

Political Science 2306: Texas Government

Fall 2020

T/Th: 2:00pm – 3:15pm

Group 1 Meets: Tuesdays, 2:00pm-3:15pm

Group 2 Meets: Thursdays, 2:00pm-3:15pm

CHSS 252

CRN: 80074

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Patane

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Office: CHSS 470

Campus Phone: (936) 294-4679

Office Hours: Remote Only.

Due to COVID-19 I won't be meeting with students in person in my office. However, I will be available by email, over Blackboard, and on my Discord server (see below). Other than late night emails, I should be able to get back to students with questions relatively quickly. I am also more than happy to voice or video call with any student who wants to talk or speak relatively face to face.

COVID-19

Because of safety concerns around COVID-19, this in person class will operate slightly differently from what you may be used to. Because there are 89 students, it is impossible to maintain social distancing in the classroom with everyone there.

1. The university is allowing students to individually opt for remote only courses this semester. Even though this class is scheduled in person, students can **email me** to opt-in to take the course remotely. This will not affect assignments, contact with me, or grades in any way. My goal is to provide the same access and material that you would get if you were able to be in class personally, so please make this decision based on the safety of you and your loved ones.
2. The class will be divided into two groups, each group shows up to class **only** on their assigned day.
 - a. If your last name begins with an A – K, you are in **Group 1** and will meet only on Tuesdays.
 - b. If your last name begins with an L – Z, you are in **Group 2** and will meet only on Thursdays.

3. Because of this new structure, and the need to keep both groups synced, there will be a higher emphasis on work outside of the classroom. In person sessions will consist of brief lectures, discussions, and I will help students work on the weekly assignment.

Course Description

This course provides a survey of the institutional and behavioral foundations of Texas government and its role in the US federal system. We will cover the ideational foundations and political culture of Texas, both at its founding and now. Later, we will cover political behavior of various groups in Texas, from political parties to lobbyists. Finally, we will cover the institutional structure of Texas's government branches and how all these factors affect the policy outputs of the Texas government.

Learning Objectives

Course expectations can always be vague. Since you will use these scores at the end of the semester to evaluate this course, looking at the learning objectives from the IDEA evaluations will give you a better picture of what this class will be like. The most important skills you will learn follow:

1. Gaining a basic understanding of the subject (factual knowledge, principles, theories)
2. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual activity
3. Learning to apply course material to improve thinking and problem solving

Course Textbook

There is one assigned textbook for the course. To keep costs down, only the ebook version is required. If students prefer to use a paper textbook, they are welcome to purchase one instead. There is also a paper copy available in my office that students can view during office hours or by appointment.

Anthony Champagne, Edward J. Harpham, and Jason P. Casellas. (2017). *Governing Texas*, Third Edition. W. W. Norton and Company.

Blackboard

All communication for this course will be conducted via the course's Blackboard site and University email. Any supplementary material, assignments, or changes to the course structure will be made available on this site. Each student should ensure that they have access to these materials and are able to receive emails through their student account. Please note that I cannot accept or respond to student emails that come from a non-university address.

Discord

In addition to email and Blackboard, I am using Discord to provide a place where students and I can meet, exchange instant messages, talk over voice/video, and stream. It is entirely free and provides a less formal environment where students can talk to each other or to me. I am also hoping to use this to help with class communication since we will not be meeting in person as frequently.

To set up an account on the Discord server:

1. Visit <https://discordapp.com/>
2. If you don't already have an account, click the "Register" button.
3. Once your account is created (please keep your username class/work appropriate), click on this link: <https://discord.gg/Q3W6FJD> and you should automatically be sent to the server.
4. The service will run fine on a web browser, so there is no need to download any software. If you would like to download the app to use on your phone or home computers, the site has apps available for most platforms.

Once you are on the server, you will see that there are text and voice "channels" for each of my classes this semester. You are free to look in, chat with, and generally interact with the students in classes that are not your own—this is an informal and open space. There are also several text and voice chat rooms available as "Student Study Spaces" where groups of you can work together.

Assignments

Weekly Discussion Board: 10 points each

Exam 1: 100 points

Exam 2: 100 points

Each week, a folder will appear in the "Weekly Assignments" section of the course Blackboard. It will have a checklist of the reading assignments and discussion questions for the week. It will also be where I post the outlines/recordings/lecture slides for that week. Hopefully this will make it easier for students to keep track of what is going on that week.

To prepare for each exam, I will make a review sheet available alongside my lecture slides. This material does not mean that class attendance is not important. Exams will be taken entirely online. On the Friday before the scheduled exam week, we will have an in-class review. We will also have in class activities where students pose their own questions and/or answer practice questions as a group.

Exams will contain 50 multiple choice or true/false questions, worth two points each.

They will be available from midnight on Monday until 11:59pm that Friday. Because I am not sure what resources people will have available at home or in their dorms, and to

reduce stresses because of COVID, exams **will be open book/note**. You will not need to use any special software such as Respondus. You can work together to figure out the answers to questions and to ask me for help.

Keep in mind that this means exam questions will be a little more difficult than you may be used to. Rather than asking basic definitions or checking to see whether you've memorized a fact, these questions will ask you to look at an event or idea that we've studied and determine which term, theory, or process best fits that example. I am more interested in teaching you how to apply the knowledge you'll gain in this class, so questions on exams will ask you to do that.

Outlines, lecture slides, and recordings will all be made available to students on Blackboard.

Grading Scale

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: 59 or lower

Information and University Policies

Academic Dishonesty:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

http://www.shsu.edu/~slo_www/

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

Students with Disabilities Policy:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

Visitors in the Classroom:

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

Copyright on Lecture and Course Materials

Copyright 2020 (Christopher Patane) as to this syllabus and all lectures. During this course, students are prohibited from selling notes or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the instructor teaching this course.

Emergencies, Crises, and Mental Health

Sometimes the study of Political Science involves dealing with difficult material. In some cases, these may reflect or reference your own personal, family, or group experiences. Other times, life events may interfere with your ability to succeed in class. We do not want to neglect our own health or well-being. If you need support, the Counseling Center can be reached at 936-294-1720. The [website](#) also contains self-help resources, and those services available in the Huntsville community.

As with all other parts of the course, students are welcome and encouraged to come talk to me to voice their concerns, seek support, or discuss accommodation for coursework after a crisis.

Class Outline, Schedule

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class, through email, and on the course Canvas site. It is the responsibility of the student to take note of any changes.

Week 1: August 17-21:

Course introduction.

Week 2: August 24-28:

The Political Culture, People, and Economy of Texas

Week 3: August 31-September 4:

Texas Constitution

Week 4: September 7- 11

Civil Rights/Liberties in Texas

Week 5: September 14-18:

Texas in the Federal System

Week 6: September 21-25:

Political Parties

Week 7: September 28-October 2

Campaigns and Elections

Exam 1 due at 11:59pm on October 2

Week 8: October 5-9:
Interest Groups

Tuesday, October 5: Last day to Register to Vote in Texas.

Week 9: October 12-16:
The Legislature

Week 10: October 19- 23:
The Executive Branch

Week 11: October 26- 30:
The Judiciary

Week 12: November 2- November 6:
Public Finance

Tuesday, November 3: Election Day, no class. Get out there and vote!
Tuesday evening I will host a remote results watch stream for anyone interested!

Week 13: November 9-13:
Public Policy

Week 14: November 16-20:
Crime and Corrections

Week 15: November 23 & December 1:

Current Policy Debates

November 25-27, No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Week 16, December 4 - 9:
Finals Week

Exam 2 Due at 11:59pm on December 9.