



Texas Government

(POLS 2306 - 06)

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Classroom: Online
Time: Online
Office Hours: M 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM,
and by appointment

Course Description

This course provides a survey of the political and institutional foundations of Texas government. The political foundations of Texas government are assessed through an overview of Texas constitutions, dominant political culture, and federalism. The three branches of government – executive, legislative, and judicial – are explored as the institutions that bound Texas government. Political parties, interest groups, and elections in Texas are also examined. Time permitted, policy-making and key policy areas, including education, immigration, and the environment, are also covered in relation to current events in the state.

Learning Outcomes

Upon the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the origin and development of the Texas constitution.
2. Describe the state and local political systems and their relationship with the federal government.
3. Describe the separation 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.

Course Textbook

Anthony Champagne and Edward J. Harpham (2015). *Governing Texas: An Introduction to Texas Politics*, Second Edition. W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 455 pages.

Course Policies

Communication: Email is the best way to reach me. During the week, I will do my best to respond to email within 48 hours. During the weekend, I will respond to email within 48 hours. Given the nature of this course, all communications exchanged in this class will abide by the principles of professional etiquette. Additional information about email etiquette can be found on Blackboard.

Evaluation: Student grades in this course will be based upon the following considerations: online exercises and essays (25%); weekly quizzes (25%); and three examinations (50%). Students must honor the principles of academic honesty, as expressed by the *Code of Student Conduct and Discipline*. A copy of the *Code* can be found online at: www.shsu.edu/students/guide. This course will be graded on a 100-point scale as follows:

A	90 – 100
B	80 – 89
C	70 – 79
D	60 – 69
F	59 and lower

Attendance: Students are expected to be logon to blackboard during each week of the semester. For a complete overview of the university policy on Student Absence Notification, see: www.shsu.edu/dept/dean-of-students/absence.html.

Online Quizzes and Exercises: Students will need access to a computer with an internet connection and a web browser to compete this course. Students will be responsible for completing several online quizzes and online exercises during the semester. These online quizzes and exercises will cover the material assigned for each week's topic of discussion. Students must complete the online quizzes and exercises by the dates and times indicated on Blackboard. In the interest of fairness, late submissions of online quizzes and exercises will not be accepted. **NOTE:** Unless otherwise noted, all deliverables are due the subsequent Saturday after they become available (one week later).

Online Examinations: Students need computer access, internet, and a web browser to compete this course. Students must complete three online examinations, which cover the course materials to date and may include true/false; multiple-choice; matching, and short answer questions. Students must complete the online examinations by the dates and times indicated on Blackboard. In the interest of fairness, late submissions of online examinations will not be accepted.

Extra Credit: Extra credit will not be awarded, for any reason, in this class. Students in this class receive every opportunity to succeed during the semester. If you find that you are getting behind, for whatever reason, contact the professor several weeks before the course withdraw deadline.

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: [Dean of Student's Office](#).

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 policy, see: www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf

Students with Disabilities Policy: It is the policy of SHSU 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 with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities. 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 Office of 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. For a complete listing of the university services and policies for students with disabilities, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/disability>.

Classroom Visitors: Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis. 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.

Course Schedule

WEEK 01: COURSE INTRODUCTION

Readings:	Course Syllabus [Provided Online via Blackboard]
Questions:	What are the learning objectives and outcomes for this course? How will the course be managed during the semester? How will students be evaluated during this course? How can students communicate with the professor?
Activities:	[Lecture] Video Lectures
Resources:	No additional resources for this week.
Notes:	Familiarize yourself with our course's Blackboard page <i>and</i> do not forget to complete your Quiz by next Saturday (01/27) at 5:00 pm .
Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> Read Materials <input type="checkbox"/> Took Lecture Notes <input type="checkbox"/> Finalized Lecture Notes <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 02: THE POLITICAL CULTURE, PEOPLE AND ECONOMY

Readings:	Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 1.
Questions:	What are the defining characteristics of Texas's political culture? How has geography influenced Texas's political culture? How has the population of Texas changed over time? What was the biggest factor in the development of Texas?
Activities:	[Lecture] Video Lectures [Exercises] Online Exercises: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Oil Production in Texas2. The Texas Population
Resources:	Check for supplemental materials posted on Blackboard
Notes:	Do not forget to complete your quiz (open book) and submit your Online Exercises via Blackboard by Saturday at 5:00 pm
Status:	<input type="checkbox"/> Read Materials <input type="checkbox"/> Took Lecture Notes <input type="checkbox"/> Finalized Lecture Notes <input type="checkbox"/> Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 03: THE TEXAS CONSTITUTION

Readings: Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 2.

Questions: What are the main functions of state constitutions?
When was the current constitution of Texas ratified?
What circumstances led to the Texas constitution in use today?
How can the Texas constitution be modified today?

Activities: [Lecture] Video Lectures

[Exercises] Online Exercises: 1. Amending the Texas Constitution
2. The Texas Constitution

Resources: Check for supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **quiz** (open book) and submit your **Online Exercises** via Blackboard by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ____ Read Materials
____ Took Lecture Notes
____ Finalized Lecture Notes
____ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 04: TEXAS IN THE FEDERAL SYSTEM

Readings: Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 3.

Questions: What is federalism?
What is the relationship between Texas and the federal governments?
What are the different types of federalism?

