

Texas Government 2023.001
Fall 2012
Tuesday, Thursday 11:00 am – 12:20 pm; CFO 203

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Course Description: This course will explore the origin and development of the Texas Constitution; structure and powers of the state government including the legislative, executive, and judicial branches; federal-state relations; political participation and the election process in Texas. We will also discuss local governments, policy-making, and the factors influencing policy decisions in Texas. Special attention will be paid to social demographics and the politics of race, gender, and class in the Texas political system.

Exemplary Learning Objectives: The purpose of this course is to produce informed and active citizens. The objectives of this course are:

- To analyze, critically assess, and develop creative solutions to public policy problems.
- To recognize and assume one's responsibility as a citizen in a democratic society by learning to think for oneself, by engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media and other appropriate information sources about politics and public policy.
- To identify and understand differences and commonalities within diverse cultures.

Textbook: Tannahill. *Texas Government: Policy and Politics*, 12th Edition. Boston: Pearson.
Texas Politics Online Textbook from the University of Texas at Austin; accessible at <http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/index.html>

Grading:

Grades will be assigned on the normal 100-point scale; i.e. 90-100%=A, 80-89%=B, and so forth. Your grade will be determined by the following components:

Exams (60% of course grade):

- There will be two exams in the course. Neither exam is cumulative. These exams will consist of 50 multiple choice questions. Each of these exams is worth 30% of your final grade, accounting for a cumulative 60% of your final grade.

Blackboard Exercises (30% of course grade):

- A main goal of this course is to encourage a greater awareness of important state and local issues. There will be three exercises, each worth 10% of your grade, during the semester. They will utilize a mix of topical questions on current news stories, and discussion questions which will ask you to analyze a current political issue.

Current Events Questions (10% of course grade):

- The remaining 10% of your grade will be derived from 2 assignments in which you will be required to read 2 articles concerning Texas politics from a reputable news source. Do not use blogs or the websites of cable news agencies, most major newspapers are acceptable (i.e. the *Dallas Morning News*, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, etc.) You must write a one-paragraph synopsis of this article, and then provide two questions this article has raised about Texas politics in your mind. Each of these assignments will be worth 5% of your total grade, accounting for a cumulative 10% of your final grade.

Two Final and Important Notes about Grading:

- Make-up opportunities for missed exams or class assignments will only be allowed when an absence is due to observance of a religious holiday or participation in a university-sponsored activity. Arrangements for make-up work should be made prior to a scheduled absence whenever possible.
- If you do not receive a grade in Blackboard for any assignment or exam you must see me within two weeks of the assignment or exam being returned to the class. If you do not do so, you will receive a 0 for that assignment or exam.

Extra Credit: It is entirely possible for all students in this class to make an A without extra credit assignment, therefore, extra credit will likely not be given in this course.

General Class Expectations:

Attendance and Blackboard: Attendance is expected, but not required for this class. You will undoubtedly learn more and be more successful if you attend class.

All announcements, including, but not limited to, changes to the syllabus, assignments due dates, and exam dates will be announced either in class or through Blackboard. Therefore, even though attendance is not required, an announcement may be made which you may be unaware of if you do not attend class. Further, you are responsible for checking Blackboard regularly. Not all announcements will necessarily be made through Blackboard, however, some may be made through Blackboard. Thus, it is in your best interest to attend class, and check Blackboard everyday.

Acceptable Student Behavior: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor's ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at <http://www.twu.edu/downloads/student-life-office/Handbookforweb.pdf>.

Academic Integrity: The instructor will adhere to and enforce TWU's policy on academic integrity (cheating, plagiarism, forgery, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty and sabotage). Violations of academic integrity in this course will be addressed in compliance with the procedures laid out in this policy. These guidelines can be found at <http://www.twu.edu/downloads/student-life-office/Handbookforweb.pdf>.

Accommodations: If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the office of Disability Support Services (CFO 106, 940-898-3835, dss@twu.edu) in order to obtain the required official notification of your accommodation needs. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

Course Outline:

The following represents an approximate calendar of class discussions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to this schedule. However, departures from the schedule may occasionally occur. Exam dates should be considered firm, and you should arrange your personal schedule to be present at the appointed times.

Section 1: Structure of Texas Government

Tuesday, Aug. 28: Course Introduction
No Reading

****Note: No class Thursday, August 30th****

Tuesday, Sept 4 & Thursday, Sep. 6: Texas Political Culture; Texas Constitution
Read: textbook Chaps 1 & 2

Tuesday, Sep. 11 & Thursday, Sep. 13: Political Parties and Elections in Texas
Read: textbook Chap 6 & 7

****Blackboard Exercise #1 Due by Thursday, Sep. 13 by 11 am****

Tuesday, Sep. 18 & Thursday, Sep. 20: The Texas Executive
Read: textbook Chap. 9

Thursday, Sep. 20: Current Events Discussion Day

****Current Events Questions #1 due by Wednesday, Sep. 19 by 11 am****

Tuesday, Sep. 25 & Thursday, Sep. 27: The Texas Legislature and Judiciary
Read: textbook Chap. 8 & 10

****Blackboard Exercise #2 due by Thursday, Sep. 27 by 11 am****

Tuesday, Oct. 2: Exam #1 Review

****Exam #1 Thursday, Oct. 4****

Section 2: Function of Texas Government and Texas Public Policy

Tuesday, Oct. 9 & Thursday, Oct. 11: Texas Interest Groups
Read: textbook Chap. 5

Monday, Oct. 15 & Wednesday, Oct. 17: County & Local Government
Read: textbook Chaps. 11 & 12

Tuesday, Oct. 23: Current Events Discussion Day

****Current Events Questions #1 due by Monday, Oct. 22 by 11 am****

Thursday, Oct. 24: Criminal Justice
Read: textbook Chap 14

****Blackboard Exercise #3 due by Friday, Oct. 26 at 5 pm****

Tuesday, Oct. 30 & Thursday, Nov. 1: Current Mood of Texas, Polling
Read: online textbook http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/11_2_1.html

Tuesday, Nov. 6 & Thursday, Nov. 8: Texas Budget Policy

Read: textbook Chap 13

Tuesday, Nov. 13 & Thursday, Nov. 15: Texas Political Economy and Poverty

Read: online textbook http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/9_1_0.html &
http://texaspolitics.laits.utexas.edu/12_1_0.html

Tuesday, Nov. 20: Debate Day

We will be debating a number of Texas political issues in a civil manner in class today.

****Note: No class Thursday, Nov. 22: Thanksgiving Holiday****

Tuesday, Nov. 27 & Thursday, Nov. 29: Constitution Writing Day

We will be writing a new Texas constitution on this day in class.

Tuesday, Dec. 4: Review for Final Exam

Thursday, Dec. 6: Reading Day – NO CLASS; use this time to study!

****Final Exam, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 10:30 am-12:30 pm****