

POLS 2306.06 **Texas Government** **CRN: 81475 (3 credit hours)**
Fall 2017 **CHSS 242B** **MWF 8:00am**

POLS 2306.07 **Texas Government** **CRN: 81478 (3 credit hours)**
Fall 2017 **CHSS 242B** **TTh 8:00am**

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Office Hours: MW 7:30-8:00am, 10:00am-11:00am; TTh 7:30-8:00, 9:30-10:30am
By appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Some have defined politics as “who gets what when, and how.” In this course we analyze how the state government of Texas decides “who gets what when, and how” and why. Many factors affect how these decisions are made, factors unique to Texas (its history, culture, demographics, geography, and economy) as well as factors such as its place in national and international systems. Within this environment Texas government responds to political demands of individuals, interest groups, political parties, elites, and other governments. We examine the setting in which the government processes these demands, including the Texas constitution, elections, and the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. We analyze the impact of all of these factors on several policies including immigration, health, environment/energy, education, and crime. Beyond learning the basics, we explore how we can influence Texas politics. This semester we will focus on politics as a problem solving process. Students will analyze how societal problems are addressed by the political system in Texas and how people can influence the policy process.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: Course objectives for students include:

- 1. Analyze how Texas’ history, economy, demography, geography, culture, and social characteristics shape Texas political culture and impact politics**
- 2. Analyze the ideological and partisan foundations of Texans’ political attitudes, values and beliefs**
- 3. Analyze the dynamics of interest group and partisan influence on Texas politics**
- 4. Explain the evolution of the Texas Constitution and how its provisions shape the dynamics of politics**
- 5. Analyze the relationship of Texas to local, state, national, and international governments**
- 6. Understand the structure, function, and policy processes of Texas’ legislative, executive, and judicial institutions**
- 7. Understand individuals’ role and responsibilities as stakeholders in Texas’ political system**
- 8. Articulate their policy preferences and formulate strategies for achieving their policy goals**

COURSE READINGS AND VIDEOS:

A. Text – J. R. Henson and the Texas Politics Project at UT Austin. TEXAS POLITICS. Asheville, NC: Soomo Learning, 2017.

This is a webtext; it is accessible only online. To purchase, go to the [Campus Bookstore](#) and search for the textbook listed for this course. When you purchase the text, you will receive an access code. Complete the instructions for setting up the webtext. The webtext will be linked via your SAM email to Blackboard.

You must purchase your own “copy” of the textbook because it is linked directly to Blackboard. You will complete assignments in the webtext and your grade will be recorded automatically in Blackboard. Because it is linked via your individual SAM email to Blackboard, you may not share a text with someone else.

POLS 2306.06 is the MWF 8:00am class.

POLS 2306.07 is the TTH 8:00am class.

B. Additional readings, websites, videos, and other materials as assigned. They will be posted on Blackboard each week.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Exams: There will be three exams and an optional final. Each of the exams will consist of 40-50 multiple choice and true/false questions. You will need a Scantron 882 and a number 2 pencil for each exam. Exams 1-3 are not comprehensive. Each exam is worth 16% of the course grade. Exams make up 48% percent of the course grade.

The Final Exam is comprehensive. **The Final Exam is optional for those who have taken Exams 1-3.** If you are satisfied with your grades on Exams 1-3, you may choose to not take the Final exam. If you wish to attempt to raise your grade, you may take the Final Exam. If the Final Exam grade is higher than one of your other exams, the Final Exam grade will replace the lowest exam grade. If the Final Exam grade is lower than Exams 1-3, it will be dropped and thus will not hurt your Course grade.

The Final Exam is mandatory for those who have missed Exam 1, 2, or 3. See the Make Up Exam Policy below.

Make Up Exam Policy: There are no make-up exams for missed exams unless you are participating in a university approved activity. Those who miss Exam 1, 2, or 3 **must** take the Final Exam. The Final Exam serves as your make up exam. **It is not**

optional for those who have missed Exam 1, 2, or 3. The Final Exam is comprehensive.

Problem Solving Group Project: Students will participate in a group project which focuses on the problem solving function of Texas government. Groups will present their findings on how the state of Texas handled the problem. The project grade consists of individual and group components as well as a group member evaluation. Details regarding the group project will be posted on Blackboard. The Problem Solving Project constitutes 40 percent of the course grade.

