

# TEXAS GOVERNMENT SYLLABUS

Course Name: **TEXAS GOVERNMENT**  
Course Number: **POLS 2306 7B**  
Credit Hours: **3 Hours**  
Semester & Year: **FALL 2017**  
Department: **POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT**  
Class Time: **Online**  
  
Instructor: **Penny Watson**

## Course Description

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.

## Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Students completing the course will be able to:

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 separate 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 the state and local election process.
7. Identify the rights and responsibilities of citizens.
8. Analyze issues, policies, and political culture of Texas.

## Required Materials

**[TEXAS POLITICS:GOVERN.LONE STAR STATE | Edition: 5TH 16](#)**

Author: JILLSON

ISBN: 9781138842007

Additional required reading is available on Blackboard.

## Professor Contact Information

Professor: Penny Watson

Email: [plw010@shsu.edu](mailto:plw010@shsu.edu)

Office Hours: contact through email or by appointment

*This syllabus is best understood as a contract between you (the student) and me (Professor Watson, the instructor). It outlines what you must do to be successful in this course. Read it carefully and make sure to meet the course requirements. If you have any questions or concerns about the policies contained in this syllabus, please contact me!*

## Course Grades & Assignments

### Grades

Course grades are based on the following:

20%	Reading Quizzes
20%	Discussion Board Posts and Learning Activities
15%	Exam 1
15%	Exam 2
15%	Exam 3
15%	Exam 4

### Reading Quizzes

Reading is a critical part of this course so that you can gain factual knowledge prior to class lectures, discussions, and activities related to the topic. To keep you accountable for the reading, 20% of your final course grade is comprised of your performance on reading quizzes. There are 11 reading quizzes. Your lowest quiz grade is dropped, making your score an average of your 10 best reading quizzes grades.

There is an assigned reading and an accompanying quiz each week, shown in the Course Schedule. The quizzes are taken online on Blackboard and are due by 11:59 pm each Tuesday. They are comprised of 10 multiple-choice questions related to the required reading. They are “open book,” which means you may use the reading to answer the questions. Grades for reading quizzes are automated and should appear in the Blackboard gradebook immediately after completion.

### Learning Activities

To explore the topics I cover in the online lectures in more depth, we will complete a series of Learning Activities throughout the semester; some of these will be posts on a discussion board. These will be noted in the applicable week folder. They are due by 11:59pm on the Tuesday of that week.

Learning Activities are varied in content, ranging from watching a video to analyzing information. Grading criteria will be presented for each assignment so that expectations are clear. The turnaround for grades on these assignments is one week after the due date. Like the Reading Quizzes, your lowest Learning Activity grade is dropped. The average of your top ten grades on these Learning Activities comprises 20% of your final course grade.

### Exams

There will be four non-cumulative exams in the course. Each exam counts for 15% of your final course grade; collectively the four exams comprise 60% of your final course grade. The scheduled dates of these exams are noted in the Course Schedule. They are comprised of 33 multiple-choice questions. Grades for exams are automated and should appear in the Blackboard gradebook immediately after completion.

### **Optional Final Exam**

A final exam will open on December 4 at 11:59 pm and close on December 7 at 11:59 pm. It is cumulative – covering all material in the course – and comprised of 50 multiple-choice questions. The final exam is optional and will replace your lowest exam grade only if you make a higher grade. Final exam grades are automated and should appear in the Blackboard gradebook immediately after completion.

## **Grading Policies**

### **Make-Up Exams and Assignments**

Make-up exams and assignments will be given *only* if you have an excused absence or documented emergency. Excused absences include: participation in a university-affiliated activity that requires you to miss class, a religious holiday (and travel related to that holiday), death or major illness in your immediate family, illness of a dependent family member, participation in legal proceedings that require your presence, injury or illness too severe to allow you to attend class, or required participation in military duties.

To be excused, you should notify me in writing (an e-mail message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if possible. In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. accident or emergency), you should provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence. If needed, you must provide additional documentation substantiating the reason for the absence within one week of the last date of the absence. Make-up exams and assignments must be completed on the day agreed upon by you and me. Extended absences (missing more than three days) should be processed per Student Guidelines; see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/absence.html>.

### **Late Assignments**

Late assignments are *not* accepted. In the event of an emergency or excused absence (per the policy listed above), you may be given additional days to complete the assignment without penalty if we discuss it and agree that more time is needed.

### **Extra Credit**

Extra credit is not routinely given in this course. If there is an extra credit opportunity, it will be announced on Blackboard in advance.

