

**CRN 80403 – POLS 2306.09:
Texas Government
Department of Political Science
3.0 Credit Hours – Fall 2017**

Location: CHSS 232

Class Time: MWF - 10:00 – 10:50

Instructor: Blake Tritico

Office: AB4 Room 472

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Email: btritico@shsu.edu

Office Hours: MW– 1:00 – 1:450 and by
appointment

Course Description and Objectives:

This course is a study of the organization, functions, and administration of the several branches and bureaucracy of the Texas state and local government, including a study of the numerous Texas constitutions. The primary factors considered relate to the three branches of government – judicial, executive, legislative – current Texas Constitution, events that shaped the state, and current events. Emphasis is placed on the interaction of these subsystems.

Specific Course Objectives:

- Gaining skills in critical thinking
- Gaining skills in communication, both orally and in writing

Course Materials:

1. The textbook is available online, at no cost.
2. Blue Book (8 1/2x11)– available at the campus book store

From the Course Catalog:

POLS 2306 - Texas Government

This course examines Texas government and politics, including political culture; the Texas Constitution; Texas' role in the federal system; individuals' political values and participation; interest groups, parties, elections and campaigns; the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; and fiscal, social, and economic policies. Credit 3.

3.000 Credit hours

3.000 Lecture hours

Course Assessment:

The following are used to assess knowledge and progress against the stated outcomes of the course: Four (4) In-class Writing Assignments and four (4) in-class Exams.

Exams:

There are four, in-class, closed book, no notes, exams and an optional final exam. All exams during the semester are essay exams. The essay question is provided in advance. There are NO opportunities to earn extra credit points on these exams.

Exam Review:

Time is set aside during regular class meetings for review prior to exams. You are urged to bring specific questions on review days.

Final Exam:

You are required to take the cumulative final exam in this class. However, if your final exam score is higher than your lowest in-class exam score your final exam grade replaces the lowest exam grade. You may replace only one (1) of the four exam grades with the score of the final exam. You may replace a score of zero (0) with your final exam score. If your final exam score is lower than all four of your in-class exam scores, the final exam score is discarded.

Make-Up Exam Policy:

You are expected to take the exams at the scheduled times. There are no opportunities to make up exams in this class. Your final exam score substitutes for any and all of the exams you miss during the semester.

Writing Assignments:

There are four writing assignments in this class. They are done in class during a writing workshop. This provides you with the skills to organize and critically analyze work for an essay. Below is the Grading Rubric for the Writing Assignments and Exams.

Writing Assignment/Term Paper Rubric:

Grade	0-7 Points	8 - 16 Points	17 - 25 Points
Assignment Components			
Identification of author's thesis	Author's thesis not identified.	The author's thesis is present, but either not in the introduction of the assignment or vaguely identified.	The author's thesis is clearly and concisely identified in the introduction.
Author's thesis put into proper context	No context for author's thesis provided.	Some context for author's thesis is included, but it remains unclear why the argument is significant.	The author's thesis is placed into its proper context with author's viewpoint and reason for writing. Significance of argument is clear.
Recognition of author's most important supporting evidence	No recognition of the author's most important supporting evidence.	Some supporting evidence is recognized, but not the most important for the thesis.	The author's most important supporting evidence is recognized and stated clearly.
Evaluation of author's argument and evidence	No evaluation of author's argument and evidence.	Evaluation of author's argument is weak, unconvincing, or incomplete.	Persuasive evaluation of the author's argument and evidence.
Mechanics, style, and organization	No topic sentences. Writing is unclear. Many errors in grammar and spelling.	Some topic sentences missing. Paragraphs are choppy or too long. Unclear writing. Occasional errors in grammar and spelling.	Topic sentences identify key points. Paragraphs connect and flow logically. Correct grammar and spelling throughout.

Course Grades:

Exam 1	100 points
Exam 2	100 points
Exam 3	100 points
Exam 4	100 points
Final Exam	Replaces lowest Exam grade
Writing Assignments (4)	100 points (25 each)
Total	500 points

Grading Scale:

450 - 500 points	A
400 – 449.999 points	B
350 – 399.999 points	C
300 – 349.999 points	D
299 points or less	F

Extra Credit:

Extra credit may be available during the semester on an ad hoc basis.

Please note:

THERE IS NO AVERAGING, PERCENTAGE CALCULATIONS, OR ROUNDING INVOLVED IN THE COURSE GRADE CALCULATIONS – IT IS BASED ON THE RAW NUMBER OF POINTS EARNED OVER THE COURSE OF THE SEMESTER. Students asking Mr. Tritico to calculate their grade for them will be penalized 100 points.

Attendance Policy:

Your grade for attendance involves attending class regularly and being prepared to engage actively with the material we are covering in class. This means you must be present, attentive, and prepared (having completed the reading assigned for that date). Sleeping, reading unrelated to HIST 1301, surfing the net, texting, looking at the Web, or other activities are not acceptable during class time. If you engage in such activities, I will mark you absent and ask you to leave.

If you are absent more than twice, your grade is lowered. Attendance is graded as follows:

0 – 2 absences = A

3 absences = B

4 absences = C

5 absences = D

6 or more absences = F

Absences from class are not excused unless you give me proof of illness (such as a doctor's note) or a death in your family within two class meetings of the absence.

Relevant University Policies:

Information concerning policies relevant to this course and syllabus can be found here: www.shsu.edu/syllabus

Academic Honesty:

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/dept/academic-affairs/faculty-handbook/academic_dishonesty.html

Classroom Rules of Conduct:

Be nice. Treat others as you want to be treated. If you have any questions as to what exactly this means see: <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/>

Americans with Disabilities Act:

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 are expected to visit the Counseling Center which is across from the Lee Drain Building (You can call them at 936-294-1720). If you have a disability that may adversely affect your work in this class, you should register with the SHSU Counseling Center and speak with the professor as soon as possible. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/>

Religious Holidays

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. 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. "Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/>

Instructor Evaluations:

You are asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester. You may also speak directly with Mr. Tritico or the Chair of the Political Science Department (Dr. Tamara Waggener) if you have concerns about the quality of instruction you are receiving.

Changes in the Syllabus:

The Instructor reserves the right to change the course syllabus at any time.