no extra credit. For each day students sit in the front row, they earn about .2 percentage points of extra credit, therefore a student sitting in the front row for every day of normal class will earn 3% in extra credit. The downside of this extra credit is that students seated in this section may be asked discussion and other questions whether they have raised their hands or not and are obliged to answer, and if they are unable to answer they do not receive the bonus points for that day. Front Row seats are first come, first serve, and there is no reserving them. If conflict arises for these seats I will discontinue the extra credit opportunity.

Participation is not a grade in this course, but when it comes to rounding grades up at the end of the semester, participation will be taken into account in this situation. If the Instructor determines that a student has been active then their grades can be rounded up at the end of the semester. This rounding up will only occur within reason meaning about a percentage point. No student should request this change, and will only be done at the Instructors discretion. Requesting this to occur will only reduce the odds of it actually occurring.

Finally, attendance is required for this course and will encompass the final 10% of your overall grade. The university allows instructors to withdraw students after they exceed a set number of absences depending the number of weekly meetings. For this course, the number is 4.

Grading Policy

Grading Scale is as follows:

A = 100-90

B = 89-80

C = 79-70

D = 69-60

F = 59 and below

Any curve will only ever make it easier to obtain a certain letter grade, and not lower the students final grade. The grade will count the assessments using the following proportions:

- 20% Quizzes
- 5% Introduction Paper
- 15% Discussion Posts
- 15% Policy Paper
- 15% Midterm Exam
- 20% Final Exam

- 10% Attendance

Course Policies

During Class

I understand that the electronic recording of notes will be important for class and so computers will be allowed in class. Please refrain from using computers for anything but activities related to the class. Phones are prohibited as they are rarely useful for anything in the course. Eating and drinking are allowed in class but please refrain from it affecting the course. Try not to eat your lunch in class as the classes are typically active.

Attendance Policy

Texarkana College's absentee policy allows instructors to withdraw a student from a course due to excessive absences. If a student leaves and returns during class or leaves the class before the class is over, they **may** be considered absent. Three tardies constitute one absence.

Faculty members **are not** obligated to provide opportunities for students to make-up missed assignments and tests as a result of a student's absence from class.

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of the class every day. A roll sheet will be passed out to all students to sign. If a student is caught signing for another student, they will be treated as if they did not attend the lecture meeting as well as the student they attempted to sign for. If a student is late or missed class, it is their responsibility to notify me. A student is allowed a maximum of 2 absences (which constitutes 1 classes per week. Any more than 2 absences could result in the student being dropped from the course by the professor.

A student should not stop attending a class without formally withdrawing from the course by the institution's published Last Day for Students to Drop. If a student stops attending after the published Last Day for Students to Drop, the student may receive a grade of "F" in the class. The professor will submit the last date of attendance for students receiving a grade of "F" or "W".

Withdrawal from a course(s) **may** affect a student's current or future financial aid eligibility. Students should consult the Financial Aid Office to learn both short and long term consequences of a withdrawal.

Make-up Exams and Missed Assignments

Missed exams will be excused and made-up after the fact in case of illness or personal emergency *only with proper documentation*. Please contact the instructor as soon as possible if an emergency arises that prevents you from taking the exam. Exams missed due to university sponsored events or religious holidays may also be excused, provided that the student informs me of the absence *at least two weeks in advance*. Vacation (e.g. leaving early for fall, spring or semester break) and social engagements will *not* be excused. Absolutely *no* excuse will be accepted for late assignments or

missed exams, unless they are formally approved by the university. There will be no exceptions to this policy. Additionally, the documentation must explicitly state that the student was unable to attend class on the date in question.

Students must provide proper documentation and make-up the missed assignment (or exam) within two weeks of the originally scheduled date. Failure to do so will result in a zero. Make-up exams may differ significantly in both structure and content from the original exam.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Scholastic dishonesty, involving but not limited to cheating on a test, plagiarism, collusion, or falsification of records will make the student liable for disciplinary action after being investigated by the Dean of Students. Proven violations of this nature will result in the student being dropped from the class with an "F". This policy applies campus wide, including TC Testing Center, as well as off-campus classroom or lab sites, including dual credit campuses. This information can be found in the Student Handbook at <https://texarkanacollege.edu>. Don't cheat. Don't be that guy. Yes, you. You know exactly what I'm talking about.