### Final Course Grade

Your final course grade is comprised of: 20% Reading Quizzes, 20% Learning Activities, 15% Exam 1, 15% Exam 2, 15% Exam 3, and 15% Exam 4 (see "Course Grades and Assignments" above for details). Final course letter grades are assigned as follows:

- A = 90.0 – 100.0
- B = 80.0 – 89.9
- C = 70.0 – 79.9
- D = 60.0 – 69.9
- F = 59.9 and below

No extra credit is offered at the end of the term. Nor are grades rounded. The letter grade reported at the end of the term corresponds to the grade you earned.

### Calculating Your Final Course Grade

The final course grade is a weighted total. To calculate your final course grade, use the instructions and tables shown below. These are also available on Blackboard for download as excel files.

First, record your reading quiz grades. Then strike out the lowest grade and average the remaining ten scores. The average is calculated by summing the highest ten grades, then dividing by ten. Do the same for your Learning Activity grades.

Step 1: Calculate Quiz and Activity Averages					
Reading Quizzes			Learning Activities		
Reading Quiz 1		Average (sum of highest 10 grades, divided by 10)	Learning Activity 1		Average (sum of highest 10 grades, divided by 10)
Reading Quiz 2			Learning Activity 2		
Reading Quiz 3			Learning Activity 3		
Reading Quiz 4			Learning Activity 4		
Reading Quiz 5			Learning Activity 5		
Reading Quiz 6			Learning Activity 6		
Reading Quiz 7			Learning Activity 7		
Reading Quiz 8			Learning Activity 8		

Reading Quiz 9			Learning Activity 9		
Reading Quiz 10			Learning Activity 10		
Reading Quiz 11			Learning Activity 11		

Second, record these averages and your exam grades in the table below. Then multiply them by the percentage that they are weighted. For example, consider this hypothetical case: You make a 90 as your Reading Quiz average, because Reading Quizzes comprise 20% of your final course grade, multiply  $90 \times .20$  to equal 18.4 points. Calculate the weighted points for each component. Finally, add those points together. That sum is your projected final course grade.

Step 2: Calculate Weighted Total			
	Score	Percentage	Weighted Points
Reading Quiz Average		20% or .20	
Learning Activity Average		20% or .20	
Exam 1		15% or .15	
Exam 2		15% or .15	
Exam 3		15% or .15	
Exam 4		15% or .15	
SUM TOTAL =			

If you would like to see how an anticipated grade on the optional final exam would affect your final course grade – simply replace your lowest exam grade for Exam 1, 2, 3, or 4 with what you expect (or are aiming for) on the optional final. Then calculate the weighted points as instructed above and sum all components together. The weighted total is your projected final course grade with your anticipated final exam score. You may substitute multiple optional final exam scores to determine the minimum score needed to earn the letter grade you are aiming for.

## Policies

### Attendance

You are expected to *participate in the discussions on blackboard*. A portion of your course grade reflects your participation in class, and, therefore, it is imperative that you participate to be successful in this course. If you have scheduling conflicts, please see me to make suitable arrangements. See the Make-Up Exams and Assignments policy above for the full list of excused absences.

### Preparation for Class

You are expected to be prepared for class. This means completing the assigned reading and accompanying reading quiz *before* the corresponding class meeting. If you are struggling with the course reading, I encourage you to visit the Reading Center for help: [http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg_www/).

### **Course Communication**

All emails sent to me directly (plw010@shsu.edu) or via Blackboard email will be responded to within 48 hours during the work week (Monday-Friday). Emails sent on the weekend (after Friday at 5pm until Monday at 8am) will be responded to the following Monday. Please be mindful of this email policy when meeting course deadlines.

When communicating with me or your classmates (via email or in Blackboard), *you are expected to use professional standards, including proper salutations, capitalization/grammar*. This means you write complete sentences and do not use “text” lingo! You may consider writing your email or discussion board response in Word, to check for spelling and grammar, then paste it into your electronic communication. See the below email for an example of a professional email.

#### **Example Email – use professional standards in course communication**

Dear Professor Watson,  
I am in Section 5 of your POLS 2306 course. I have a scheduling conflict with Exam 2. I’m a member of the Arts Council, and my organization is taking a trip that day. I can provide a letter confirming this. Could I take the exam on a different date?

Thank you,  
Ryan Williams

## **University Policies**

### **Student with Disabilities**

Sam Houston State University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. The Counseling Center may be reached at (936) 294-3786. Once registered, please meet with me as soon as possible so that we can make all needed accommodations in the class. All disclosures of disabilities are kept confidential. For more information, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability/>.