Activities: [Lecture] Video Lectures

[Exercise] Online Exercises: 1. Federal Funds to Texas
2. Federal Funds Received by the States

Resources: Check for supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **quiz** (open book) and submit your **Online Exercises** via Blackboard by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ____ Read Materials
____ Took Lecture Notes
____ Finalized Lecture Notes
____ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 05: DISASTERS – THINKING ABOUT FEDERALISM

Readings: NYTIMES (2015) *10 Years After Katrina*

Activities: [Video] CSPAN (2015) *Hurricane Katrina - 10th Anniversary*

[Exercise] Disasters – Thinking About Federalism

Resources: Check for supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **Essay Exercise** by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ____ Read Materials
____ Took Lecture Notes
____ Finalized Lecture Notes
____ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 06: FIRST EXAMINATION

WEEK 07: POLITICAL PARTIES IN TEXAS

WEEK 08: CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS

Readings: Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 5.

Questions: What types of elections are held in Texas?
How has participation in Texas elections evolved over time?
What is voter turnout in Texas considered to be low?

Activities: **[Lecture]** Video Lectures
[Exercises] Online Exercises: 1. A Candidate's Background

Resources: Check for supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **quiz** (open book) and submit your **Online Exercises** via Blackboard by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ___ Read Materials
___ Took Lecture Notes
___ Finalized Lecture Notes
___ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 09: SPRING RECESS

Readings: None

Questions: None

Activities: None

Resources: No additional resources for this week

Notes: No class this week. Enjoy your break and be safe.

Status: ___ Read Materials
___ Took Lecture Notes
___ Finalized Lecture Notes
___ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 10: INTEREST GROUPS AND LOBBYING

Readings: Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 6.

Questions: Why is the budget an important component of this class?
Where does state revenue comes from?
How does the Texas government spend this revenue?
What are the major steps in the development of the state budget?

Activities: [Lecture] Video Lecture

[Exercises] Online Exercises: 1. The Right to Arm and Disarm
2. Reasons Texans Give for Not Voting

Resources: Check for any other supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **quiz** (open book) and submit your **Online Exercises** via Blackboard by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ___ Read Materials
___ Took Lecture Notes
___ Finalized Lecture Notes
___ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 11: SECOND EXAMINATION

Readings: Review all Assigned Readings and Lecture Notes

Questions: None

Activities: Review all your course materials

Notes: There is not a study guide. The examination will be open book and open note.

Status: ___ Read all Materials and Lecture Notes
___ Completed 1st Review
___ Completed 2nd Review
___ Completed 3rd Review and have Prepared for the Examination

WEEK 12: THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE

Readings: Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 7.

Questions: How is the Texas legislature structured?
Who can become a member of the Texas legislature?
What are the different types of session held by the Texas legislature?
What powers are held by the Texas legislature?
How are laws made and who can affect the development of legislation?
Why does redistricting matter?

Activities: [Lecture] Video Lectures

[Exercises] Online Exercises: 1. The Texas Legislature
2. Talking Against the Clock

Resources: Check for any other supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **quiz** (open book) and submit your **Online Exercises** via Blackboard by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ___ Read Materials
___ Took Lecture Notes
___ Finalized Lecture Notes
___ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 13: THE TEXAS EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Readings: Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 8.

Questions: What are the powers of the Texas governor?
How are the powers of the Texas governor limited?
What is meant by the phrase: Texas has a “plural executive?”
What are the roles played by boards, commissions and regulatory agencies?

Activities: [Lecture] Video Lectures

[Exercises] Online Exercises: 1. The Texas Governor
2. The Governor’s Strong Arm

Resources: Check for any other supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **quiz** (open book) and submit your **Online Exercises** via Blackboard by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ___ Read Materials
___ Took Lecture Notes
___ Finalized Lecture Notes
___ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 14: THE TEXAS JUDICIARY

Readings: Champagne and Harpham (2015) – Chapter 9.

Questions: How is the Texas court system organized?
What is the difference between the civil court system and the criminal court system?
How are judges selected in Texas?
What are the major issues in the Texas judicial system?

Activities: [Lecture] Video Lectures

[Exercises] Online Exercises: 1. Waiting on the Court
2. Texas Judges

Resources: Check for any other supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **quiz** (open book) and submit your **Online Exercises** via Blackboard by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ___ Read Materials
___ Took Lecture Notes
___ Finalized Lecture Notes
___ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 15: SAM HOUSTON WEEK

Readings: None

Questions: Who is General Sam Houston?

Activities: [Lecture] Video Screening: PBS (2013) *Sam Houston Documentary*

[Exercises] Online Exercises: 1. Student Reaction Essay

Resources: Check for any other supplemental materials posted on Blackboard

Notes: Do not forget to complete your **Essay Exercise** by **Saturday at 5:00 pm**

Status: ____ Read Materials
____ Took Lecture Notes
____ Finalized Lecture Notes
____ Reviewed Readings and Lecture Notes

WEEK 16: THIRD EXAMINATION

Readings: Review all Assigned Readings and Lecture Notes

Questions: None

Activities: Review all your course materials

Notes: There is not a study guide. The examination will be open book and open note.

Status: ____ Read all Materials and Lecture Notes
____ Completed 1st Review
____ Completed 2nd Review
____ Completed 3rd Review and have Prepared for the Examination

ENJOY THE SUMMER BREAK!!!