Webtext Assignments: Each chapter in the webtext includes questions over the chapter material. Students will answer these questions for each chapter assigned. Out of the 9-10 webtext assignments, the highest 8 webtext grades will count towards the course grade, each counting as 2% of the course grade. The total webtext assignments are worth 16% percent of the course grade.

COURSE EVALUATION:

Assignments		% of Course Grade
Exams		
Exam 1		16%
Exam 2		16%
Exam 3		16%
*Optional Final replaces lowest test grade		
	Total Exam Points	48% of course grade
Project		
Part 1		6%
Part 2		7%
Part 3		8%
Part 4 – Final Product		15%
Total Project Points	Total Project Points	36% of course grade
Assignments		
	Webtext Assignments	
Webtext Assignments 1		2%
Webtext Assignments 2		2%
Webtext Assignments 3		2%
Webtext Assignments 4		2%
Webtext Assignments 5		2%

Webtext Assignments 6		2%
Webtext Assignments 7		2%
Webtext Assignments 8		2%
9* lowest webtext grade dropped		0
	Total Webtext Assignment Points	16% of course grade
	Total Points for Course	100%

Grading Scale:

Course Grade	Average
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Below 60%

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly, to be punctual, to be prepared, and to not be disruptive. Attendance will be taken daily. Students will be penalized for missing in-class group work sessions.

Participation in class discussion: Students are expected to participate in class discussions. Do the readings. Be prepared. Join in the intellectual exchange that enhances the class. The reward for participating is that you do not have to hear me lecture the entire class period, you do not have to hear a few students dominate the discussion, and you will get to know more about your fellow classmates.

Communication: Students should check Blackboard and their SAM email regularly. I will communicate with you via your Sam email. I will also post announcements, new assignments, and exam grades on Blackboard. You are responsible for the material posted there or sent via email to your Sam email account. You will communicate with your group via Blackboard.

Classroom Conduct:

-Turn off your electronic devices. Do not text in class. You may use your laptops only for class related tasks.

-It is disruptive for students to walk in and out of class. If you find you must leave for any reason, do may not re-enter the classroom. Once you leave you may not come back into class.

-Do not talk to each other while others are talking. I will ask you to leave if you disrupt the class. You will not be allowed to return to class until we have a meeting regarding your disruptive behavior.

-Academic Dishonesty Policy: Students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach and to maintain complete honesty and integrity in the academic experiences. Academic dishonesty includes cheating on exams or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. Any student found cheating on exams or plagiarizing another's work will be given an F for the course.

-Cell Phone Policy: Students are to turn off all cell phones and other electronic equipment while in the classroom. The use by students of cell phones, pagers, or similar communication devices during scheduled class-time is prohibited. All such devices should be turned off or put in a silent (vibrate) mode and should not be taken out during class.

Any use of cell phones or other electronic devices during a test period is prohibited. Even the visible presence of a cell phone or other device during the test period will result in a zero for that test. This includes the use of headphones, earphones, and earbuds. During the test these instruments should be left at home or stored securely in such a way so they cannot be seen or used by the student. If you are found to have an electronic device out during an exam you will receive an F not only for the exam but also for the course.

Additional University Policies

IDEA Evaluation: Students will receive a link to the IDEA faculty evaluation system. You are to complete the evaluation of me and submit it before the evaluation deadline near the end of the semester. It is very important that you complete the online evaluation. Student evaluations of faculty are a significant and important component of a faculty's performance evaluation. Thank you for your participation.

University policies regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, Religious Holidays, Instructor Evaluation, Visitors in the Classroom, and the Classroom Rules of Conduct will be observed. These policies can be found at <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/> and at <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/>.

Course Outline*

Week	Topics
Week 1	Intro
Week 2	Context of Texas Politics
Week 3	Political Culture
Week 4	Ideology and Partisanship
Week 5	Political Parties
Week 6	Interest Groups
Week 7	Participation
Week 8	Voting
Week 9	Texas Constitution
Week 10	Legislature
Week 11	Legislature
Week 12	Governor
Week 13	Executive Branch
Week 14	Courts
Week 15	Group Presentations
Week 16	Finals

***The professor reserves the right to change the course outline, the course syllabus, and course assignments at any time.**