GOVT 2306: Texas Government

Instructor: Mrs. Megan Whiteside  
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Office Hours: T 10-2:30pm, and MWRF by Appointment
Department: Government, Political Science

Course Description: “This course introduces students to the origin and development of the Texas constitution, structure and powers of state and local government, federalism and intergovernmental relations, political participation, the election process, public policy, and the political culture of Texas.” General Bulletin, 2022-2023.

Course Topics: There are 13 topics that we will cover in this class. Each of these topics has a self-contained module in Brightspace where you will find all lectures resources and assignments for that topic. You can see which topics we are working on each week by reviewing the course calendar.

- Texas Political Culture
- Texas Constitutions
- Federalism
- Public Policy
- Local Governments
- Political Parties
- Interest Groups
- Elections and Voting
- The Legislature
- The Plural Executive
- The Bureaucracy
- The Judiciary
- Participation

Email Policy: I will respond to your emails within 48 hours, unless they are sent over the weekend, then I will respond on Monday morning.

Note: So, I can respond as promptly as possible to your emails you MUST include the following:
- Your full name - as it is in Brightspace,
- Your course number (2305 or 2306),
- Your section number (the three digits after 2305/2306), and
- An in-depth description of your problem or question. Be as specific as possible, even better-send a screenshot as well if you can!

Course Readings: This course does not have a required textbook, but if you think that you may like a textbook to refer to then I would suggest finding a used copy of the following textbook:


Notes: Actively taking notes as you go through the course material helps you better retain the information. A Notes Outline has been provided for every topic to guide you through the course material as it is laid out in the module. You do not have to use these, but they may help you organize the material, or keep track of what is covered in each module.

Generative AI: We might be using AI tools in this class to generate ideas and scenarios to use as examples. AI tools can be very helpful in generating ideas, acting as a sounding board and even for brainstorming, and these are acceptable uses of the tools in this course. Unacceptable use of AI includes having it generate answers for your assignments, using it as a source of factual information, or a citation generator.

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Assignments:

**Attendance Discussions-15% (Each worth 1 point)**
Every week there will be an attendance discussion in Brightspace. These discussions will not be over course material, but rather “getting to know you” or silly prompts. They will be used to make sure that you are checking our Brightspace course material at least once a week, but you should be checking it more often. This is how attendance will be tracked in the course.

**Class Activities- 15% (Each worth 1 point)**
Every course module will include an activity, which is not assessment but a way to help you understand the content or think about it in a new context. These activities are not uniform, they could be polls from another site, an online game, or it could be a padlet post. These are low risk assignments, as long as you participate and put in effort, you will get credit.

**Reading Assignments- 18% (Each worth 6 points)**
Three readings in this course are accompanied by a reading assignment to help you understand the reading and expose you to other viewpoints. Each of you will be sorted into a reading group (think “book club”) and you will cover each reading within your group. The first of these assignments will be a Brightspace discussion, but for the next three you will record a zoom meeting between you and your group members and then turn in the link recording.

*Note: Please do not stress about setting this up, you will choose your own groups according to availability, and we will go over creating a zoom meeting together.*

**Quizzes- 15% (Each worth 3 points)**
There are 5 quizzes in this course. Each quiz will cover only material contained in that module, which could include readings, videos, and content files. The quizzes are found within the Module it covers.

**Reflections- 15% (Each worth 5 points)**
In three Modules you will be writing a short reflection over the covered content. For these assignments you will be given a prompt to critically evaluate and express an opinion over.

**Current Events- 12% (Each worth 6 points)**
It is very important to be attentive to current issues or situations that our government is dealing with. Being informed is one of the most important duties of a citizen. To help you develop this lifelong practice there are two assignments over what our government is currently doing. The progression of these assignments will help you learn how to form and defend your opinions.