Classroom Conduct

Activities that are disruptive to class will not be tolerated. Arriving late for class, reading newspapers, speaking while others are speaking, packing prior to the end of class, and cell phones are all highly disruptive. Cell phones, ipods, and other similar devices must be turned off during class. Laptops may be used for note-taking only; use of laptops for purposes other than note-taking will result in the banning of laptops from the classroom.

In addition, students are encouraged to discuss and express opinions on the many issues, some controversial, that are covered in class. Although differing opinions are encouraged, I will not tolerate any attacks of a personal nature or statements that single out students based on their race, gender, religion, age, ethnicity, nationality, or sexual orientation. Any student engaging in disruptive or disrespectful activities will be asked to leave the classroom.

Religious Observances

Texas House Bill 256 regarding religious observances requires that faculty and the university make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Students are advised to notify the course instructor well in advance of the conflict and must make-up the missed assignment within two weeks of the original due date.

Disability Act Statement

Texarkana College complies with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and makes reasonable accommodations upon request. Please contact Larry Andrews at 903.823.3283, or go by the Recruitment, Advisement, and Retention Department located in the Administration building for personal assistance.

If you have an accommodation letter from their office indicating that you have a disability which requires academic accommodations, please present it to me so we can discuss the accommodations that you might need for this class. *It is best to request these changes at the beginning if not before the start of class so there is ample time to make the accommodations.*

Course Schedule

The schedule is tentative and subject to change.

Week 01, 01/20 - 01/24: Introduction

- Tuesday - Introduction
- Introduction Paper Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 02, 01/27 - 01/31: Political Culture

- Tuesday - Chapter 1 Jones
- Tuesday - Paper Topic Draft
- Chapter 1 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 03, 02/03 - 02/07: Texas and Federalism

- Tuesday - Chapter 2 Jones
- Discussion Post - Faultlines Chapter 1
- Discussion Post and Chapter 2 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 04, 02/10 - 02/14: Constitution

- Tuesday - Chapter 3 Jones
- Chapter 3 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 05, 02/17 - 02/21: Voting

- Tuesday - Chapter 4 Jones
- Discussion Post - Faultlines Chapter 11
- Discussion Post and Chapter 4 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 06, 02/24 - 02/28: Parties

- Tuesday - Chapter 5 Jones
- Chapter 5 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 07, 03/02 - 03/06: Interest Groups

- Tuesday - Chapter 6 Jones
- Discussion Post - Faultlines Chapter 3
- Discussion Post and Chapter 5 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 08, 03/09 - 03/13: MIDTERM

- Tuesday - **MIDTERM**
- Online - Online Security
- Discussion Post Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 09, 03/16 - 03/20: SPRING BREAK

- Tuesday - NO CLASS
- Online - NO DISCUSSION
- No Quiz or Discussion Post Due this week

Week 10, 03/23 - 03/27: The Legislature

- Tuesday - Chapter 7 Jones
- Chapter 7 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 11, 03/30 - 04/03: Executive

- Tuesday - Chapter 8 Jones
- Discussion Post - Faultlines Chapter 6
- Discussion Post and Chapter 8 Quiz Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 12, 04/06 - 04/10: Judiciary & Law and Due Process

- Tuesday - Chapters 9 & 10 Jones
- Chapters 9 & 10 Quizzes Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 13, 04/13 - 04/17: Local Government & Public Policy

- Tuesday - Chapters 11 & 12 Jones
- Chapters 11 & 12 Quizzes Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 14, 04/20 - 04/24: Paper Presentations

- Tuesday - Presentations Slides and Papers Due at start of class
- Tuesday - Presentations 1-8

Week 15, 04/27 - 05/01: Paper Presentations

- Tuesday - Presentations 9-16
- Final Discussion Post! - Faultlines Chapter 9
- Discussion Post Due Sunday at 11:59pm

Week 16, 05/04 - 05/08: Review and Final Presentations

- Tuesday - Review for Final!
- Tuesday - Presentation spill over

Week 17, 05/11 - 05/15: FINAL EXAM

FINAL EXAM, TUESDAY, May 12th, 11am-1:30pm