## Academic Dishonesty

You 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 both in and out of the classroom. Students found to engage in academic dishonesty in any form are subject to disciplinary action. University faculty and 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, plagiarism, collusion, and the abuse of resource materials. For the university policy, see: [www.shsu.edu/syllabus](http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus).

## Student Absences on 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. 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 more information, see: [www.shsu.edu/syllabus](http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus).

## Student Resources

Being a successful student requires a balance in life. If you are dealing with an issue that affects your academic performance, please contact me so that we can figure out what you need to be successful in this class. In the meantime, here are some links that you might find helpful:

**Academic Advising:** [http://www.shsu.edu/~sam\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~sam_www/)

**Counseling Services:** <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/counseling/>

**Veterans' Resource Center:** [http://www.shsu.edu/~reg\\_www/VRC/VRC\\_VetSuccess.html](http://www.shsu.edu/~reg_www/VRC/VRC_VetSuccess.html)

**International Students' Resources:** [http://www.shsu.edu/~int\\_www/current/](http://www.shsu.edu/~int_www/current/)

**Newton Gresham Library:** <http://library.shsu.edu/>

**Blackboard Tutorials:** <http://ondemand.blackboard.com/students.htm>

**Reading and Writing Center:** [http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~rdg_www/)



## Tentative Course Schedule

Dates are subject to change with advance notice. All assignments are due by 11:59 pm. on the week they are assigned.

	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments Due
<b>Unit 1: Texas Political Foundations</b> Chapters 1 & 2 SLOs Met: 1, 2, 3, & 8	<b>Week 1</b>	The Purpose of Government	Chapter 1	Reading Quiz 1* over Chapter 1 due by 10/24
	Oct. 18-	Political Culture		Learning Activity 1 due by 10/24
	Oct. 24	Texas Constitutional History		Reading Quiz 2* over Chapter 2 due by 10/24
		American Federalism & Texas	Chapter 2	Learning Activity 2 due by 10/24
		<b>Exam 1</b> over ch 1 & 2		Due 10/24
<b>Unit 2: Political Contestation in Texas</b> Chapters 3, 4, & 5 SLOs Met: 5, 6, & 7	<b>Week 2</b>	Voting Past and Present	Chapter 3	Learning Activity 3 due by 10/31
	Oct. 25-	Campaigns & Elections		Reading Quiz 3 over Chapter 3 due by 10/31
	Oct. 31	<i>Last Man Standing</i> video		Learning Activity 4 due by 11/7
	<b>Week 3</b>	Interest Group Types & Activities	Chapter 4	Reading Quiz 4 over Chapter 4 due by 11/7
	Nov. 1-	Political Ideology		Learning Activity 5 due by 10/31
	Nov. 7	Political Parties in Texas	Chapter 5	Reading Quiz 5* over Chapter 5 due by 11/7
		<b>Exam 2</b> over ch. 3, 4, & 5		Due 11/7
<b>Unit 3: Texas Political Institutions</b> Chapters 6, 7, & 8 SLO Met: 4	<b>Week 4</b>	Legislative Structure	Chapter 6	Reading Quiz 6* over Chapter 6 due by 11/14
	Nov. 8-	Legislative Process		Learning Activity 6* due by 11/14
	Nov. 14	Executive Branch Structure		Reading Quiz 7 due by 11/14
		Governor Powers	Chapter 7	Learning activity 7 due 11/14
	<b>Week 5</b>	<i>Death by Fire</i> video		Learning Activity 8 due by 11/21
	Nov. 15-	Judicial Branch Structure	Chapter 8	Reading Quiz 8 due by 11/21
	Nov. 21	Texas Justice		
		<b>Exam 3</b> over ch. 6, 7, 8		Due 11/21
	<b>Week 6</b>	Policy Process	Policy 1 & 2	Reading Quiz 9 over Policy 1 & 2 due by 11/28
	Nov. 22-	Ed Policy & <i>The Revisionaires</i> video		Learning Activity 9 due by 11/28
	Nov. 28	Immigration Policy	Policy 3	Reading Quiz 10 over Policy 3 due by 11/28
		Immigration Trends		Learning Activity 10 due by 11/28

**Unit 4: Public Policy in Texas**

Policy 1, 2, 3, & 4\*  
SLOs Met: 2, 3, & 8

**Week 7**  
Nov. 29-  
Dec. 4

Fracking Trends & Policies  
Environmental Policy  
**Exam 4 over policy readings 1-4**

Policy 4

Learning Activity 11 due by 12/4  
Reading Quiz 11 over Policy 4 due by 12/4  
Due by 12/4

Dec. 4-  
Dec. 7

Optional Final Exam Closes at 11:59

**Final Exam**