**Final- 10% (One worth 10 points)**
At the end of the semester, you will complete a cumulative assignment.

**Late Work:** I need grace in my life every day, and you deserve the same. There are set due dates in this course, but late work will be accepted for any reason according to the following:
- You can turn in assignments up to two days late, without points deducted.
- After the two-day grace period you can still turn in late work for an addition two weeks, but 30% of your grade is deducted.

*Note 1: A zero will be entered into the gradebook until I receive your assignment, because I do not know whether you have chosen not to do it, or it is just late.*

*Note 2: Because assignments should be graded in a timely manner according to the due date, I will not be able to give late work the same amount of attention as work turned in on time.*

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Course Contact Hours and Study Hours:
Under federal financial aid eligibility requirements, SFA policy 5.4 defines the credit hour as “Not less than one hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time.” A 3-credit hour course should approximate 3 hours of classroom time/direct instruction and at least 6 hours of out-of-class work per week.

Direct Instruction: Approximately 3 hours of direct instruction will be given through written content, videos, and podcasts from outside sources.

Out-of-class work: Approximately 6 hours per week should be spent in the course completing assignments, readings, and research pertaining to the course.

Program Learning Outcomes:
This course is a general education core curriculum course and no specific program learning outcomes, for a political science major, are addressed in this course.

Student Learning Outcomes:
In any given semester, one or more of the following Core Curriculum Objectives for the political science/ government Foundational Component Area may be assessed.

- Critical Thinking Skills – creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information
- Communication Skills – effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication
- Social Responsibility – intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to effectively engage in regional, national, and global communities
- Personal Responsibility – the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making

Student Learning Objectives:
By the end of the course, you should be able to

- Critically evaluate political science theories and approaches to institutional arrangements of Texas political system and to Texas public policy
- Communicate your understanding and interpretation of institutional arrangements of the Texas political system, and well as key domestic and foreign policy issues
- Understand social responsibility by examining Texas government policy choices as they effect various regional, national, and global communities
- Understand, connect, and evaluate individual choices associated with Texas state public policy options and / or theories and approaches to institutional design of the Texas political system

Institutional Absences (HOP 04-110)
An Institutional Absence may be granted to a student who participates as a representative of the University in academic (including research), extra- or cocurricular, or athletic activities. Students will be excused for institutional purposes from otherwise required academic activity only when a valid Institutional Absence is approved by the appropriate administrative unit or official and the documentation of approval is provided to the faculty member at least five (5) days in advance.

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Institutional absences will not be approved for keystone events, defined as: a special or unique assignment, test, project, experience, or other academic exercise identified by the Faculty member as critical for successful completion of standards of the class and unable to be missed. These events must be identified on the syllabus at the beginning of the semester and communicated to the students. Events added to the syllabus at a later date will not qualify for Keystone Event status. Keystone Events where the date/time is changed will no longer be considered a Keystone Event. Students should make themselves aware of any Keystone Events identified in the syllabus to ensure there are no conflicts.

For keystone events where the assignment dates vary, it is incumbent upon the students to work with their faculty member to not select a conflicting date.

More information on Institutional Absences, including how to apply, can be found at https://www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents/student-resources/institutional-absences.

Academic Integrity:

The Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outlines the prohibited conduct by any student enrolled in a course at SFA. It is the responsibility of all members of all faculty, staff, and students to adhere to and uphold this policy.

Articles IV, VI, and VII of the new Code of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity outline the violations and procedures concerning academic conduct, including cheating, plagiarism, collusion, and misrepresentation. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) Copying from the test paper (or other assignment) of another student, (2) Possession and/or use during a test of materials that are not authorized by the person giving the test, (3) Using, obtaining, or attempting to obtain by any means the whole or any part of a non-administered test, test key, homework solution, or computer program, or using a test that has been administered in prior classes or semesters without permission of the Faculty member, (4) Substituting for another person, or permitting another person to substitute for one’s self, to take a test, (5) Falsifying research data, laboratory reports, and/or other records or academic work offered for credit, (6) Using any sort of unauthorized resources or technology in completion of educational activities.

