

# TEXAS GOVERNMENT SYLLABUS

Course Name: **TEXAS GOVERNMENT**  
Course Number: **POLS 2306**  
Credit Hours: **3 Hours**  
Semester & Year: **SPRING 2018**  
Department: **POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT**  
Class Time: **9:30am – 10:50am**  
Class Location: **CHSS C070**  
Instructor: **KELLEY BROWN**

## Course Description

This course offers an introduction to Texas government and a broad overview of how the state's political system operates. Its primary objective is to learn and understand how and why state and local government affect each and every person in Texas.

## Learning Objectives:

This course has the following three general learning objectives:

- 1) Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classification, methods, and trends) about the institutions of Texas government, political behavior, and civic engagement.
- 2) Gaining analytical knowledge about fundamental principles, generalizations, theories, and philosophical foundations of political attitudes and behaviors in Texas.
- 3) Gaining knowledge of civic responsibility to engage effectively in American democracy.

## Required Materials

*Governing Texas*, Champagne, Harpham, Casellas; 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition  
ISBN 978-0-393-28367-9

## Professor Contact Information

Professor: Kelley Brown, MA  
Email: ksb016@shsu.edu  
Office: CHSS 471  
Phone: (936) 294-4654  
Office Hours: TTh, 11am - 1pm, or by appointment

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Units		
<b>1</b>	Thursday 18 Jan	Syllabus Review
	Tuesday 23 Jan	Social Contract
	Thursday 25 Jan	<b>Reading Quiz 1 – Pol Culture (CH 1)</b>
	Tuesday 30 Jan	<b>Reading Quiz 2 – TX Constitutions (CH 2)</b>
	Thursday 1 Feb	History of Voting
	Tuesday 6 Feb	<b>Reading Quiz Three – Federalism (CH 3)</b>
	<b>Thursday 8 Feb</b>	<b>EXAM ONE</b>
	Tuesday 13 Feb	<b>Reading Quiz Four – Ideology (CH 4)</b>
	Thursday 15 Feb	Party Conflict
	Tuesday 20 Feb	<b>Reading Quiz Five – Interest Groups (CH 6)</b>
	Thursday 22 Feb	Interest Groups
	Tuesday 27 Feb	<b>Reading Quiz Six – Elections (Ch 9)</b>
	Thursday 1 March	<i>Last Man Standing</i>
	Tuesday 6 March	Exam Review
	<b>Thursday 8 March</b>	<b>EXAM TWO</b>
	<b>12 – 16 March</b>	<b>* SPRING BREAK *</b>
	Tuesday 20 March	<b>Reading Quiz Seven – Legislature (CH 7)</b>
	Thursday 22 March	Bathroom Bill
	Tuesday 27 March	<b>Reading Quiz Eight – Executive (CH 8)</b>
	Thursday 29 March	Bureaucracy
	Tuesday 3 April	<b>Reading Quiz Nine – Judiciary (CH 9)</b>
	Thursday 5 April	<i>PBS: Justice For Sale</i> <b>*DROP DATE</b>
	Tuesday 10 April	Exam Review
	<b>Thursday 12 April</b>	<b>EXAM THREE</b>
	Tuesday 17 April	<b>Reading Quiz Ten – Local (CH 10)</b>
	Thursday 19 April	Immigration
	Tuesday 24 April	<b>Reading Quiz Eleven – Policy (CH 12)</b>
	Thursday 26 April	<i>Revisionaries</i>
	Tuesday 1 May	<b>Reading Quiz Twelve – Criminal Justice (CH 13)</b>
	Thursday 3 May	Final Review
	<b>Thursday 8 May</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>

# Course Grades & Assignments

## Grades

Course grades are based on the following:

20%	Reading Quizzes Average (total points divided by 10)
20%	Exam One
20%	Exam Two
20%	Exam Three
20%	Final Exam

## 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 **twelve reading quizzes** in total. I grade **ten** of them.

There is an assigned reading and an accompanying quiz most weeks, as shown in the Course Schedule. **The quizzes are taken online on Blackboard and are due by class time.** 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.

## Exams

There will be four exams in the course. Each exam counts for 20% of your final course grade; collectively the four exams comprise 80% of your final course grade. The scheduled dates of these exams are noted in the Course Schedule. The first three exams are comprised of 35 multiple-choice questions. You should bring a pencil and **green scantron** to class to take each exam. Grades will be processed for exams within one day and posted on Blackboard.

## Final Exam

A final exam is scheduled for **Thursday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2018**. It is cumulative – covering *all* material in the course – and is comprised of 50 multiple-choice questions. Final exam grades will be processed by 5pm on Thursday May 10<sup>th</sup>.

## 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 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 beforehand and agree that more time is needed. **I do not reopen reading quizzes** once the due date has passed. They are *all* available to take from the first week of class. You are responsible for keeping up with the readings and the quizzes!

### **Extra Credit**

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

### **Final Course Grade**

Your final course grade is comprised of: 20% Reading Quizzes Average, 20% Exam One, 20% Exam Two, 20% Exam Three, and 20% Exam Four (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.

## **Classroom Policies**

### **Attendance**

You are expected to *attend class and be on time*. It is imperative that you attend class 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/).

## Class Decorum

During class you are expected to behave respectfully and contribute to a positive learning environment. This means that you turn off your cellphone ringer and refrain from text messaging in class. Also, during class discussion, you are expected to be respectful of others' opinions and open to a diversity of ideas. *If you do not comply with these expectations, you will be asked to leave class and you will not be given the opportunity to make up any assignments for that class meeting.*

## Course Communication

All emails sent to me directly (ksb016@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 Brown,  
I am in Section 7 of your POLS 2305 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,  
Student Doe

## 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).

### **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. 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/)