Plagiarism is the appropriation of material that is attributable in whole or in part to another source or the use of one’s own previous work in another context without citing that it was used previously, without any indication of the original source, including words, ideas, illustrations, structure, computer code, and other expression or media, and presenting that material as one’s own academic work being offered for credit or in conjunction with a program course or degree requirements.

Collusion is the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments offered for credit or collaboration with another person to commit a violation of any provision of the rules on academic dishonesty, including disclosing and/or distributing the contents of an exam.

Misrepresentation is providing false grades or résumés; providing false or misleading information in an effort to receive a postponement or an extension on a test, quiz, or other assignment for the purpose of obtaining an academic or financial benefit for oneself or another individual or to injure another student academically or financially.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54):

Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the coursework because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in

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which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course to compute the grade point average. For additional information, go to https://www.sfasu.edu/policies/course-grades-5.5.pdf.

**Students with Disabilities:**
To obtain disability-related accommodations, alternate formats, and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services promptly may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.

**Acceptable Student Behavior:**
Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom. Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the iCare program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

**Mental Health:**
SFA values students’ overall well-being, mental health and the role it plays in academic and overall student success. Students may experience stressors that can impact both their academic experience and their personal well-being. These may include academic pressure and challenges associated with relationships, emotional well-being, alcohol and other drugs, identities, finances, etc. If you are experiencing concerns, seeking help, SFA provides a variety of resources to support students’ mental health and wellness. Many of these resources are free, and all of them are confidential.

**On-campus Resources:**
**The Dean of Students Office** (Rusk Building, 3rd floor lobby)
www.sfasu.edu/deanofstudents
936.468.7249
dos@sfasu.edu

**SFA Human Services Counseling Clinic** Human Services, Room 202
www.sfasu.edu/humanservices/139.asp
936.468.1041

**The Health and Wellness Hub** “The Hub”
Location: corner of E. College and Raguet St.
To support the health and well-being of every Lumberjack, the Health and Wellness Hub offers comprehensive services that treat the whole person – mind, body and spirit. Services include:

- Health Services
- Counseling Services
- Student Outreach and Support
- Food Pantry
- Wellness Coaching
- Alcohol and Other Drug Education

www.sfasu.edu/thehub

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936.468.4008  
thehub@sfasu.edu

**Crisis Resources:**
- Burke 24-hour crisis line: 1.800.392.8343
- National Suicide Crisis Prevention: 9-8-8
- Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1.800.273.TALK (8255)
- Crisis Text Line: Text HELLO to 741-741

**General Education Core Curriculum**

By enrolling in GOVT 2306: Texas Government you are also enrolling in a Core Curriculum Course that fulfills the Core Curriculum / General Education Objectives of Communication Skills (Visual and Written), Critical Thinking, Personal Responsibility, and Social Responsibility. During the semester, you will receive assignments that fulfill both the requirements of this course and the needs of Stephen F. Austin State University’s Core Curriculum Assessment Plan with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. If you have any questions, please see your Instructor or the Office of Student Learning and Institutional Assessment at (936) 468-1130.

The chart below indicates the core objectives addressed by this course, the assignment(s) that will be used to assess the objectives associated with this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Objective</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Course Assignment Titles</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication Skills</strong></td>
<td>To include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas though written, oral, and visual communication.</td>
<td>1) Current Event 1 &amp; 2 2) Reading Assignment 1-3</td>
<td>1) 2/16, 4/12  2) 2/23, 3/27, 4/26</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Critical Thinking</strong></td>
<td>To include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information</td>
<td>1) Reading Assignment 1 2) Reflection 2 3) Final</td>
<td>1) 2/23  2) 3/1  3) 5/10</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>To include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to effectively engage in regional, national, and global communities</td>
<td>1) Reflection 1 2) Reading Assignment 3 3) Reflection 3</td>
<td>1) 2/2  2) 4/26  3) 5/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal Responsibility</strong></td>
<td>To include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making</td>
<td>1) Reading Assignment 2</td>
<td>1) 3/27</td>
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